



Western Nevada College

Counseling Services

WRITEPLACER ESSAY GUIDELINES

Your Accuplacer scores have qualified you to take a writing sample test to determine if you are eligible for English 101.

The WritePlacer test will give you one topic for your essay. You'll use this topic to write a multi-paragraph essay of about 300-600 words. **There is a two hour time limit** to plan, write, review, and edit what you have written.

The following five characteristics of writing will be evaluated:

- Focus- the clarity with which you maintain your main idea or point of view
- Organization- the clarity with which you structure your response and present a logical sequence of ideas
- Development and support- the extent to which you elaborate on your ideas and the extent to which you present supporting details
- Sentence structure- the effectiveness of your sentence structure
- Mechanical conventions- the extent to which your writing is free of errors

HOW THE TEST IS SCORED

Your writing sample will be scored on a scale of 1 to 8. **A score of '6' or higher will qualify you for English 101.** The test is scored on the basis of how effectively it communicates a whole message to the readers for the stated purpose.

SAMPLE ESSAY

Below is a sample essay that received a score of '8'.

From the 2008 College Board "WritePlacer Guide with Sample Essays" at www.collegeboard.com

Passage: An actor, when his cue came, was unable to move onto the stage. He said, "I can't get in, the chair is in the way." And the producer said, "Use the difficulty. If it's a drama, pick the chair up and smash it. If it's a comedy, fall over it. From this situation the actor concluded that from any situation in life that is negative, there is something positive you can do with it.

Topic: Can any obstacle or disadvantage be turned into something good?

Sample Essay #1- Score of 8

An obstacle or disadvantage may appear to be a setback, though either has the ability to be turned into something good. For instance, Rosa Parks participated in the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 60s and was jailed for her involvement. Though her jail time was initially a setback and an obstacle she had to overcome, it eventually led to the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the gradual desegregation of the United States. Similarly, the Dean of Students at my school has to overcome the obstacle of paraplegia each day, yet he describes himself as a stronger and more sensitive individual as a result. Rosa Parks and my Dean are clear examples of obstacles being turned into something good.

In Montgomery, Alabama during the Civil Rights Movement, African Americans were required to sit in the back of public buses. One day Rosa Parks refused to sit in the back of the bus and was sent to jail for her acts of civil disobedience. This action resonated with African Americans nationwide but particularly in Montgomery. The African American people staged a boycott and contributed to the desegregation which was a goal of their movement. Rosa Parks served as a symbol of what was possible if one would simply take a stand and turn their situation from unjust and degrading to one that made a profound difference in today's society.

The Dean of Students at my school, was an English teacher, a track coach, and the Dean of Students before the roof of his barn collapsed on him a few years ago. He had always been a strong man who genuinely cared for his students. Who respected and loved him. After his accident, he lost the use of his legs and feet and his life drastically changed. He had become unable to care for himself and lost great-amounts of self esteem. He ultimately decided he had to get his life back so he learned how to live independently through physical training courses, he learned to drive a car, and he returned to school. His experience which could have destroyed him and the goals he had actually allowed for him to build strength he never knew he had. Through actions he made a severe disadvantage into a very positive life change.

Through their varying experiences, Rosa Parks and my dean demonstrate that any obstacle or disadvantage can be turned into something good.

-----Annotations-----

This essay demonstrates outstanding critical thinking as it insightfully develops a point of view (*An obstacle or disadvantage may appear to be a setback, though either has the ability to be turned into something good*), supporting it with effective, fully developed examples. Well organized and focused as it shows how people's actions can make "a severe disadvantage into a very positive life change," the response exhibits clear coherence and smooth progression of ideas (*After his accident, he lost the use of his legs and feet and his life drastically changed... His experience which could have destroyed him and the goals he had actually allowed for him to build strength he never knew he had.*) The essay exhibits a skillful use of language, using a varied, accurate, and apt vocabulary (*This action resonated with African Americans nationwide*), and a carried structure appears throughout. Displaying clear and consistent mastery, this essay earns a score of 8.

More information on the WritePlacer test can be found on our web site at:
http://www.wnc.edu/studentservices/counseling/placement_testing.php