

**RICHLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

**Preparing for Placement  
Tests in Mathematics  
and English**

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## **Introduction:**

This booklet offers students, counselors, and other concerned individuals helpful information about the placement tests at Richland Community College. Placement testing helps the counselors and faculty determine a student's current skill level in mathematics, English, and reading so that he or she will be placed in courses that match current knowledge and promote success at Richland. These tests are not designed to determine specific areas in which a student needs to improve. If you want more specific information, you will need to inquire about a diagnostic or assessment test.

The Board of Trustees has adopted the following policies regarding placement tests at Richland:

## **Course Placement Policy:**

Students will be tested in English, mathematics, reading, or other areas needed for particular majors, using the selected College placement exam(s) or other criteria established by the program faculty. Picture identification is required at the time of testing. Tests results will be used to determine a student's eligibility for courses with prerequisites and/or placement in developmental courses (courses numbered 099 or below). Cut-off scores for all placement instruments will be determined by the faculty in the tested areas and will be published before students take the tests. An instructor may do additional testing during the first week of class to verify placement; students may be transferred to an alternate course at that time. Once a student has started a developmental sequence of courses, that student may not take the placement test again. Individual departments may offer a proficiency exam to alter the sequence of courses required.

## **Course Placement Retesting:**

Students tested in English, reading, mathematics, or other areas may take one test of each type at no cost. A student may retest by choosing one of the following options: (1) Wait a minimum of twenty-four (24) hours and pay a retest fee or (2) wait six months and retest at no charge. A student may be allowed to take the test a third or subsequent time only with the recommendation of a faculty member or academic director in the appropriate discipline and payment of the retest fee.

## **Process for Completing Placement Exams:**

1. No appointment is necessary. Although the tests are untimed, we recommend allowing about 2 hours to complete the battery of tests.
2. Bring a photo ID (driver's license or other school ID with social security number) for proof of identification.
3. Before starting the exams, you will complete a testing tutorial and answer local background questions that will also determine which math test you will begin.
4. You will be provided with scrap paper and pencils for the mathematics exam. No calculator is allowed on any math placement exam.
5. Once the testing is complete, you will receive a copy of your results, unless you complete the English essay. That test requires approximately 48 hours to score. All scores will become a part of your academic record and will be available for counselors and faculty to use while advising you.

## Testing Accommodations:

If you need special testing accommodations, please contact the Disability Accommodation Services Office, 875-7200, ext. 379, prior to making an appointment for completing the placement test. Failure to notify the office before taking the exam may reduce your chances of accurate placement.

## Test Taking Tips:

### Multiple Choice Tests and Computerized Testing

Computerized testing may be different from the testing you have previously done. Make sure that you understand the directions and follow them carefully. Don't assume that because you can use a computer mouse that you can skip over the tutorial. The tutorials at the beginning of the test clearly indicate how to complete the exam.

Since this test is untimed, you can take the time that you need, but don't labor over questions for which you do not know the answers. Remember that we are evaluating what you know, not how well you can guess. **You will not be allowed to go back to previous questions once you move to another question.** Allow yourself plenty of time to complete the tests by the posted/designated closing time so that you will not feel rushed.

Each test will begin with a question at a medium level of difficulty. If you answer the question correctly, the next question will be a little more difficult. If you answer the question incorrectly, the next question will be a little easier. The computer will then choose questions depending on whether you answer correctly or incorrectly until you reach the prescribed number of questions for the test.

The computerized tests offer multiple choice selections. Below are some tips on completing a multiple choice exam:

- Try to supply the answers before you read the alternatives.
- Identify the key phrase in the question.
- Eliminate immediately the choices that you know are not correct.
- Read all the choices and pick the best answer.
- Refer choices to question for relationship.

## Additional Help in Preparing for Placement Exams:

The best preparation for taking the placement exams is to take as many English and mathematics courses as you can while in high school. Of course, if you have been out of school for a while and have not used these skills, you may want to review some basic skills. You have several options for this review, depending on your schedule.

- Register for Applied Learning Skills modules. These one-credit course focus on specific topics covered in developmental math and English courses. Information about the modules are available in Student Development and Services, Room C129, or the Student Learning Center, Room S118.
- For math, use computerized math tutorials available in the Student Learning Center, Room S118. You may work independently at your own speed. Limited tutoring assistance is available while you work on this program.
- Register for Adult Basic Education Open Study Skills labs. After you complete diagnostic testing, you may concentrate on areas that the tests identify as needing work. Information about Adult Basic Education courses is available in the Adult Education Office, Room W121.
- Limited tutoring is also available for reading and writing on an appointment basis in the Student Learning Center, Room S118.

Again, these options are primarily designed for people who wish to review material that they have already covered in high school or other college courses. They are not designed to replace any English or mathematics courses required for a degree or certificate.

## Mathematics Skills

Students must show mastery of the following mathematics skills to enter a transfer-level mathematics course at Richland Community College. Instructors emphasize the development of all of the identified skills through homework, quizzes, and tests. Problem solving is emphasized throughout the students' mathematics education, and the use of technology such as a graphing calculator or computer software is generally encouraged.

To qualify for a technical and transfer-level mathematics course, a Richland student must meet the following prerequisites:

- successful completion of Math 098 (“C” or better grade)  
**or**
- satisfactory score on the mathematics placement exam,  
**and**
- successful completion of Math 095 or one year of high school geometry  
**and**
- eligibility for Engl. 101

For mathematics courses below 100, other specific English prerequisites are required. See course schedule for details. No matter where the results place you in the sequence of mathematics courses, state guidelines require the completion of either one year of high school geometry with a “D” or better or Math 095 with a “C” or better.

