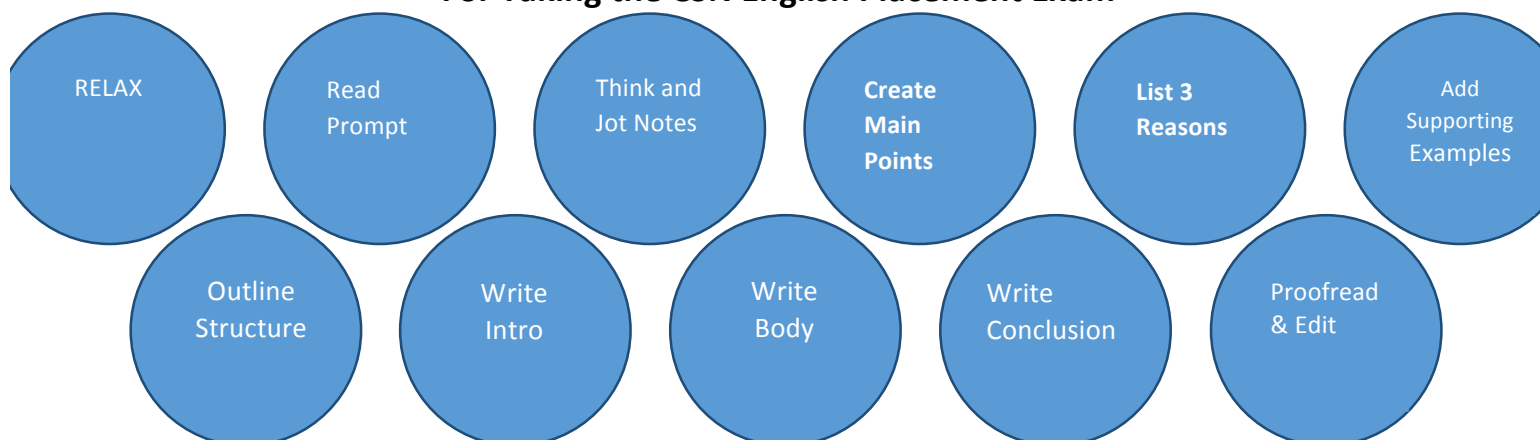


11 Easy Steps

For Taking the CSN English Placement Exam



1. **Relax:** Being a little nervous before any exam is normal and will give you energy for the exam; however, being extremely nervous will impact your test-taking skills. See the separate handout: “How To Keep Calm During Tests” created by the University of Texas, Austin. It will help you understand your nervousness and give you suggestions on how to relax.

2. **Carefully Read The Topic Paragraph:** At the testing center carefully read the topic paragraph provided on the computer. Then read it again and write down your topic on the scratch paper that will be provided. Don’t rush. You have as much time as you need or until the testing center closes.

TIP: Write down what you think the paragraph is asking you to decide. Example: Should kids be required to play sports in school?

3. **Review The Topic And Add Notes:** Understanding the essay topic is important. Additionally, when you are nervous you may misunderstand the topic on the first or second reading. Read the topic paragraph again and jot down what you know about the topic.

Sports are good. Mental health is good too. Makes better people.

Make Kids Healthy. Lose weight

Gain Confidence Learn teamwork. Build social skills

Notes can be messy.

4. **Create Main Points:** The essay topic is designed for students to take a stand on an issue which will become your main point/thesis; therefore, you must take the initial step by creating a thesis statement. For example, if your topic is, “**Should students be required to participate in organized sports?**” Your stand should be for or against which will lead to developing your thesis statement. For example, your thesis could be something like this:

Students should be required to participate in organized sports. Or: Students should not be required to participate in organized sports.

5. **List At Least Three Reasons Why Your Main Point May Be True:** These reasons are the support/arguments for your thesis which will make your thesis stronger. Using the thesis above, below is an example of how you would add your reasons to your thesis:

Students should be required to participate in organized sports because sports activities will make students healthier, build social skills, and students will develop teamwork skills.

6. **Add Examples To Your Reasons:** In academic writing, professors require students to think and write analytically. Reasoning with examples is a large part of analytical thinking. For example, by using the reason, “Organized sports will make students healthier,” you could give examples that participating in sports controls weight, builds muscles, and conditions the cardio vascular system.

7. **Outline A Solid Essay Structure:** Once you have thought out your essay topic and taken adequate notes, the next step to take is to think about structure. The best way to structure a 300 to 500 word essay exam is to use the five paragraph essay format as explained below.

8. **Create An Introduction Paragraph:** An introduction paragraph states what you are going to prove in your essay. It consists of general statements about your topic, then it narrows to your thesis statement. For example, using the above topic about sports, your general statements might be:

In today's society, people seem addicted to watching television and are not physically active. Some children watch six hours of TV and have little to no physical activity in their lives. Unfortunately, a sedentary life may lead to physical problems, reclusive behavior and the inability to interact with others. **Therefore, students should be required to participate in organized sports because doing so will make individuals healthier, socialize better, and learn how to work with others.** (Thesis statement is in bold.)

9. **Create Body Paragraphs:** Body paragraphs should develop your reasons by using examples and support your thesis. Each body paragraph should begin with a topic sentence stating a reason, with examples that follow. If you were to write the underlined thesis above, then your first topic sentence might be:

Children should be required to participate in organized sports because they will be healthier.

Then continue on with your reasons in this paragraph. For example, ask yourself how or why would children become healthier through organized sports? After you develop your first body paragraph, begin a new paragraph with a topic sentence and make your next point. For example:

Also, students who are active in organized sports will learn to socialize with others.

With this topic sentence you might give examples about how sports develop social skills such as learning to communicate.

10. **Create A Conclusion Paragraph:** A conclusion paragraph sums up what you have written in your essay. It consists of a reworded thesis statement then broadens to general wrap up statements. For example:

Although students develop in many different ways, they should be required to participate in organized sports because it develops many skills, makes them healthier, and can be fun and exciting. Some may argue that sports create hostile environments; however, if organized in the proper way, not only children but adults may benefit from involvements in athletics.

11. **Edit Your Essay:** After writing your essay on the computer, take time to edit your work. The best way to edit is to read the essay quietly to yourself. At this point you may want to add more examples to your essay or reword awkward sentences. By reading aloud, you will "hear" errors, and you should correct them. Then read your essay AGAIN to find any remaining errors that you may have missed. Remember: Revising is a part of writing.

SUGGESTION: Take A Practice Exam: Before taking the exam, the CSN Writing Center will provide you with a sample topic and guide you through the steps.

QUESTIONS:

IS THE EXAM TIMED? The Essay Placement Exam is NOT timed. You have as long as you need; however, you should ask what time the office closes before beginning the exam.

WHAT DO I NEED? You need a photo ID, pen or pencil, and your NSHE #.

MAY I TAKE THE TEST AGAIN? You may take the exam again; however, there are rules so check with the testing center before you take the exam.

HOW IS THE EXAM SCORED? You cannot "flunk" the exam. The essay is "scored" on your ability to write a coherent and thoughtful academic essay. The scores range from 1 -8 and reflect what English course is best for you based on your demonstrated writing ability. You do not want to pay for a class you do not need, nor do you want to pay for a class that is too frustrating for you to pass. **For more preparation material, including video tutorials, visit csn.edu/english/**