# Writing Skills Test

The ASSET Writing Skills Test is a 36-item, 25-minute test that measures the student's understanding of the conventions of standard written English in punctuation, grammar, sentence structure, strategy, organization, and style. Spelling, vocabulary, and rote recall of rules of grammar are not tested.

The test consists of three prose passages, each accompanied by a sequence of 12 multiple-choice test items. To provide a variety of rhetorical situations, a range of passage types is employed. Items that measure usage and mechanics offer alternative responses, including "NO CHANGE," to underlined portions of the text. The student must decide which alternative employs the conventional practice in usage and mechanics that conforms to the sense of the context. Items that measure rhetorical skills may refer to an underlined portion of the text or may ask about a section of the passage or the passage as a whole. The student must decide which alternative response is most appropriate in a given rhetorical situation.

The elements of the Writing Skills Test and the approximate proportions of the test devoted to each are given below.

- **Punctuation.** Tests such conventions as the use and placement of commas, colons, semicolons, dashes, parentheses, apostrophes, question marks, and exclamation points.
- **Grammar.** Tests adjectives and adverbs, conjunctions, and agreement between subject and verb and between pronouns and their antecedents.
- Sentence Structure. Tests relationships between/among clauses, placement of modifiers, and shifts in construction.
- Organization. Tests the organization of ideas and the relevance of statements in context (order, coherence, unity).
- **Strategy.** Tests the appropriateness of expression in relation to audience and purpose, the strengthening of writing with appropriate supporting material, and the effective choice of statements of theme and purpose.
- **Style.** Tests precision and appropriateness in the choice of words and images, rhetorically effective management of sentence elements, avoidance of ambiguous pronoun references, and economy in writing.

#### **Writing Skills Test Item Classification**

Classification	Proportion of Test	Number of Items
Mechanics	.30	11
Punctuation	.14	5
Grammar	.16	6
Sentence Structure	.36	13
Rhetorical Skills	.33	12
Organization	.16	6
Strategy	.06–.11	2–4
Style	.06–.11	2–4
Total	1.00	36

#### **Writing Skills**

- 1. Determine the intended meaning of each paragraph before trying to answer items in that paragraph.
- 2. Substitute each alternative into the appropriate underlined portion for each item and select the one that fits best with the meaning of the paragraph.

#### **Sample Writing Skills Test**

Directions: In the passage that follows, certain words and phrases are underlined and numbered. In the right-hand column, you will find alternatives for each underlined part. You are to choose the one that best expresses the idea, makes the statement appropriate for standard written English, or is worded most consistently with the style and tone of the passage as a whole. If you think the original version is best, choose "NO CHANGE." You will also find questions about a section of the passage or about the passage as a whole. For each question in the test, choose the alternative you consider best and fill in the corresponding space on your answer sheet. Read each passage through once before you begin to answer the questions that accompany it. You cannot determine some answers without reading several sentences beyond the phrase in question. Be sure that you have read far enough ahead each time you choose an alternative.

The following paragraphs may or may not be in the most logical order. Each paragraph is numbered in brackets, and item 11 will ask you to choose the sequence of paragraph numbers that is in the most logical order.

[1]

In the end, everyone gives up

jogging. Some find that their

strenuous efforts to earn a living

drains away the energy necessary for

- A. NO CHANGE
  - B. drain
  - C. has drained
  - D. is draining

running. Others suffering from

- A. NO CHANGE
  - B. suffered
  - C. suffer
  - D. suffering with

defeat by the hazards of the course,

which can range from hard pavement to

muddy tracks and from smog to sleet

and snow. Person's can also simply

collapse in their sneakers. My experience having been different.

however; I had a revelation.

[2]

It happened two summers ago up at Lake Tom, where I was vacationing with friends. I had been accustomed to running fairly regularly, but that whole week I decided to be lazy. I sailed, basked in the sun, and ate wonderful: lobster, steak, 5

com on the cob, baked potatoes, and ice cream. By the fourth day of this routine, I had to face the truth which 6

my body was slowly changing to dough.

