

PLACEMENT TESTING

Placement tests are an important element in helping you and your advisor select courses for your first semester at UMBC.

Freshman and Transfer Testing

All freshmen are required to take placement tests prior to their orientation to determine writing, mathematics, and reading abilities. The results will be available during academic advising on your **Course Selection Day**.

Transfer students are not required to take the reading placement test. Transfer students who have completed a prerequisite course in mathematics and English composition are not required to take the UMBC placement tests. However, transfer students who have not completed a prerequisite course in these disciplines with a grade of “C” or better must complete the appropriate placement test(s). **Transfer students are strongly encouraged to take the mathematics test to ensure that their skills are current.**

More specific information concerning the mathematics and English composition placement tests along with sample questions is included. The Reading Test is described as well; a practice test is available once you access the actual online placement test.

Two of the placement tests are timed: the English test is 40 minutes and the mathematics test could be 60-90 minutes. Although untimed, the reading test requires about 60 minutes to complete.

Students with a disability may receive testing accommodations after their documentation has been received and evaluated by the Office of Student Support Services, 410-455-3250.

English Composition Placement Essay

As an entering UMBC student, you must write an English Composition Placement Essay. Your score on this essay determines your placement in an English Composition course. Because the university cannot administer the Composition Placement Essay more than once to the same student, the score and placement decision are not subject to appeal. Therefore, you need to demonstrate your writing strengths in this essay.

When you take the Composition Placement Test, you will be asked to write an academic essay similar to one of the prompts below. You will have 40 minutes to write your essay. A discussion of what the essay graders will be looking for is provided in the course descriptions following the prompts.

Sample Essay Prompts

I. Should students’ words and actions be subject to censorship on their college campus? In other words, do college students have the “right” to say and do whatever they want in various settings such as the college newspaper, a student gathering, a classroom, an activity poster, etc? When writing your argument, consider this statement from the *UMBC Student Handbook*:

COMMUNITY STANDARDS

Respect for the rights of others

It is expected that all members of the community will treat others with respect. Students will be held responsible for behavior that infringes on the individual rights and autonomy of others. In particular, UMBC views seriously any action against another person or organization based on their race, religion, age, national origin, gender, or sexual orientation.

2. Modern technology has radically changed how individuals live as well as how the larger world operates. If you had to give up one item of modern technology (consider anything from the internal combustion engine to today's cellular phones), what would it be? Why would that be your choice? How would the absence of that technology affect your life and the way the world operates?

3. What book (or any piece of writing) has had a strong impact on you or has influenced you in some way? The impact could be positive or negative. Identify the work and then explain the nature of its impact on you. In developing your essay, you might consider this quotation about literature from writer X. J. Kennedy:

“Literature is nothing more than the study of life. In some works of literary fiction, we see more deeply into the minds and hearts of the characters than we ever see into those of our family, our close friends—or even ourselves.”

4. Think about the adults who have influenced you, and then choose one to focus on. This adult could be a famous person about whom you have read or heard, a person who became a mentor to you in some capacity, a teacher you have never forgotten, a coach of a school or community team, etc. In your essay, identify this adult and then explain his or her influence on you. Also describe the person in terms of his or her attitudes, actions, and qualities that have resulted in this influence.

5. In 1963, former British prime minister Harold Macmillan said this about the younger generation of that time: “It is thinking about themselves that is really the curse of the younger generation—they appear to have no other subject which interests them at all.” This statement is sometimes made today about the current younger generation, those of you in your late teens and early twenties. Do you agree or disagree with this comment? Define the current younger generation by identifying and discussing its values and characteristics. Give examples to support your views.

6. A journalist, Godfrey Smith, wrote these words in a letter to his new grandchild: “In a world full of audio-visual marvels, may words matter to you and be full of magic.” What words—a specific sentence or two from a novel, a poem, an essay, a speech, or the entire work—have affected you in a significant way? How did these words contain “magic” for you? Quote or paraphrase the words, identify the work, and briefly describe the work for your reader. Then discuss the impact of these words on you.