### **Arithmetic – Math 087\*** – Equivalent to 7th Grade Math or High School General Math

Areas covered:

- whole number operations
- estimation and rounding off
- order of operations
- averages
- fractions
- decimals
- percents
- ratio and proportion
- problem solving

A student who places at this level has several options available:

- 1 - Enrollment in a free Adult Basic Education course, in which a specific deficiency can be met. Class times are flexible, but a student earns no credit.
- 2 - Enrollment in an Applied Learning Skills module, in which a specific deficiency can be met. Class times are flexible. The student earns 1 credit and pays tuition and fees.
- 3 - Enrollment in the course Math 087. Class times are fixed. The student earns 4 credits and pays all tuition and fees.

### **Pre-Algebra – Math 090\*** -- Equivalent to 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Math or High School General Math

Areas covered:

- signed numbers, order of operations and formulas
- fractions and mixed numbers
- decimals

- percents
- fractions
- exponent/roots
- polynomials
- linear equations
- word problems
- geometry
- ratio and proportion
- unit multipliers/conversion
- average/overall average

**Beginning Algebra – Math 091\*** – Equivalent to 9th Grade Algebra

Areas covered:

- real numbers and basic properties
- order of operations
- solving linear equations and inequalities with applications
- whole number exponents
- arithmetic of algebraic fractions
- arithmetic of polynomials
- factoring of polynomials
- graphing linear equations and inequalities
- systems of linear equations using elimination and substitution (2 variables)
- systems of inequalities (2 variables)
- roots and radical expressions
- quadratic equations
- scientific notation

**\* Non-transferable course**

Sample Skills Exam:  
Beginning Algebra

1. Simplify:  $3 \cdot 5 + 5(2+3)$
2. Give the absolute value, opposite, and reciprocal of -2.
3. Add:  $-2 + 7 + (-5)$
4. Simplify:  $-2 - (-3+7) - 6$
5. Apply the distributive property to :  $4(3x - 6)$
6. Simplify:  $4(-3) + 5(-2)$
7. Simplify:  $\frac{4(-2) - 8}{4}$
8. Which of the following are integers?  $-5, -\frac{2}{3}, 0, \sqrt{5}, \frac{2}{3}, 9$
9. Simplify:  $3(x-5) - (2x+7)$

10. Solve for x:  $7x - 3 = 6x + 1$
11. Solve for a:  $3a - 5 = -a - 7$
12. Solve for y:  $2 - 3(2y - 5) = 5$
13. John is 4 years older than Tim. Four years ago John's age was twice Tim's age. Find their ages now.
14. Solve for x and graph the solution set:  $4(3 - 3x) + 2 < 6x - 4$
15. Solve and graph:  $-3 < 3x + 3 < 12$
16. Which of the following ordered pairs are solutions to  $y = 2x + 4$ ,  $(-3, -2)$   $(3, 12)$   $(2, 8)$
17. Graph the line  $2x - 5y = 10$
18. Solve the system by graphing: 
$$\begin{aligned} y &= 3x - 2 \\ y &= 4 \end{aligned}$$
19. Solve the system: 
$$\begin{aligned} 4x + 5y &= -3 \\ 3x - 2y &= -8 \end{aligned}$$
20. Solve the system: 
$$\begin{aligned} x + y &= -2 \\ y &= 3x + 2 \end{aligned}$$
21. One number is 1 more than 3 times another. Their sum is 13. Find the numbers.
22. Graph:  $2x - 3y \geq 12$
23. Simplify:  $3x^6(3x)^2$
24. Simplify: 
$$\frac{(x^{-2})^{-3}}{x^{-12}}$$
25. Combine:  $12a^4b^2 - 7a^4b^2$
26. Subtract:  $(2x^2 - 3x + 4) - (5x^2 - 4x + 4)$
27. Multiply:  $(3x - 2)(5x + 2)$
28. Multiply:  $(3x - 5)^2$
29. Simplify: 
$$\frac{16a^4b + 20a^3b^2}{4a^2b}$$
30. Factor 300 into the product of primes.
31. Factor out the greatest common factor:  $16a^3 - 8a^5$
32. Factor:  $2x^3 + 4x^2 - 16x$
33. Factor:  $3x^2 + 17x + 10$
34. Factor:  $36a^2 - 25$
35. Solve for x:  $x^2 + 9x = -14$
36. The product of two consecutive even integers is 80. Find the integers.

37. Reduce to lowest terms:  $\frac{x+5}{x^2+7x+10}$

38. Divide:  $\frac{x^2-2x+7}{x+2}$

39. Simplify:  $\frac{x^2+7x+10}{x^2-25} \div \frac{x^2+4x+4}{2x-10}$

40. Add:  $\frac{1}{x-5} + \frac{-10}{x^2-25}$

41. Solve for x:  $\frac{x}{4} + \frac{7}{3} = \frac{1}{3}$

42. If  $\frac{3}{7}$  is added to 4 times the reciprocal of a number, the result is 1. Find the number.

43. Simplify:  $\sqrt[4]{16}$

44. Simplify:  $\sqrt{80x^3}$

45. Write in simplified form:  $\frac{3}{\sqrt{7}-2}$

46. Add:  $4\sqrt{32} + 7\sqrt{18}$

47. Multiply:  $(\sqrt{3}+2)(\sqrt{3}-5)$

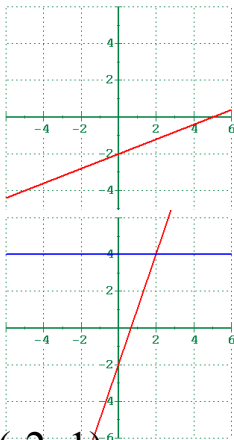
48. Solve for x:  $\sqrt{5x+6} - 5 = 1$

49. Solve for x:  $(2x-3)^2 = 25$

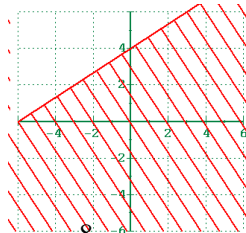
50. Solve by completing the square:  $x^2 + 2x - 8 = 0$