- A. NO CHANGE
  - B. Still others

  - C. One may also
    D. It's also possible to
- 4. A. NO CHANGE
  - B. being different,
  - C. was a difference,
  - D. was different.

- A. NO CHANGE
  - B. ate wonderfully.
  - C. eating wonderful:
  - D. eat wonderful:
- A. NO CHANGE
  - B. truth about
  - C. truth:
  - D. truth, which

So, filled with worthy ambition,

I tied on my favorite pair of running
shoes and loped out to the main road
in search of a five-mile route. Out
7
of curiosity, I turned onto Lookout
7
Hill Road and soon discovered how the

road had come by its name. I was chugging, at a painfully slow rate, up one of the <u>longest</u>, <u>steepest</u>

inclines in the region. Perched at the faraway top of the hill was a solitary house, and only a desire to get a closer look at the place kept me going.

[4]

I was exhausted when, gasping and bedraggled, I reached the crest of the hill. There I found a native New Englander rocking tranquilly on the

- 7. A. NO CHANGE
  - Out of curiosity, Lookout Hill Road was turned onto
  - Having become curious, Lookout
     Hill Road was the road I turned onto
  - Lookout Hill Road, having become curious, was the route I turned onto—
- A. NO CHANGE
  - B. longest, steepest,
  - C. steepest longest,
  - D. longest and steepest,

front porch of the house, which was painted. "Mister," I panted, "you

sure live on a big hill!"

[5]

He studied me closely for a moment and then responded, "Yep, and I've got the good sense not to run up

it." That night I tied the laces of my running shoes around a rock and

pitched them into Lake Tom.

- 9. A. NO CHANGE
  - B. house (painted).
  - C. house, and it was painted.
  - D. house.

- 10. A. NO CHANGE
  - B. laces, of my running

  - C. laces of my running, D. laces; of my running

Items 11 and 12 pose questions about the essay as a whole.

- 11. Choose the sequence of paragraph numbers that will make the essay's structure most logical.
- 11. A. NO CHANGE
  - B. 1, 4, 5, 2, 3
  - C. 1, 5, 4, 3, 2 D. 4, 5, 1, 2, 3
- 12. Is the use of direct quotation in the essay appropriate?
- 12. A. No, because the essay is an explanation of why the writer gave up jogging.
  - B. No, because more physical detail would be better in a descriptive
  - C. Yes, because the story is enlivened by dialogue.
  - D. Yes, because the essay persuades readers to talk about running.

#### **Writing Skills Answer Key**

- 1. B 6. C 11. A
- 2. C 7. A 12. C
- 3. B 8. A
- 4. D 9. D
- 5. B 10. A

# **Reading Skills Test**

The ASSET Reading Skills Test is a 24-item, 25-minute test that measures reading comprehension as a product of skill in referring and reasoning. The test items require students to derive meaning from several tests by (1) referring to what is explicitly stated and determining the meaning of words through context and by (2) reasoning to determine implicit meanings and to draw conclusions, comparisons, and generalizations.

The test consists of three prose passages of about 375 words each that are representative of the level and kinds of writing commonly encountered in college freshman curricula. Passages on topics in prose fiction, business, and the social studies are included. Each passage is accompanied by a set of eight multiple-choice test items.

The approximate proportion of the test devoted to each type of reading item is given below.

## **Reading Skills Test Item Classification**

**Classification Proportion of Test Number of Items** 

Reasoning	.50	12
Total	1.00	24

#### Sample Reading Skills Test

**DIRECTIONS:** The passage below is followed by 8 questions. After reading the passage, choose the best answer to each question and fill in the corresponding space on your answer sheet. You may look back at the passage as often as you wish.

The Industrial Revolution got under way first in England. This is a historical fact of the utmost significance, for it explains in large part England's primary role in world affairs in the nineteenth century. Consequently, the question of why the Industrial Revolution began where it did is of much more than academic interest.

