

The CPT: Preparing the Florida GED PLUS Student

Appropriate course placement is critical for success in college course work. To ensure appropriate course placement, the Department of Education Rule 6A-10.315 states that, ". . . first-time-in-college students entering degree programs must be tested prior to initial registration and shall enroll in college preparatory reading, English and/or mathematics courses if their test scores are below college level." Furthermore, Section 1008.30 (formally 240.117), Florida Statutes, requires the State Board of Education to develop and implement a common

placement testing program to assess the basic computation and communication skills of students who intend to enter a degree program at any public community college or state university. This policy has been implemented by the Board through Rule 6A-10.0315, Florida Administrative Code.

This Technical Assistance paper has been designed to provide instructors with information they can use to assist **Florida GED PLUS** students in preparing for the College Placement Test.

What Is the CPT?

The Computerized Placement Tests (CPTs) were developed by the College Board with the assistance of committees of college professors. The CPT provides information about a student's level of skills in reading, English, and mathematics in order to better predict success in college. Sometimes referred to as the Accuplacer, because of the use of the computer, or the Florida Placement Test, the paper/pencil version, the CPT is one of the most used entry-level assessments for first-time students entering college in Florida.

Eight tests are available within the CPT program. Colleges determine which tests are administered based on state requirements and student achievement. The tests include read-

ing, sentence skills, arithmetic, elementary algebra, and college-level algebra. Scores from reading, sentence skills, and mathematics determine in which English and mathematics courses students will be placed. The State Board of Education (SBE) has set the cutoff scores for placement into college credit level as opposed to college preparatory courses.

Students may also present American College Testing (ACT) scores or Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores as alternative placement test scores.

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Funds for this project were provided through the Adult and Family Literacy Act, Division of Workforce Education, Florida Department of Education

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Learning Disabilities and the Florida GED PLUS Student

The CPT: An Overview of the Tests

THE CPT is an untimed computerized placement test. It is delivered with approximately 20-21 reading questions, 20-21 sentence skills questions, and 12 –14 algebra questions. The sequencing of questions is dependent upon students answering the current question correctly or incorrectly.

Because the CPT is a placement test, students cannot fail the test. However, their scores do determine what courses in which they will be placed. Therefore, it is important that **Florida GED PLUS** students are well prepared.

To assist students in preparing for the CPT, provide them with an overview of the tests, as well as effective test-taking strategies for computerized testing. Use some of the practice tests included in the website resources on page 4 of this paper.

Registering for the Test

Students should check with the college they wish to attend regarding registering for the CPT. Some colleges have assessment centers that offer a varied schedule of weekdays, weekends, and evenings. Other colleges have a more limited testing schedule. Assist **Florida GED PLUS** students by accessing testing schedules at the colleges they wish to enter, as well as the requirements for testing. Colleges generally require that students bring with them picture identification, such as a driver license or passport. Students must also know their social security number or student identification number (dependent on the college) as scores are entered via these numbers.

Fees for the test differ dependent on the college. For entering students, the fees for the CPT are often included as part of the application fee. Other colleges may charge a nominal or additional fee.

Skills Measured by the CPT

Reading Comprehension

This test is designed to measure how well students understand what they read. Some questions are sentence relationships and require that students select how two sentences are related. Other questions require that students read passages of various lengths and answer questions developed at the various cognitive levels.

Sentence Skills

This test is composed of sentence correction questions that require students to select a word or phrase to substitute for an underlined portion of a sentence and construction shift questions that ask students to rewrite a sentence in a specific way without changing its meaning.

Arithmetic

The Arithmetic test measures a student's skills in three primary categories. The *first* is operations with whole numbers and fractions. This includes addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, and recognition of equivalent fractions and mixed numbers. The *second* category involves operations with decimals and percents. It includes addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, as well as percent problems, decimal recognition, fraction and percent equivalences, and estimation problems. The *last* category involves applications and problem solving. Questions include rate, percent, and measurement problems, geometry problems, and distribution of a quantity into its fractional parts.

Elementary Algebra

There also are three categories in The Elementary Algebra Test. *First*, operations with integers and rational numbers, includes computation with integers and negative rationals, the use of absolute values, and ordering. The *second* category is operations with algebraic expressions. This tests students' skills with the evaluation of simple formulas and expressions and adding and subtracting monomials and polynomials. Both categories include questions about multiplying and dividing monomials and polynomials, the evaluation of positive rational roots and exponents, simplifying algebraic fractions, and factoring. The *third* category tests skills in equation solving, inequalities, and word problems. These questions include solving systems of linear equations, solving quadratic equations by factoring, solving verbal problems presented in algebraic context, geometric reasoning, translating written phrases into algebraic expressions, and graphing.

What Are the College Placement Remedial Cutoff Scores?

A student must meet or exceed the following scores in order to be placed into college degree credit courses. Otherwise, students are placed in college preparatory courses.

Elementary Algebra	72
Reading	83
Sentence Skills	83

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CPT Test-Taking Tips

Answering the Questions

Because students take the CPT on a computer, they do not have to answer as many questions as on traditional paper-and-pencil tests. The number of questions range from 12-25. The questions appear one at a time on the computer. Most questions are multiple choice. All students need to do is to use the Enter key or mouse to select an answer. When the question has been completed and the student has confirmed his/her answer, a new screen will appear with the next question.

Testing Regulations

Although the CPT is a computerized test, scratch paper and pencils are provided. However, textbooks, notebooks, dictionaries, or any other papers brought in by the student are not allowed.

Adaptive Testing

Each test is adaptive. This means that the computer automatically determines which questions are presented to students based on their responses to prior questions. This technique selects just the right questions to ask without being too easy or too difficult. Each test is untimed so that students can give each question as much thought as necessary. However, it is important to share with students that once they have selected and confirmed an answer, they cannot return to that question.