Sample Skills Exam Answer Key  
Beginning Algebra

1. 40
2. 2, 2, -1/2
3. 0
4. -12
5.  $12x - 24$
6. -22
7. -4
8. -5, 0, 9
9.  $x - 22$
10.  $x = 4$
11.  $a = -1/2$
12.  $y = 2$
13. John is 12 and Tim is 8
14.  $x > 1$
15.  $-2 < x < 3$
16. (-3, -2) and (2, 8)
- 17.



18. (2, 4)
19. (-2, 1)
20. (-1, -1)
21. 3 and 10
- 22.



23.  $27x^8$
24.  $x^{18}$
25.  $5a^4b^2$

26.  $-3x^2 + x$
27.  $15x^2 - 4x - 4$
28.  $9x^2 - 30x + 25$
29.  $4a^2 + 5ab$
30.  $2 \cdot 2 \cdot 3 \cdot 5 \cdot 5$
31.  $8a^3$
32.  $2x(x + 4)(x - 2)$
33.  $(3x + 2)(x + 5)$
34.  $(6a + 5)(6a - 5)$
35.  $x = -2$  or  $-7$
36.  $x = 8, 10$  or  $-10, -8$

37.  $\frac{1}{x+2}$
38.  $x - 4 + \frac{15}{x+2}$

39.  $\frac{2}{x+2}$

40.  $\frac{1}{x+5}$

41.  $x = -8$

42.  $x = 7$

43. 2

44.  $4x\sqrt{5x}$

45.  $\sqrt{7} + 2$

46.  $37\sqrt{2}$

47.  $-7 - 3\sqrt{3}$

48.  $x = 6$

49.  $x = 4$  or  $-1$

50.  $x = 2$  or  $-4$

## **Geometry – Math 095\* – Equivalent to 10th Grade Geometry**

Areas covered:

- basic concepts of undefined terms, defined terms, postulates, theorems, angles, and construction
- congruent triangles
- parallels and parallelograms
- deductive reasoning
- geometric proofs
- logical reasoning
- concepts of area, perimeter, and volume
- ratio, proportion, and similarity
- circles
- regular polygons

*A student does not place into Math 095 - Geometry by taking the Math Placement Test. The state requirement is met either through high school course or through completion of Math 095.*

## **Intermediate Algebra – Math 098\* – Equivalent to 11th Grade Algebra**

Areas covered:

- review of real number operations and properties
- solve first degree equations and inequalities
- solve absolute value equations and inequalities
- elementary operations with polynomials and factoring
- operations with algebraic fractions and solving fractional equations
- integer and rational exponents
- simplification of roots and radical expressions
- operations with complex numbers, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, and whole number powers of  $i$
- second degree equations and inequalities
- graphing lines; other graphs, distance formula, and circles
- function definition, linear functions, and other functions
- systems of linear equations and inequalities using elimination and substitution (2 or more variables)
- integer and rational number exponents with variables
- arithmetic of algebraic fractions
- quadratic equations
- scientific notation

**\* Non-transferable course**

**Sample Skills Exam:  
Intermediate Algebra**

1. If  $A = \{1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6\}$  find  $\{x | x \in A \text{ and } x < 4\}$
2. Simplify:  $30 - 20 \div 4 + 8$
3. Simplify:  $-\left|-\sqrt{-3}\right|$
4. Graph:  $\{x | x \leq -2 \text{ or } x > 1\}$
5. Simplify:  $8x + 4 + 6x + 3$
6. Simplify:  $-4 - 9 - (-2)$
7. Simplify:  $9x - x + 5 - 3x$
8. Divide:  $-\frac{4}{3} \div 8$
9. Simplify:  $\frac{-3(-5) - 2(-10)}{3(-1) - 2}$
10. Simplify:  $7 - 4(3x - 5) + 4x$
11. Solve:  $\frac{2}{3}x + 6 = -2$
12. Solve:  $3(4y - 2) + y = 3y + 14$
13. Solve:  $-3y + 4 < -8$
14. Solve:  $-4 < 2x - 6 < 4$
15. Solve:  $|4x - 2| + 3 = 7$
16. Solve:  $|3a + 2| \leq 5$
17. Solve:  $|5 - 3t| > 4$
18. Solve for x:  $ax + 5 = bx + 2$
19. Diane is 4 years older than JoAnn. In 6 years, the sum of their ages will be 58. What are their ages now?
20. What percent of 84 is 21?
21. Bob has a collection of dimes and nickels that totals \$3.25. If he has a total of 50 coins, how many of each type does he have?
22. Simplify and write your answer with positive exponents only:  $(3y^{-2})^3(2y^4)$
23. Simplify:  $\frac{m^{-4}}{m^{-7}}$
24. Simplify:  $(2 \times 10^9)(3 \times 10^{-8})$

