

# MTC Writing Placement (WSAMP)

## Overview & FAQs

### ***1) Are all students entering MTC required to take placement tests?***

According to MTC's Academic Policies and Requirements (found online at <http://www.midlandstech.edu/catalog/catalog2006-2008/placetesting.htm>):

Applicants for curriculum programs must be tested for course placement unless exempted. Exemptions are granted if one of the following criteria is met:

1. the applicant has earned a grade of "C" or better in appropriate college-level English and mathematics courses taken at a regionally accredited college or university;
2. the applicant has earned advanced placement credit for English and mathematics on CLEP and/or AP exams that are recognized by the college;
3. the applicant has taken the Midlands Technical College Placement Test (COMPASS, ASSET or equivalent) within the previous three years;
4. the applicant plans to enter certain certificate programs that do not require placement testing;
5. the applicant has earned a two-year degree or higher from a regionally accredited college or university (this exemption may not apply to some academic programs); or
6. the applicant is not pursuing an academic award and desires to be admitted to take a specific course(s) under the Career Development status. The applicant must have met course prerequisites. English and mathematics courses, or courses with English and mathematics prerequisites, require demonstrated proficiency in English and mathematics skills and may require testing if acceptable prerequisite courses have not been completed. Students not pursuing degrees, diplomas or certificates are limited to 18 semester hours in Career Development status, unless this limit is waived by the academic department chair.

### ***2) What is MTC's WSAMP Placement Test?***

MTC's WSAMP (short for "Writing Sample") is an in-house writing placement test that bases student placement in development or college-level writing courses on actual student writing.

Students are given a cover sheet for their WSAMP which contains a choice of two essay topics. In most circumstances students can take as much time as they need to complete the writing of a full essay based on the topic that they choose from the options provided.

Topics are typically argument-based topics—that is, they pose a question on a controversial issue or local, regional, or national importance. The issue is one that can be (and has been) debated, and the student writer is asked to take a position on the issue, and to discuss the issue and his/her position in essay form.

WSAMP essays are then scored by two-three different placement readers. Our placement readers are professional and experienced MTC instructors (with at least Master's degrees) who are familiar both with our courses and with our student populations.

Once the WSAMP has been scored, the scores are entered into the student's online records and made available for use by students and advisors for course placement purposes.

***Why does MTC have its own in-house writing placement test? Why not use COMPASS or ASSET writing scores?*** Both COMPASS and ASSET writing tests are multiple choice tests which ask students general questions related to writing and/or research. But, they are not scores based on a sample of the student's actual writing, and they are not scores that are calibrated to MTC's first-year composition course sequence, as is our WSAMP test.

### ***3) What can I do to prepare for taking MTC's WSAMP test?***

Keep in mind that the purpose of MTC's WSAMP writing placement test, as with any placement test, is to determine your current level of skills for the purposes of placing you in the English writing course that is best suited to your needs.

As such, the best preparation for taking MTC's WSAMP test (or any college's writing placement test) is to work hard in English courses throughout high school, to read widely and richly across a variety of genres (fiction and nonfiction books, newspapers, magazines, credible online sites and sources, etc.), and to take courses that give you practice with analytical essay writing and writing using multiple sources of ideas and information.

More specifically, students who wish to prepare or brush up (if you've been out of school for a while) can do so in a variety of ways:

- Review the WSAMP writing placement scores and criteria found in a separate document on this site to see how WSAMP essays are being scored at different levels and what criteria and characteristics our placement readers are looking for as they score MTC's WSAMP tests.
- Review the basics of good college-level essay writing and structure by visiting an online writing lab such as Purdue University's OWL (<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/685/01/>).
- Read regularly in good online or hard copy newspapers, or go to an online source such as "Issues and Controversies," to review sound pro and con arguments and examples being used to discuss issues currently being debated.
- Bring a sample of your essay writing to one of MTC's Academic Success Centers to review the basics of good essay writing face-to-face with one of MTC's professional writing consultants (tutors).

**4) Once I've taken the WSAMP test, how do I use my placement test scores to determine which English course MTC requires me to start with?**

See placement information for English courses at MTC in the charts below.

<b>COMPASS English Placement Information</b>		
<b>IF COMPASS Reading Score is</b>	<b>AND IF WSAMP Score is</b>	<b>THEN Student enrolls in</b>
Not Applicable	1-10	ENG 032
36-60	20 or 30	No English course until Reading Prerequisite is completed (see #2, below)
61 and above	20	ENG 100
75 or above	20	ENG 100 OR ENG 010*
61-79	30	No English course until Reading Prerequisite is completed (see #2, below)
80 and above	30	ENG 101

<b>ASSET English Placement Information</b>		
<b>IF ASSET Reading Score is</b>	<b>AND IF WSAMP Score is</b>	<b>THEN Student enrolls in</b>
Not Applicable	1-10	ENG 032
30-34	20 or 30	No English course until Reading Prerequisite is completed (see #2, below)
35 and above	20	ENG 100
38 or above	20	ENG 100 OR ENG 010*
35-39	30	No English course until Reading Prerequisite is completed (see #2, below)
40 and above	30	ENG 101

**\*IMPORTANT ENG 010 Notes:**

- ENG 010 is a Fast Track (4-week) version of ENG 100 that is available ONLY to those students with qualifying scores in their first semester of taking English courses at MTC.
- ENG 010 is offered on a space-available basis (limited number of sections).
- Previous data indicates a much higher pass rate amongst students who are taking ENG 010 for the very first time, and in fact in addition to a higher failure rate we have documented several non-academic problems with repeat

010 students as well: behavior issues, tardiness, absences, and an inability to complete the work on a second or third attempt.

- As a result, we do NOT allow students to retake ENG 010. If they are Unsuccessful or Withdraw, we do not allow a second chance.
- In addition, students who have struggled in ENG 100 and then found their way to 010 have similar problems; therefore, students who have attempted and failed or been withdrawn from ENG 100 are also not allowed in ENG 010.

### **5) How do I know what “Reading Prerequisite” courses MTC requires me to take?**

The placement information for all Developmental Studies (DVS) Department Reading courses is provided below:

<b>COMPASS SCORES</b>	
<b>COMPASS Reading Score</b>	<b>Student must enroll in:</b>
36-60	RDG 032
61-79*	RDG 100
80-87*	RDG 101/Curriculum-Level Courses
88-99	Curriculum-Level Courses

<b>ASSET SCORES</b>	
<b>ASSET Reading Score</b>	<b>Student must enroll in:</b>
30-40	RDG 032
35-39*	RDG 100
40-44*	RDG 101

\*RDG 100 or equivalent test scores are required for ALL curriculum level (college-level) courses. However, some programs will allow students to enroll in some of their courses with lower Reading scores. Check individual program requirements for more information.

For more information about MTC’s Reading courses, please contact the Developmental Studies (DVS) Department. Reading courses are taught and administered out of that department.

### **6) May I retake MTC’s WSAMP test?**

According to MTC’s Testing Center FAQs (online at <http://www.midlandstech.edu/edu/sds/sac/faq.html#4>):

Each student is allowed to retest a limited number of times. Students must complete a Retest Request form. A completed form must be submitted to the Testing Center for approval. If granted, a RETEST fee of \$10 per section, maximum of \$20, is due prior to the RETEST. The retest fee should be paid at the Cashier’s Office on either campus. A request is available on line or by contacting the Beltline Campus at (803) 790-7522 or the Airport Campus at (803) 822-3659.