English Composition Courses

Your placement essay score will designate one of the following courses:

ENGLISH 100 – 3 Credits

Students placed in English 100 have written a developed, thoughtful, focused and clear essay. There are no significant weaknesses in the student's writing. English 100 (or its approved substitutes) is a graduation requirement.

ENGLISH 100A – 4 Credits

Students placed in English 100A create an essay with a focus but have demonstrated writing weaknesses in one or two of these areas:

- grammar, usage and mechanics
- organization
- generation of content

English 100A fulfills the English 100 graduation requirement.

ENGLISH 99 – 4 Institutional Credits

Students placed in English 99 typically have demonstrated writing weaknesses in a number of the following areas:

- essay organization
- vocabulary
- paragraph organization
- grammar, usage and mechanics
- unifying thesis or focus idea
- syntax
- generation of content

In some cases, these single problems warrant an English 99 placement:

- extremely poor organization and/or lack of focus
- a combination of weak writing mechanics and flawed syntax

Upon satisfactory completion of English 99, students placed there must then take English 100A or 100.

ENGLISH 110 – 3 Credits

For non-native speakers of English, English 110 is otherwise comparable to English 100 and fulfills the graduation requirement.

ELC 041/042 and 051/052

These classes are for non-native speakers of English with significant problems in writing the English language. Upon satisfactory completion of 051/052, a student must then take English 110 to fulfill the graduation requirement.

The UMBC Reading Test

The UMBC Reading Test is required of all new freshmen. The Reading Test is designed to assess your vocabulary and comprehension abilities, and takes approximately 60 minutes. The test is composed of six reading passages, each with six questions. These questions are a combination of vocabulary within context and critical reading applications. A percentage score is calculated upon completion of the test. On **Course Selection Day**, an academic advisor will discuss your score to assist you with selecting your first semester course load and/or the combination of courses you will register for.

The advisor may also recommend that you enroll in LRC 100: Introduction to College Reading or in LRC 101: Academic Success for Lifelong Learning. The choice is yours. Many new freshmen who have elected to enroll in one of these courses have commented on how helpful they were in making a successful transition from high school course work to university study.

Mathematics Placement

The UMBC Mathematics Placement Test was prepared by the Mathematics Association of America. The test is designed to assess your current level of mathematical skill as it relates to a variety of courses at UMBC. The entire test takes 90 minutes. **Students are not permitted to use a calculator.**

The test consists of two parts, Part I – Algebra Test and Part II – Calculus Readiness Test. The Algebra Test is required of all students who are taking the Mathematics Placement Test; the Calculus Readiness Test is required of only those students who want to place into a calculus course. There are 32 multiple-choice questions on the Algebra Test and 25 multiple-choice questions on the Calculus Readiness Test.

Sample Algebra Test

The questions on the Sample Algebra Test are similar to the questions on the Algebra Placement Test in format and the level of difficulty. However, not all of the topics or types of questions that are on the Algebra Placement Test are included on the Sample Algebra Test.

Topics on the Algebra Portion of the Mathematics Placement Test:

- Arithmetic of rational numbers
- Operations with algebraic expressions
- Linear equations and inequalities
- Factoring and algebraic functions
- Exponents and radicals
- Graphing and distance
- Fractional and quadratic equations
- Inequalities
- Absolute values
- Systems of equations

1. $(xy^3)^2 =$

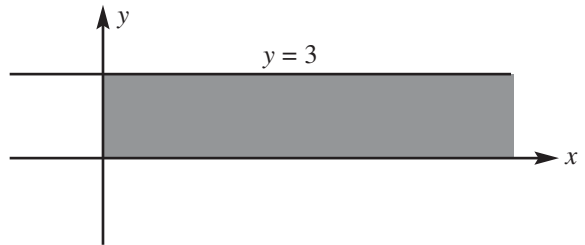
- (a) x^2y^3 (b) x^2y^6 (c) $(xy)^6$ (d) x^2y^5 (e) $(xy)^5$
-