25. Subtract:  $4x^2 - 9x + 1$  from  $-2x^2 - 5x - 2$

26. Simplify:  $4x - 2[2 - (3x + 40)]$

27. Multiply:  $(93x + 2y)(9x^2 - 6xy - 4y^2)$

28. Expand and multiply:  $(2x - 3)^2$

29. Multiply:  $(x^3 + 4a)(x^3 - 4a)$

30. Divide  $10x^4 - 15x^4 + 20x^3$  by  $5x^3$

31. Divide  $2x^2 - 7x + 9$  by  $x + 2$

32. Factor:  $x^2 - bx + ax - ab$

33. Factor:  $2x^2 + 5xy - 12y^2$

34. Factor:  $12x^4 - x^2 - 6$

35. Factor:  $81x^4 - y^4$

36. Factor:  $8x^3 - 125y^3$

37. Reduce to lowest terms:  $\frac{x^2 - 16}{4 - x}$

38. Divide:  $\frac{x^2 - y^2}{x^2 + 2xy + y^2} \div \frac{x^3 - y^3}{x^3 + x^2y}$

39. Subtract:  $\frac{3x + 6}{x - 4} - \frac{2x + 10}{x - 4}$

40. Add:  $\frac{-7}{x^2 - x - 12} + \frac{8}{x^2 - 16}$

41. Simplify:  $\frac{1 - \frac{4}{x^2}}{1 + \frac{1}{x} - \frac{6}{x^2}}$

42. Solve:  $\frac{x}{x-3} + \frac{3}{2} = \frac{3}{x-3}$

43. John can do a certain job in 4 hours, while it takes Bob 5 hours to do the same job. How long will it take them, working together, to get the job done?

44. Simplify:  $4^{-3/2}$

45. Write in simplified form for radicals:  $3\sqrt{40a^4b^5}$

46. Rationalize the denominator:  $\frac{4}{\sqrt{5}}$
47. Combine:  $6\sqrt{75xy^3} - 8y\sqrt{12xy}$
48. Expand and simplify:  $(3\sqrt{x} + 2\sqrt{y})^2$
49. Rationalize the denominator:  $\frac{6}{\sqrt{5} - \sqrt{2}}$
50. Solve:  $\sqrt{x-4} = \sqrt{x} - 2$
51. Subtract :  $(5 - 2i) - (6 - 3i)$
52. Divide:  $\frac{2+i}{3+2i}$
53. Solve for x:  $6x^2 = 5x + 4$
54. Solve for x:  $2 + \frac{5}{x} = \frac{12}{x^2}$
55. Solve for x:  $(3x - 1)^2 = -20$
56. Solve for x:  $\frac{x^2}{2} - x = -\frac{5}{2}$
57. Find k so that  $9x^2 - kx = 4$
58. Solve for x:  $4x^4 + 11x^2 = 3$
59. The lengths of the three sides of a right triangle are given by three consecutive even integers. Find the lengths of the three sides.
60. Solve:  $6x^2 + x \geq 2$
61. Graph  $y = 2x - 2$
62. Graph  $x + y \leq 3$
63. Find the equation of the line with slope -3 that contains the point (-4, 3). Write your answer in slope intercept form.
64. Find the slope of the line containing (-2, -3) and (5, -1).
65. y varies inversely with the square of x. If y is 4 when x is 10, find y when x is 5.
66. Solve the system: 
$$\begin{aligned} 3x + 5y &= -7 \\ 5x + 4y &= 10 \end{aligned}$$

$$x + y + z = 6$$

67. Solve the system:  $2x - y + z = 5$

$$x + 2y - 3z = 2$$

68. Find the value of:  $\begin{vmatrix} 1 & -3 & -2 \\ 2 & 0 & 1 \\ 4 & -1 & 1 \end{vmatrix}$

69. Use Cramers' rule to solve:  $2x - 3y = 3$   
 $4x + 5y = 4$

70. How much 20% alcohol solution and 50% alcohol solution must be mixed to get 9 gallons of 30% alcohol solution?

71. Graph:  $y = x^2 + 6x + 5$

72. Graph:  $x^2 + y^2 - 6x + 4y - 12 = 0$

73. Graph:  $9x^2 + 4y^2 = 36$

74. Graph:  $9y^2 + 4x^2 < 36$

75. Solve the system:  $x^2 + y^2 = 4$   
 $x + 2y = 4$

76. Give the domain and range for the function  $y = x^2 + 3$

77. If  $f(x) = 3x^2 + 2x - 1$ , find  $f(5)$

78. If  $f(x) = 4x - 3$  and  $g(x) = 4x^2 - 7x + 3$ , find  $f/g$  and simplify it.

79. Graph:  $y = x^3$

80. Find  $f^{-1}(x)$  for  $f(x) = 2x + 3$


81. Find  $x$  if  $\log_4 8 = x$

82. Write as a single logarithm:  $3 \log a + 2 \log b - \frac{1}{2} \log c$

83. Evaluate:  $\ln 2446$

84. Solve:  $25^{2x-1} = 15$

Sample Skills Exam Answer Key  
Intermediate Algebra

1.  $x = 1, 2, 3$
2. 33
3.  $-\sqrt{-3}$  Or  $-i\sqrt{3}$
4. 

A number line from -4 to 4 with tick marks at every integer. A red arrow points from 1 to the left, ending at -4. A blue dot is placed at -2.
5.  $14x + 7$
6. -11
7.  $5x + 5$
8.  $\frac{-1}{6}$
9. -7
10.  $27 - 8x$
11.  $x = -12$
12.  $y = 2$
13.  $y > 4$
14.  $1 < x < 5$
15.  $x = \frac{3}{2}, \frac{-1}{2}$
16.  $a \leq 1$  And  $a \geq \frac{-7}{3}$
17.  $t < \frac{1}{3}$  Or  $t > 3$
18.  $x = \frac{-3}{a-b}$
19. JoAnn is 21 and Diane is 25
20. 25%
21. 35 nickels and 15 dimes
22.  $\frac{54}{y^2}$
23.  $m^3$
24. 6 X 10
25.  $-6x^2 + 4x - 3$
26.  $10x + 76$
27.  $837x^3 - 54x^2y - 384xy^2 - 8y^3$