The problem may be simplified by eliminating those countries that could not, for one reason or another, have generated the Industrial Revolution. Italy at one time had been an economic leader but had dropped behind with the Discoveries and the shift of the main trade routes from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic. Spain had been economically predominant in the sixteenth century but had then lost out to the northwestern states for various reasons already noted. Holland had enjoyed her Golden Age in the seventeenth century, but she lacked the raw materials, labor resources, and water power necessary for machine production. The various countries of Central and Eastern Europe had been little affected by the Commercial Revolution and hence did not develop the technical skills, the trade markets, and the capital reserves needed for industrialization.

This leaves only France and Britain as possible leaders, and of the two, England had certain advantages that enabled her to forge far ahead of her rival. In commerce, for example, the two countries were about equal in 1763, or, if anything, France was somewhat in the lead. But France had a population three times that of England. France also lost ground in foreign trade when she was driven out of Canada and India in 1763. Furthermore, the blockade of the British fleet during the Revolutionary and

Napoleonic Wars reduced French commerce to about half its 1788 value, and the loss was not restored until 1825.

Another important advantage enjoyed by Britain is that she had taken an early lead in the basic coal and iron industries. Because the forest reserves were being depleted, Britain early began using coal for fuel and for smelting iron. By the time of the French Revolution in 1789, Britain was producing about 10 million tons of coal per year, while France was producing 700,000 tons. A contemporary poet sensed the significance of this unlimited source of power for English industry when he wrote,

England's a perfect World! has Indies too! Correct your Maps! New-castle is Peru

England also pioneered in the development of the blast furnace which, in contrast to the old forges, could mass-produce iron. In 1780 Britain's iron output had been a third that of France; by 1840, it was three times more. All this meant that Britain was pushing ahead in the production of goods of mass consumption for which there was a large and steady demand, whereas France specialized more in luxury commodities of limited and fluctuating demand. Perhaps Voltaire had this in mind when he wrote in 1735, "In truth we are the whipped cream of Europe."

From L. S. Stavrianos, The World Since 1500: A Global History.

 The word forge, as it is used in the third paragraph, means:

- make use of the blast furnace.
- B. alter in order to deceive.
- C. move forward steadily.
- D. produce wrought iron.
- In comparing the economic development of England and France, the passage shows that:
  - England and France were essentially equals until the middle of the nineteenth century.
  - B. France modeled itself on the examples of Italy and Spain, while England modeled itself on the example of Holland.
  - C. England gained most of its capital reserves from the spoils of war, while France gained its capital reserves from trade.
  - D. England began on an equal base with France in the middle of the eighteenth century, but pulled far ahead by the middle of the nineteenth century.
- 3. What reason does the author give for discussing several countries besides England and France?
  - Enriching the information provided in the passage
  - B. Balancing the passage in the interest of fairness
  - Simplifying the problem confronted in the passage
  - Eliminating countries whose Golden Age was yet to come

- 4. The passage suggests that generating the first Industrial Revolution required which of the following?
  - I. Raw materials
  - II. Technical skills
  - III. A large population
  - A. I only
  - B. III only
  - C. I and II only
  - D. II and III only
- The author asserts that England's primary role in world affairs in the nineteenth century can be explained in large part by:
  - A. the Industrial Revolution getting under way in England first.
  - B. England's overwhelming naval power.
  - The decline of Italy, Spain, Holland, and Central and Eastern Europe.
  - England's unlimited source of power to fuel its industry.
- The passage suggests that one indication of a country's success in industrializing was:
  - A. an educational system that could produce a steady supply of skilled workers.
  - an ability to satisfy a large market for necessary, rather than luxury, goods.
  - a forest reserve that could be rapidly and efficiently replenished.
  - a fluctuating demand for luxury, rather than necessary, goods.

