

SUNY College at Old Westbury
Academic Advising Center
NAB 1118A • 516-876-3044

What to Expect When You Take the Online Writing Placement Exam

Arranging the Exam

The Online Writing Placement Exam is by appointment only. To make an appointment to take the Online Writing Exam, please contact Professor Elizabeth Schmermund at schmermunde@oldwestbury.edu with your request to take the exam and your student ID number. Please also note if you have any accommodations for extra time. You may take the exam at your convenience but will first need to be added to the Brightspace exam page, which can take several days.

You will not be in the Brightspace system and will not be able to access the exam if you are a new or transfer student and have not yet registered for at least one class at SUNY Old Westbury.

Accessing the Brightspace Writing Proficiency Exam Page

Within one to two business days, you should be added to the Brightspace exam page. To access the page, you need to log on to Old Westbury Connect and then click on the Brightspace icon. Once in the Brightspace Writing Proficiency Exam page, you can click on "Placement Exam" in the left-hand menu of the page to take your exam.

Please make sure that you have at least one hour to complete your exam before beginning it. *Once you start the exam, you must complete it.* You will be asked to fill out information about you (including your student identification number, name, phone number, email address) prior to beginning the essay.

Communication of Results

Please let Dr. Schmermund know when you have completed taking the exam. Results of the exam will be available approximately two days after the exam is taken and you have notified Dr. Schmermund. You are welcome to contact the professors with any questions you may have.

Difficulties With Brightspace

If you have any trouble connecting to Brightspace, please contact studentIThelp@oldwestbury.edu.

You should also let Dr. Schmermund know that you are experiencing technical difficulties, although she cannot help you with any IT troubleshooting.

The Online Writing Placement Exam

When you take the Online Writing Exam, you will see the following instructions:

Directions:

You will have approximately one hour to complete this essay. Select ONE of the topics from among those provided on the next page and organize and write a multi-paragraph essay. If possible, please find a quiet location where you can concentrate for the duration of the exam. It may be useful to have lined paper and a pen or pencil near you. You can use this to plan and outline your essay before typing in the text box. You may also use a dictionary. Allow yourself 10 to 15 minutes to proofread before submitting your essay.

IMPORTANT: You MUST use at least one quotation from the excerpted source to receive credit. All the information needed for proper documentation is included.

The successful essay will:

- be a minimum of 300 words
- follow essay format (that is, have an introduction, body section, and conclusion)
- have a well-formulated thesis statement
- develop ideas in a detailed, clear, and logical manner
- demonstrate solid knowledge of grammar and sentence structure
- use at least ONE quotation from the source given, with proper quotation, documentation, and Works Cited (References) listing

NOTE that the test requires a well-structured essay using correct grammar and sentence structure. Each of the 4 test questions will consist of an excerpt from published writing (in a book or on the Web). You will have to include at least ONE quotation from this excerpt, in correct format. You will also have to provide a citation for the quotation and—at the end—identification of the source. If you aren't sure of the correct quotation, citation, and source-identification formats, do the best you can.

Take all of the allowed time, and be careful. Plan your essay carefully first—THEN write carefully and leave time to review before finishing. Remember that this test determines your writing placement and may excuse you from otherwise-required courses—so treat it like a final exam.

On the next page, you will see a sample question. You will NOT get this question, but the 4 questions you do get will be in the same format, with the same instructions. Below the sample question is an illustration of how you could integrate a quotation into your essay.

Re-Take Policy: Students are allowed to take this test TWICE in any semester, no less than 14 days apart. You will be provided with a different set of questions for a re-take, which is also available on Brightspace.

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Writing Proficiency Essay

Select **ONE** topic. Read and respond to the quoted excerpt. You may agree, disagree, or partly agree with the view stated. If you wish, you can offer a completely distinct view. Be sure to include at least ONE properly cited quotation from the excerpted article or book. If you're unsure of citation format, do the best you can.

1. There is no such thing as a *neutral* educational process. Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity *or* it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.

From a book by Paulo Freire entitled *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Published in 1970 by Herder and Herder. Page 15.

Beginning of a sample student response showing how you MIGHT integrate a quotation from the excerpt into your essay. Remember that you MUST include at least one quotation AND a Works Cited or References listing:

I believe education means training in the skills needed for today's world, and skills are neutral. They can be applied for good or bad purposes. Therefore, I do not agree with Paulo Freire's idea that "there is no such thing as a *neutral* educational process" (15). An example of neutral skills applied for a good purpose would be....

Works Cited

Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Herder and Herder, 1970.

NOTE: The citation format above is "MLA Style." Any academic format is OK. If you're unsure, do the best you can.

For a review of thesis statement, essay and paragraph structure, citation formats, etc., please consult the links on the Writing Center Resource page, accessible at oldwestbury.edu/academics/support/writing/resources.