28.  $4x^2 - 12x + 9$
29.  $x^6 - 16a^2$
30.  $2x - 3x + 4 = -x + 4$
31.  $2x - 11 + \frac{31}{x+2}$
32.  $(x - b)(x + a)$
33.  $(2x - 3y)(x + 4y)$
34.  $(3x^2 + 2)(4x^2 - 3)$
35.  $(9x^2 + y^2)(3x + y)(3x - y)$
36.  $(2x - 5y)(4x^2 + 10xy + 25y^2)$
37.  $-(x + 4)$
38.  $\frac{x^2}{x^2 + xy + y^2}$
39. 1
40.  $\frac{1}{(x+4)(x+3)}$
41.  $\frac{x+2}{x+3}$
42.  $\emptyset$
43. 2  $\frac{2}{9}$  hours
44.  $\frac{1}{8}$
45.  $6a^2b^2\sqrt{10b}$
46.  $\frac{4\sqrt{5}}{5}$
47.  $14y\sqrt{3xy}$
48.  $9x + 12\sqrt{xy} + 4y$
49.  $2\sqrt{5} + 2\sqrt{2}$
50.  $x = 4$

51.  $-1 + i$

52.  $\frac{8 - i}{13}$

53.  $x = -1/2$  or  $4/3$

54.  $x = 3/2$  or  $-4$

55.  $\frac{1 \pm 2i\sqrt{5}}{3}$

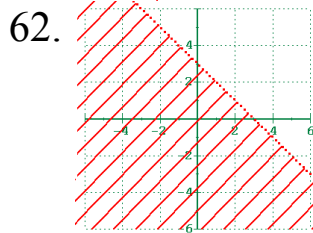
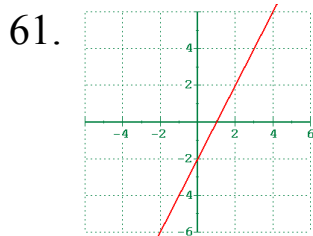
56.  $1 \pm 2i$

57.  $k = \frac{9x^2 - 4}{x}$

58.  $x = \pm \frac{1}{2}$  Or  $x = \pm i\sqrt{3}$

59. Lengths are 6, 8, and 10

60.  $x \leq \frac{-2}{3}$  Or  $x \geq \frac{1}{2}$



63.  $y = -3x - 9$

64. Slope is  $\frac{2}{7}$

65.  $y = 80$

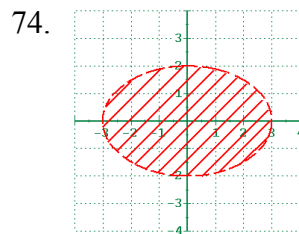
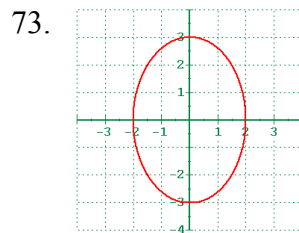
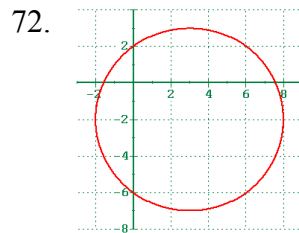
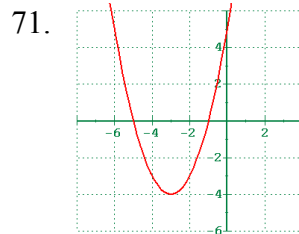
66.  $(6, -5)$

67.  $\left(\frac{35}{13}, \frac{24}{13}, \frac{19}{13}\right)$

68.  $-1$

69.  $\left(\frac{27}{22}, \frac{-2}{11}\right)$

70. 6 gallons of the 20% solution and 3 gallons of the 50% solution

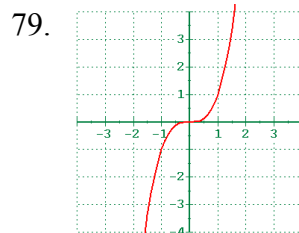


75.  $(0, 1.2)(0, 2)$

76. Domain is all Real #'s and Range is  $\geq 3$

77. 84

78.  $\frac{1}{x - 1}$



80.  $\frac{x + 3}{2}$

81. 1.5

82.  $\log \frac{a^3 b^2}{\sqrt{c}}$

83. 7.802

84.  $-.921$

## **Preparation for College English Composition**

Individuals who apply to Richland Community College are placed in English courses on the basis of their placement scores. Those who enter with ACT scores at the 40th percentile or above in both English and reading are eligible for English 101 and for all those courses that have eligibility for English 101 as a prerequisite. Those students who have not taken the ACT, probably a majority of entering students, have two options: the computerized Sentence Skills Test and the English Placement Essay. The computerized test is untimed, generally taking 45 minutes to complete. Again, those placing above the 40th percentile are eligible for English 101. Those scoring between the 21<sup>st</sup> and 39<sup>th</sup> percentile are placed in English 091, while those scoring below the 21<sup>st</sup> percentile are registered for English 089. These students then will take the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Comprehension Exam, which takes 30 minutes. Students scoring 35 or above will place in English 090, and those scoring 34 or below will place in English 088. More than 50% of the students taking the placement test are placed in English 101. The other option is the English Placement Essay, an impromptu essay written in Assessment Services, Room W124. After reading the brief directions and choosing one of four prompts that rely on the student's experience, the student has one hour to create a 500-word, organized, fully developed essay. About 50% of these essay writers are placed in English 101. The results of this essay are available about 48 hours after the essay has been completed; the student may not register until the results are available. If a student places in English 089 or English 091 as a result of the essay, the student must also complete the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Comprehension Exam before registering. During the first week of classes, students will complete an in-class writing assignment that will verify placement and be used as a diagnostic instrument by the instructor. Once students begin a sequence of courses, no retesting is allowed.

