



ENGLISH PLACEMENT

Because writing and reading skills are critical to college success, the Department of English evaluates each student's skills before determining where that student should begin in the English course sequence. Completing the English Placement process, which includes answering self-assessment questions and writing an essay, will help ensure that you start with the English course that's right for you.

If you are a new Cecil College student who has already been placed in the English course sequence by Student Services¹, you have already finished the English placement process. All other new students need to complete the English Placement process within one week of receiving this letter.

To complete the English Placement process, you will need to

- (a) have your academic advisor enroll you in EPE000,
- (b) log on to Blackboard (cecil.blackboard.com) using your Cecil username and password,
- (c) go to the English Placement page,
- (d) take a quick self-assessment, and
- (e) write an essay in response to a reading.

To complete this process, you just need a computer with a reliable Internet connection and about seventy-five minutes.

Once you have completed the self-assessment and essay, the Department of English will review your materials, send you your course placement by campus email, and send a copy to Advising. At that point, you will be all set to schedule your English class for the coming semester.

If you have any questions about this process, please contact Prof. Susan Bernadzikowski, Chair, Department of English, at sbernadzikowski@cecil.edu.

¹Student Services (Advising/Admissions) may place students in the English sequence who have presented appropriate SAT scores, ACT scores, Accuplacer scores, high school GPA, or transfer credit.



English Placement Essay WRITING TIPS

Let's be honest – Writing is challenging, and writing academic essays, especially with limited time, can be downright nerve-wracking! We want to help you feel prepared for the English placement essay. Check out the following tips:

- **Review the Instructions Closely**

Look for key words and details that indicate what you're being asked to do in your essay. For example, words like "summarize," "argue," and "propose" can help you determine the type of content you're expected to develop.

- **Create a Schedule**

Take full advantage of the time you are given to complete your essay. Divide that time into segments – reading, planning, writing, and proofreading – and manage your time carefully as you move through those steps.

- **Read Strategically**

If you are asked to read a passage or article, read it carefully too. As you read, look for the author's main argument or message as well as any main supporting ideas the author offers. Jot down notes about where you see those ideas most clearly expressed in the text.

- **Plan Your Content**

Before you begin writing your essay, spend at least a few minutes brainstorming and creating a "scratch" outline of your ideas. Use this time to write your thesis statement – a one-sentence statement of the main point you want to express – and two to four key ideas to support it. Then list evidence (examples, observations, etc.) to support your key ideas.

- **Limit Your Scope**

Although you may have several main ideas and details in mind, it may be difficult to explain all of that content in the allotted time. Therefore, choose the ideas and details that you feel you can best explain in the time you have.

- **Keep it Simple**

A typical five-paragraph essay structure is a useful framework. Start your essay with an introduction paragraph that includes your thesis statement. Follow the introduction with a series of body paragraphs, each one with a distinct key idea that supports your thesis. Wrap up your essay with a conclusion paragraph.

- **Summarize Carefully**

If you're asked to summarize what you've read, present the author's main ideas accurately, objectively, and in your own words. Be sure to enclose any language that you've borrowed from the passage/article in quotation marks.

- **Remain Focused**

Use your thesis statement as your guide, and avoid drifting away from that main idea as you develop the rest of your essay. Use transitional phrases (such as "First," "In addition," and "For example") to help connect your ideas and paragraphs to one another.

- **Read Your Essay Before Submitting**

Allow at least a few minutes at the end to read through your essay. Proofread and edit your sentences, look for opportunities to clarify your essay's main ideas, and check that you have addressed all parts of the essay instructions.

Looking for additional information to help prepare for writing the English placement essay?

The Cecil College Writing Center is here for you! The Writing Center's professional writing consultants are available to offer guidance in reading comprehension and writing skills.

To speak with a consultant, contact us at thewritingcenter@cecil.edu or 443-674-1976.