2. $\sqrt{3}(\sqrt{3} + 2) =$

- (a) $9 + 2\sqrt{3}$ (b) 5 (c) $3 + 2\sqrt{3}$ (d) $\sqrt{3} + 2\sqrt{3}$ (e) 11
-

3. The shaded area (including the boundary) represents the graph of which of the following sets of inequalities?

- (a) $x \leq 3$ and $y \leq 3$
(b) $x \leq 3$ and $y \geq 0$
(c) $0 \leq x \leq 3$ and $y \geq 0$
(d) $y \leq 3$ and $x \geq 0$
(e) $0 \leq y \leq 3$ and $x \geq 0$



4. $\frac{x-3}{8} - \frac{7}{4} = \frac{5}{8}$ has a solution of

- (a) -12 (b) -6 (c) 15 (d) 16 (e) 22
-

5. If $x^2 + 2x = 3$, then x could equal

- (a) -3 (b) -2 (c) -1 (d) 0 (e) 3
-

6. $x^3(2x^2 + 4x) =$

- (a) $2x + 4x^4$ (b) $2x^6 + 4x^3$ (c) $2x^5 + 4x^4$ (d) $2x + 4x$ (e) $2x^5 + 4x^4$
-

7. When factored, $y^2 - 7y + 12 =$

- (a) $y(y - 7) + 12$ (b) $y(y - 7) + 5$ (c) $(y + 2)(y + 6)$ (d) $(y + 3)(y + 4)$ (e) $(y - 3)(y - 4)$
-

8. $\frac{x}{5y} \div \frac{2x}{3y} =$

- (a) $\frac{3}{10}$ (b) $\frac{2x^2}{15y^2}$ (c) $\frac{x}{15y}$ (d) $\frac{10}{3}$ (e) $\frac{x+3y}{2x+5y}$
-

9. If $f(x) = \frac{x+3}{5-x}$, then $f(a+4) =$

- (a) $\frac{a+7}{1-a}$ (b) $\frac{a+7}{9-a}$ (c) $\frac{38-6a}{5-a}$ (d) $\frac{23-3a}{5-a}$ (e) $\frac{a+7}{5-a}$
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10. Which are factors of $x^2 - 3x + 2$?

- (I) $x + 1$ (II) $x - 2$ (III) $x - 3$

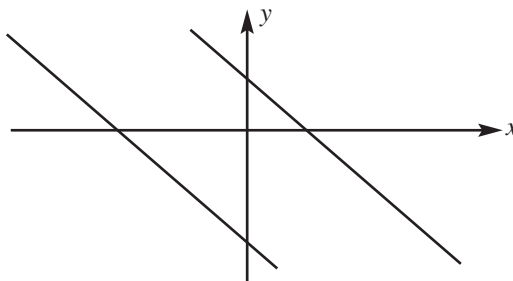
- (a) I only (b) II only (c) III only (d) I and II only (e) II and III only
-

11. $(32)^{2/5} + (16)^{1/4} =$

- (a) $(48)^{1/10}$ (b) 4 (c) 6 (d) 8 (e) $\frac{84}{5}$
-

12. The two parallel lines represent the graphs of which of the following pair of equations?

- (a) $x - 2y = 3$ and $x - 2y = 7$
(b) $x + y = 1$ and $x + y = -2$
(c) $x + y = 3$ and $2x + 2y = 6$
(d) $x + y = 3$ and $x - y = 5$
(e) $x - y = 7$ and $x - y = 14$



13. For any x , $|x - 7| =$

- (a) $x - 7$ (b) $|7 - x|$ (c) $|x + 7|$ (d) $-x - 7$ (e) $|(x + 7)|$
-

14. $\log_6 4 + \log_6 9 =$

- (a) 2 (b) $\log_6 13$ (c) $\frac{13}{6}$ (d) 78 (e) $\log_6 \left(\frac{4}{9}\right)$
-

Answers to Sample Algebra Test: 1b, 2c, 3e, 4e, 5a, 6a, 7e, 8a, 9a, 10b, 11c, 12b, 13b, 14a

Sample Calculus Readiness Test

The questions on the Sample Calculus Readiness Test are similar to the questions on the Calculus Readiness Test in format and the level of difficulty. However, not all of the topics or types of questions that are on the Calculus Readiness Test are included on the Sample Calculus Readiness Test.