- According to the passage, France was compared to whipped cream by:
  - an unnamed contemporary poet.
  - B. Voltaire.
  - C. Napoleon.
  - D. L. S. Stavrianos.
- The main idea of the passage is that:
  - A. certain conditions gave England an advantage over other countries in industrializing.
  - With its conquest of Canada in 1763, England controlled the raw materials necessary for industrialization.
  - the English preferred quantity in their goods, while the French demanded quality.
  - England's primary position in international affairs gave it the wealth and influence necessary for industrialization.

### **Reading Skills Answer Key**

- 1. C 4. C 7. B
- 2. D 5. A 8. A
- 3. C 6. B

# Advanced Mathematics Test: Intermediate Algebra

The Intermediate Algebra Test is designed to assess skills commonly acquired in a second high school algebra course. The content areas tested include:

- · solutions of polynomial equations by factoring
- graphs of linear equations
- operations with radical and rational expressions
- the distance formula
- slope of a line
- solution of linear inequalities
- simplification of radicals

Students may use calculators on the ASSET advanced-level mathematics tests.

## **Intermediate Algebra Test Item Classification**

Classification	Proportion of Tes	t Number of Items
Elementary Algebra	.20	5
Intermediate Algebra and Coordinate Geometry	.64	16
College Algebra	.16	4
Total	1.00	25

#### Sample Intermediate Algebra Test

**Directions:** Solve each problem, choose the correct answer, and then fill in the corresponding space on your answer sheet. Do not linger over problems that take too much time. Solve as many as you can; then return to the others in the time you have left.

- 1. What are all the real values of x that are solutions for the inequality  $|x-2| \le 6$ ?
  - A.  $-8 \le x \le -4$
  - B.  $-8 \le x \le 4$
  - C.  $-8 \le x \le 8$
  - D.  $-4 \le x \le 4$
  - E.  $-4 \le x \le 8$
- 2. If 3x 2 = 2y and y = 3z + 5, which of the following is equal to x?
  - A. z+2
  - B.  $z + \frac{7}{3}$
  - C. z+5
  - D. 2z + 4
  - E. 3z + 7
- What is the distance between the points with (x,y) coordinates (3,-2) and (-3,-1)?
  - A. √7
  - B. √37
  - C. √11
  - D. 3
  - E. 7

#### **Intermediate Algebra Answer Key**

- 1. E
- 2. D
- 3. B

# **Advanced Mathematics Test: College Algebra**

The College Algebra Test is designed to assess skills commonly acquired in a precalculus course. The content areas tested include:

- · exponential functions
- factorials
- operations with complex numbers
- composition of functions
- inverses of functions
- linear inequalities
- graphs of polynomials

Students may use calculators on the ASSET advanced-level mathematics tests.

## **College Algebra Test Item Classification**

Classification	Proportion of Test	Number of Items
Intermediate Algebra	1.12	3
College Algebra	.64	16
Trigonometry	.24	6
Total	1.00	25

#### Sample College Algebra Test

Directions: Solve each problem, choose the correct answer, and then fill in the corresponding space on your answer sheet. Do not linger over problems that take too much time. Solve as many as you can; then return to the others in the time you have left.

- 1.  $\log 8 + \log 2 = ?$ 
  - A. log 4
  - B. log 10
  - C. log 16

  - D. log 64 E. log 256
- 2. If  $f(x) = x^2 2$ , then f(a+2) = ?
  - A.  $a^2 + 4a + 4$
  - B.  $a^2 + 4a + 2$
  - C.  $a^2 + 4a$
  - D.  $a^2 + 2$
  - E. a<sup>2</sup>
- 3. For  $0^{\circ} < x < 90^{\circ}$ , how many solutions are there for the equation  $2 \sin x = \cos x$ ?
  - A. 0
  - B. 1
  - C. 2
  - D. 3
  - E. 4

**College Algebra Answer Key** 

- 1. C
- 2. B
- 3. B