The best guide to student success in college writing remains experience in expository writing in high school. Students who have had only "English survey" courses, literature courses, or courses in creative writing are not typically ready for English 101. Students who expect to do well in college should prepare themselves early and take appropriate high school courses, including advanced composition or research paper writing. These courses concentrate on writing strategies such as causal analysis, comparison/contrast, and persuasion, thesis statement development, transition use, outlining, and basic research tools. Students who have practiced these skills as well as those who understand and practice formal grammar rules are generally more than ready to tackle any college writing requirements.

However, courses that only cover mechanical skills as grammar and spelling do not necessarily prepare students for college writing. A student who knows every grammar rule and who spells perfectly may still be unable to pass an essay placement test. While the ability to use standard written English is still expected, grammar drills generally do not improve expository writing.

## Reading and Writing Skills

English 088 and 090 enable students to develop and improve their reading and study skills. English 089 and 091 focus on writing skills from the composition of grammatically correct sentences to thoughtfully developed paragraphs and five-hundred-word themes. The skills that students acquire in each course are sequential and complementary, building through practice to exit level from each course. Students generally take English 088 and English 089 in the same semester and English 090 and English 091 in the same semester. Other combinations are possible, however, depending on a variety of factors such as skill level and course load.

Enrollment in developmental English courses is required if placement testing so indicates, and students must complete both reading and study skills and writing components to achieve eligibility for English 101, a common prerequisite for many transfer and technical-level courses at Richland Community College.

### **At the completion of English 088, students should be able to:**

- comprehend what is read with 70% or above accuracy
- recall information in sequential order
- summarize in one's own words what has been read
- identify the main idea
- sort out the major and minor details of a narrative
- predict outcomes
- predict what a text is about before reading it
- be able to test at the sixth grade reading level or above as measured by the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test

### **At the completion of English 089, students should be able to:**

- write sentences that are free of most mechanical errors
- develop topic sentences suitable for short paragraphs
- develop outlines from which to compose paragraphs
- write paragraphs that are carefully developed in about ten to fifteen sentences
- make formal language choices appropriate for academic writing
- revise paragraphs in both content and mechanics areas with or without instructor's suggestions
- avoid errors in subject-verb agreement and in verb tenses
- avoid basic sentence faults of fragments, comma splices, run-on sentences
- be able to punctuate sentence endings, series, and possessives

### **At the completion of English 090, students should be able to:**

- build on those skills listed for English 088
- increase vocabulary with at least five new words a week
- use structural analysis in vocabulary development
- utilize the PQRST Study Technique
- improve spelling skills
- improve critical comprehension skills: to make inferences, to distinguish facts from opinions, to perceive the author's intent, to recognize the seven devices of propaganda, to recognize the author's tone
- utilize the Cornell System of note taking
- appreciate various kinds of reading materials
- improve management of time
- test at the ninth grade reading level or above as measured by the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test

**At the completion of English 091, students should be able to:**

- build on those skills listed for English 089
- understand the writing process of prewriting, writing, and revising
- create outlines from which to create paragraphs and essays
- write sentences usually free of serious mechanical errors and paragraphs that are clearly organized, logical, and well-developed
- write short essays (400-500 words) with basic organization and logical content
- develop proficiency with paragraphs, considering the following qualities: organization, unity, coherence and continuity, development with specific examples, impact, and interest
- develop proficiency with short essays, considering the following qualities: appropriate divided or undivided thesis, development of supporting sub-topics, coherence and continuity of sentences and paragraphs, unity of idea and purpose, logic of content, originality or appropriateness of approach, appropriateness of diction, appropriateness of first or third person
- avoid errors in pronoun reference and agreement
- correctly punctuate clause connections and quotations
- use appropriate vocabulary and sentence structure for the needs of the given writing
- use and maintain first and third person pronouns appropriately

**Accuplacer Sentence Skills Test**

The Sentence Skills Test evaluates a student's knowledge of standard written English skills using two types of questions. The first type is sentence correction questions, which require an understanding of sentence structure. These questions ask students to choose the most appropriate word or phrase to substitute for the underlined portion of the sentence. The second type is construction shift questions. These ask that a sentence be rewritten according to the criteria shown while maintaining essentially the same meaning as the original sentence.

Within these two primary categories, the questions are also classified according to the skills being tested. Some questions deal with the logic of the sentence, others with whether or not the answer is a complete sentence, and still others with the relationship between coordination and subordination.

These questions include topics in social sciences, natural and physical sciences, human relations and practical affairs, and the arts.

Sample Questions:

1. Mary and I made several changes in our travel plans, we decided to go to Louisville, Kentucky, instead of Cincinnati, Ohio.
  - a. travel plans, we decided to go
  - b. travel plans; we decided to go
  - c. travel plans we decided to go
  - d. travel plans. Deciding to go
2. Randolph followed the teacher's instructions before he stopped working on the project for the afternoon.
  - a. instructions before he stopped
  - b. instructions. Before he stopped
  - c. instructions; before he stopped
  - d. instructions, before he stopped

3. After graduating from high school, the teachers remembered the positive attitude that Lolita always had in class.
- After graduating from high school, the teachers remembered the positive attitude that Lolita always had in class.
  - After graduating from high school, the teachers remembered the positive attitude that Lolita had in class.
  - After high school graduation, the teachers remembered the positive attitude that Lolita always had in class.
  - After Lolita graduated from high school, the teachers remembered the positive attitude that she always had in class.
4. The study of architecture is included in Richland’s general humanities class, and the teacher often requires visits to local historical buildings.