Taking the Assessment

When students have agreed to the rules and conditions for the CPT, they will click on the “yes” button which will take them to the first test. They will be provided with instructions for taking the test and a sample question. When they are ready to begin, they should select the “Continue” button and take the actual test.

Test Format

The CPT presents one question at a time. Each page presents the question and several possible answer choices. The page may also include additional information that is needed to answer the question, such as a reading passage, picture or table of information.

Choosing an Answer

To select an answer, students will need to know how to use the mouse on the computer in order to move the arrow pointer to the circle button next to the answer they wish to choose. They will then click on the button and the circle will be filled in next to the answer selected. When the student clicks on the next button to move to the next question, a box will appear on the screen asking the student to confirm his/her last answer and giving

them another opportunity to return to the question and select a different answer. This is the only method in which a student can change his/her mind about an answer. Once the student has confirmed an answer, the test continues to the next question.

Students can also use the keyboard to select an answer by using the TAB button, highlighting the answer, and then pressing the Enter key. Either keyboarding technique is acceptable.

Guessing

The CPT/ACCUPLACER is an adaptive test. This means that the questions are selected based on the students' answers to previous questions. Because the test works this way, students must answer every question when it is presented. They can change an answer to a particular question before moving on to the next question, but they cannot leave a question out or come back to it later to change an answer. Teach students how to eliminate one or more choices if they do not know the answer to a question. Then they should select an answer from the remaining choices.

At the End of the Test

At the end of the test, students will either see a page indicating that they have completed all of the testing or that the test that they have just completed will be followed by another test.

Score Reporting

Individual Score Reports include a *Total Right Score*, *Range*, and *Percentile Rank*. The *Total Right Score* shows how many of the questions students answered correctly out of the total number possible. The *Range* tells students how accurate their score is. If a student retook the test, he/she would be expected to score in a specific range. The *Percentile Rank* compares the students score with the scores of typical students entering college who completed tests composed of similar questions. Example: A percentile rank of 60 means that the student's score is higher than 60% of the students who completed the test.

Special Arrangements for Students with Disabilities

Colleges provide special testing accommodations for students who have documented disabilities. If a student has a disability that will present him/her from taking the CPT under standard conditions, the student should inform the appropriate college personnel prior to testing. Documentation must be provided early enough so that the college can determine the appropriate accommodations and have them available during the testing situation.

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Visit us at:
[http://www.floridatechnet.org/
gedplus/](http://www.floridatechnet.org/gedplus/)**

CPT—Practice Tests and Informational Websites

There are numerous sites that provide information on the CPT/ Accuplacer. Complete a search on a search engine such as Google. The sites listed below are just a place to start.

Accuplacer Practice. TestPrepReview.com's Online Courses. Retrieved from the World Wide Web on 05/24/06 at: http://www.testprepreview.com/accuplacer_practice.htm.

CPT/Accuplacer Preparation Website. Retrieved from the World Wide Web on 05/22/06 at: <http://www.collegeboard.com/highered/apr/accu/accu.html>.

Fitchburg State College. Practice Exercises for Algebra Placement Test. Retrieved from the World Wide Web on 05/21/06 at: <http://www.fsc.edu/placementtest/practicetest/algebra.html>.

Front Range Community College. Retrieved from the World Wide Web on 05/22/06 at: http://frontrange.edu/pub_index.cfm?cid=8421%20.

Lake-Sumter Community College. Retrieved from the World Wide Web on 05/22/06 at: <http://www.lsc.edu/admissions/FLCELPT.pdf>.

Manatee Community College. Retrieved from the World Wide Web on 06/03/06 at: <http://www.mccfl.edu/pages/1484.asp>.

Palm Beach Community College. Retrieved from the World Wide Web on 06/03/06 at: <http://www.pbcc.edu/prepmath/cpt.asp>.

Math Placement Test Online College Prep. Interactive algebra examples. Retrieved from the World Wide Web on 05/21/06 at: <http://www.onlinecollegeprep.com/placementtest/intro/PlacementTest.htm>.

Miami-Dade College. Online resources for the CPT. Retrieved from the World Wide Web on 05/22/06 at: http://www.mdc.edu/testing_information/CPT_CLAST/newaccu1.asp.

Monroe Community College. Retrieved from the World Wide Web on 05/22/06 at: <http://www.monroecc.edu/depts/counsel/accuplac.htm>.

Montgomery College, Maryland. Retrieved from the World Wide Web on 05/22/06 at: <http://www.montgomerycollege.edu/Departments/AssessCtr/studyguide.htm>.

New England Institute of Technology Academic Skills Center. Practice Tests. Retrieved from the World Wide Web on 05/22/06 at: <http://wcb.neit.edu/asc/prctctst.htm>.

Ocala Walton College. Retrieved from the World Wide Web on 05/22/06 at: <http://owc.edu/testing/FCPT/index.cfm>.

Online College Prep Course. Retrieved from the World Wide Web on 05/22/06 at: <http://www.onlinecollegeprep.com/sampletest/samplePlacemntTest.html>.

St. Louis Community College. Retrieved from the World Wide Web on 05/22/06 at: <http://www.stlcc.edu/mc/services/assess/entry.html>.

Santa Fe Community College. CPT Study Guide. Retrieved from the World Wide Web on 05/22/06 at: <http://adminsfcc.edu/%7Eacres/assess/cptprep.pdf>.

Springfield Tech, Massachusetts. CPT Study Materials. Retrieved from the World Wide Web on 06/03/06 at: <http://www.stcc.edu/testing/placement.html>.

Westfield State College, Massachusetts. Retrieved from the World Wide Web on 06/03/06 at: <http://www1.wsc.ma.edu/math/accuplacer/accuplacer.asp>.