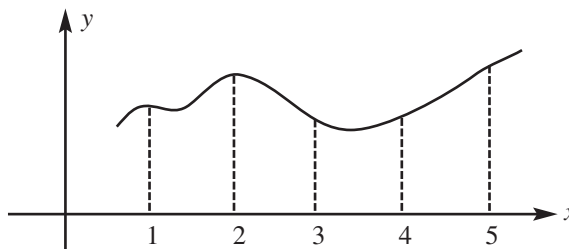
Topics on the Calculus Readiness Portion of the Mathematics Placement Test:

- | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| • Geometry and measurement | • Functional notation | • Exponential functions |
| • Word problems and modeling | • Absolute value | • Equations and factoring |
| • Numerical awareness | • Graphs of functions | • Inequalities |
| • Exponents and logarithms | • Concept formation | • Trigonometry |

1. Definition: A function is *increasing* on the interval $[a, b]$ if and only if $f(x_1) < f(x_2)$ whenever $x_1 < x_2$, where x_1 and x_2 are any numbers in $[a, b]$.

The function f , pictured in the graph on the right, is increasing on the interval

- (a) $[1, 2]$ (b) $[2, 3]$ (c) $[3, 4]$
 (d) $[4, 5]$ (e) none of these

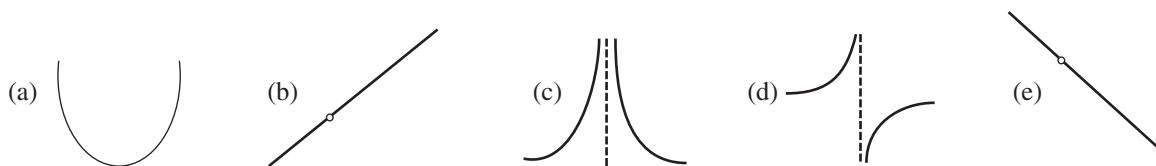


2. Given a rectangle with sides of length x and width y . Suppose the length x is doubled and the width y is halved.

The new perimeter is

- (a) $4x + y$ (b) $(2x)\left(\frac{y}{2}\right)$ (c) $2x + \frac{y}{2}$ (d) $x^2 + y$ (e) $x^2 + \frac{y}{2}$

3. Which of these curves best resembles the graph of $f(x) = \frac{(x-2)(x+3)}{(x+3)}$



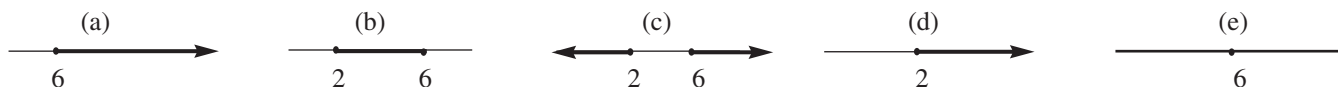
4. If $F(x-2) = \frac{x+3}{x-4}$, then $F(5) =$

- (a) -6 (b) $\frac{10}{3}$ (c) 5 (d) $\frac{23}{4}$ (e) 8

5. If $\log_2 16 = 8 \cdot 2^{-x}$, then $x =$

- (a) -7 (b) $-\frac{4}{3}$ (c) -1 (d) $-\frac{2}{3}$ (e) 1

6. The graph representing $|x - 4| \geq 2$ is



7. Which of these choices best describes the alteration made to the graph of the sine curve, $f(x) = \sin x$, for $-\pi \leq x \leq \pi$?

- (a) The amplitude of the graph was doubled.
 (b) The graph was shifted to the left π units.
 (c) The period of the graph was decreased to π units.
 (d) The graph was reflected about the x -axis.
 (e) The graph was shifted up 1 unit.