If the sentence began with “Because the study of architecture...” the sentence would include which of the following?

- class, and the teacher
  - class, the teacher
  - class, required by the teacher to visit
  - class, the teacher requiring
5. Parasites are found in all areas of the world, so people spending time outdoors must take precautions.

If the sentence began “People spending time outdoors must take precautions...”, which of the following phrase would also be included?

- finding in all areas of the world
  - because parasites in all areas
  - because parasites are found
  - finding parasites in all areas
6. Computer literacy is a new expectation that colleges and universities have for incoming students.

If the sentence began “Colleges and universities have developed....”, the sentence would continue

- a new expectation about computer literacy for incoming students
- for new students computer literacy as a new expectation
- computer literacy as a new expectation for incoming students
- incoming students’ new expectation about computer literacy

Answers:

1. B; 2. A; 3. D; 4. B; 5. C; 6. A

## Sample Essays

The following essays are sample placement essays with some details changed to preserve anonymity. “Amy’s Essay” will place Amy in English 101. “Chip’s Essay” will place Chip in English 090/091, and “Fred’s Essay” will place Fred in English 088/089.

### Amy’s Essay

I went to Greenview schools for thirteen years, including four years of high school. Greenview is a small town in the country. The high school consists of about two hundred and fifty students and has a 98% graduation rate. There is a teaching staff of about twenty teachers. Despite the safety, small classes, and spirit of Greenview High School, it is not a good place to send children because there is only one race of people, there are not many sports offered, and it does not prepare students for college.

Amy has carefully constructed an analytic thesis statement, detailing both the good points and bad ones about Greenview she is going to discuss.

Greenview does have good aspects. It is a safe school, free from gangs, guns and violence. There are no i.d. cards for students to wear; everyone knows everyone. There are security guards, security cameras, fences, or locked doors needed to protect the students. There is no way to prevent some drugs from entering the school or to prevent an occasional fight from happening, but the principal, Bob Shields, is strict when it comes to discipline. The class sizes at Greenview High School range from middle-sized to very small. An English class usually has fifteen to twenty-five students, while a speech class may only have six students. Greenview schools have and show a lot of spirit in who they are and what they stand for. The past four years have resulted in Greenview’s basketball team playing in the state playoffs. The mothers of all the athletes in Greenview are highly supportive. They sometimes help the cheerleaders to decorate the town with streamers and paint before a game. Sometimes they paint empty milk jugs and fill them with rocks to make a great noisemaker. The parents are also very supportive of any fundraisers the kids have.

The next paragraph’s topic sentence follows her thesis.

Although Greenview does have some good aspects, it is not a very good place to send your children. One reason this is true is because there is only one race of people in town. White is the only race of people in Greenview and some of the old, hypocritical “church” people will do anything to keep it that way. A couple of years ago, a non-white family moved to town briefly and tried to open a hardware store. The people in town stopped going to that store and eventually chased those people out of town. How are children supposed to grow and learn to live with other races in peace with the examples that the town of Greeview gives? Most black people that have moved into Greenview with kids have moved out within a year. That is no way to teach children to live. Students that graduate from Greenview High School and move on to college with other races tend to be racist and afraid to communicate with other races.

Conscientious use of transition, then restatement of first reason of main point of her thesis.

Another reason Greenview is not the right place to send your children is because the high school does not provide enough sports. Greenview offers: football, boys’ and girls’ basketball, girls’ volleyball, and boy’s and girls’

Again, careful transition, though many of us might

track. Most bigger city schools offer soccer, baseball, swimming, golf, bowling, and many other sports as well. Greenview does not have the coaching staff, money, or space to provide even one of these extra sports. This puts kids at a great disadvantage because they do not have the chance to try new things, and hence, may never find all of their strong points. It also makes it harder for a child to receive sports scholarships or to ever get the chance to play on a college team.

well argue with Amy's knowledge of life outside of Greenview.

The most important reason you should not enroll your student at Greenview High School is because it will not prepare them for college. Although Greenview has high graduation rate and offers a small variety of classes, it does not prepare a child for college. Freshmen classes at a community college far excel any homework or test expectations a new student may have. I learned as I entered college that I was at a disadvantage in my classes. I had not been taught in high school a lot of the material that professors in biology and English said should have been "review", nor had I been instructed in high school world history or government classes to read many of the books mentioned in the first days of a political science class. I have had to struggle to adapt to his new life of homework, tests, and note taking in college. I have had to dedicate a lot of my time to studying, just to pass.

Amy points out the least-to-most-important-point structuring of her thesis.

Even though it is a spirited high school with small classes and guaranteed safety, Greenview has only one race of people, does not offer many sports, and does not prepare a child for college. Greenview High School is not a good place to send your child. Children should be working hard to prepare for college so that they will not be at a disadvantage. They should be practicing social skills to help them out in their upcoming adult life. They should not be living in a small, racist town.

Rather mechanical restatement, but it does remind the reader that she covered positive points before her three main objections to Greenview.

Amy's essay is actually one that was written in the early weeks of an English 101 class rather than for placement, but while a little more sophisticated and better structured, it reflects the same kind of writing from personal experience that characterizes the placement essay prompts. This, in fact, may have been a revision of a diagnostic essay prompt.

It's obviously an A paper, just as Chip's and Fred's essays that follow are C and F essays respectively. Lest you think grades are assigned by this method in class, I should hasten to point out that the student's names have been changed and associated with these essays in an easily memorable way.

There may be an additional worry, though not on the part of any English teacher accustomed to dealing with the charge, that content may have influenced grading. Politically correct Amy's paper is privileged while aggressively rural Fred has been assigned to developmental classes. But there is no urban school bias here in that a check of records reveals that Amy still lives in her small town, while both Chip and Fred live within Decatur's city limits.

Amy's essay is not free of error, but exhibits some complexity of both structure and thought. Amy is a writer who will work on style and development in her composition class, and who will need to spend only minimal time reviewing mechanics or grammar.

## Chip's Essay

A material possession that I have that has changed my life has been my car. There has been three ways my car changed my life. The first is that I have been helpful to my mother. The second is that my social status has risen to new heights. The third is that it allows me to see more of Illinois.

There is an attempt here to write an analytic thesis statement, even though ponderous and with a subject-verb problem.

There are numerous ways that I have been helpful to my mother. When she would get off work late, I would take my sister to ballet class. I would also run to the store for her. The most common bit of help I could give my mother was a ride when her van was not running. These were little ways I could help my mother.

Both topic sentence and conclusion in this paragraph, though it may not merit it.

My social status has changed rapidly. I went from being cute, mild-mannered person to be a straight-up party animal. My car has gotten my friends and myself introduced to more girls than I can name. Girls are asking me out. The things this car did for my high school life was amazing. The biggest change it gave me was attracting my wife with it. We dated before I had the car, but when we got back together after I got the car, she loved it.

The misuse of the reflexive pronoun here is probably a generational tag and irremediable.

The way I travel around this state of ours has gotten crazy. My first trip on the highway with my car was to Springfield. It was great. The mall there was fantastic. I've now been to Peoria to see the campus of Bradley University. They had a great basketball program. I also went to Monmouth to visit Monmouth College. The football coach was really cool. Rockford was one of my favorite drives because I got to see my cousin Helen. She was visiting all the way from Minneapolis.

This paragraph shows Chip's best use of concrete detail to illustrate a generalization.

I can't help but feel like Forest Gump because of all the things I've seen and done and all the people I've helped. I guess when you get a car, that's what happens. I'm glad it happened and I would never change it for anything. At this point, life is good, but with my car, it's even better.

Students attempt few enough allusions, that I suspect we have to be grateful for them whatever form they take.

While Chip has worked to establish paragraphs to follow his main idea, he has a weak thesis because it is developed in several sentences in the introduction, not just in one clear statement.

He also needs work on paragraph development, generally helped by using an outline, transitions and sentence structure.

Chip would benefit from English 091's focus on all of these writing skills as well as a review of mechanics and grammar.

## Fred's Essay

Most people have lived in the same city most of their lives, but some people haven't. In some cases people's lives evolve around the environment in which they live.

The environment in which my family lives now, is a rural country area. My family has lived their most of my life. It has had great impact on my life, when I was younger I lived in the city. The city had such a devastating effect on me, it made me meaner and more hateful. The rural area made me more calmer and gentler person. The environment in which we live has a control over you in the way you get.

The rural environment has had major control over my personality. It has taught me a lot of things about nature and the life they play with the environment. It has taught me to be kinder and more gentle person, because the atmosphere is so different in a rural area. It has taught me also to be a more helpful and caring person, not like the city which is mostly greed and hate. The rural area has changed my whole outlook on life, and things surrounding it.

The rural area in which my family lives now will have great and far reaching effects on our lives for years to come. I think the environment in which I live now will have such a great impact on my life and personality for years to come.

Fred has learned that he needs a topic sentence at the end of the first paragraph.

He seems to attempt new topic sentences for each succeeding paragraph, but they are obviously a repetition of the same generalization.

Again, Fred has learned enough to know that he needs a conclusion.

While no typescript can do justice to Fred's paper, it has been accurately transcribed. According to the test proctor's note, Fred took the entire hour allowed for the placement essay and his paper shows some sign of revision. On a simple level he has changed the "mad" of the second paragraph into "made" in the next sentence; "person" was added later to the end of that sentence.

On the most basic level, Fred needs to learn sentence structure, grammar, and punctuation. Beyond this, more subtle skills in pronoun reference, consistency, and coherence need work.

Fred is a student who will benefit from the emphasis on paragraph development in English 089 and the expansion of his usable vocabulary in English 088. In many ways, his writing here would be much stronger if he understood the difference between a generalization and supporting detail.

## Offices

Do you still have questions about Richland mathematics, English and reading courses? Contact the following offices for more information:

Assessment Services – Room W124 – Phone 217-875-7200, Ext. 238

Placement exams are administered in this room by appointment. Schedule approximately two hours to complete all exams. Specific questions about the exams are also answered in this office.

Disability Accommodation Services – Room N131 – Phone 217-875-7200, Ext. 379

After individuals provide appropriate documentation of a disability, this office will arrange for placement testing accommodations. These arrangements must be made before scheduling the exams in order for appropriate evaluation to occur.

Student Learning Center

Reading and Writing – Room S118 – Phone 217-875-7200, Ext. 419

Math, Science – Room S116 – Phone 217-875-7200, Ext. 417

Mathematics, English, and reading professional tutors are available to assist in course work. Appointments or walk-in service is available.

Student Development and Services – Room C129 – Phone 217-875-7200, Ext. 267

Counselors and advisors are available to discuss program and course requirements, transfer information, and career planning.

Arts and Sciences – Room S219 – Phone 217-875-7200, Ext. 432

Faculty in math are available to discuss course and program requirements. Also included in this department are nursing, allied health, engineering, biology, chemistry, physics, earth science, psychology, sociology and surgical technology.

Arts and Sciences – Room C162 – Phone 217-875-7200, Ext. 344

Faculty in English and reading are available to discuss course and program requirements. Also included in this department are business/accounting, foreign language, speech and theater, history, philosophy.