

# College Math Placement Test Prep

**AMERICAN RIVER COLLEGE  
ASSESSMENT CENTER**  
**Math COMPASS TEST**  
**SAMPLE ITEMS**

*These items are not actual items from COMPASS® but are similar in content and format. These items are presented for illustrative purposes and do not constitute a full representation of item content.*

## Numerical Skills/Pre-Algebra Placement

### Averages: Means, Medians, and Modes

- 1 What is the average (arithmetic mean) of 8, 7, 7, 5, 3, 2, and 2?

A.  $3\frac{1}{2}$   
B.  $4\frac{1}{2}$   
C.  $4\frac{2}{3}$   
D. 5  
E.  $6\frac{1}{2}$

### Basic Operations with Decimals

- 2 Ben is making wooden toys for the next arts and crafts sale. Each toy costs Ben \$1.80 to make. If he sells the toys for \$3.00 each, how many will he have to sell to make a profit of exactly \$36.00?

A. 12  
B. 20  
C. 30  
D. 60  
E. 108

### Basic Operations with Fractions

- 3 How many yards of material from a  $24\frac{1}{2}$ -yard length of cloth remain after 3 pieces, each  $3\frac{1}{2}$  yards long, and 5 pieces, each  $2\frac{1}{2}$  yards long, are removed?

A.  $2\frac{1}{4}$   
B.  $4\frac{1}{4}$   
C.  $4\frac{5}{6}$   
D.  $10\frac{1}{4}$   
E.  $10\frac{5}{6}$

### Percentages

- 4 Philip charged \$400 worth of goods on his credit card. On his first bill, he was not charged any interest, and he made a payment of \$20. He then charged another \$18 worth of goods. On his second bill a month later, he was charged 2% interest on his entire unpaid balance. How much interest was Philip charged on his second bill?
- A. \$8.76  
B. \$7.96  
C. \$7.60  
D. \$7.24  
E. \$6.63

Answers: 1. C; 2. C; 3. A; 4. B

## Algebra Placement

### Elementary Algebra: Linear Equations in One Variable

- 1 A student has earned scores of 87, 81, and 88 on the first 3 of 4 tests. If the student wants an average (arithmetic mean) of exactly 87, what score must she earn on the fourth test?

A. 85  
B. 86  
C. 87  
D. 92  
E. 93

### Elementary Algebra: Basic Operations with Polynomials

- 2 Which of the following expressions represents the product of 3 less than twice  $x$  and 2 more than the quantity 3 times  $x$ ?

A.  $-6x^2 + 25x + 6$   
B.  $6x^2 + 5x + 6$   
C.  $6x^2 - 5x + 6$   
D.  $6x^2 - 5x - 6$   
E.  $6x^2 - 13x - 6$

### Elementary Algebra: Substituting Values into Algebraic Expressions

- 3 If  $x = -1$  and  $y = 2$ , what is the value of the expression  $2x^2 - 3xy$ ?

A. 8  
B. 4  
C. -1  
D. -4  
E. -8

### Intermediate Algebra: Rational Expressions

- 4 For all  $r \neq -2$ ,  $\frac{r^2 - 3r + 5}{r^2 - 4} = ?$

A.  $\frac{r-1}{r+2}$   
B.  $\frac{r-2}{r+2}$   
C.  $\frac{r-2}{r+3}$   
D.  $\frac{r+3}{r-2}$   
E.  $\frac{r+3}{r+2}$

### Coordinate Geometry: Linear Equations in Two Variables

- 5 What is the equation of the line that contains the points with  $(x,y)$  coordinates  $(-3,7)$  and  $(5,-1)$ ?

A.  $y = 3x - 2$   
B.  $y = x + 10$   
C.  $y = -\frac{1}{3}x + 8$   
D.  $y = -\frac{3}{4}x + 4$   
E.  $y = -x + 4$

Answers: 1. D; 2. D; 3. B; 4. A; 5. E

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College math placement test prep is a crucial step for students transitioning from high school to college. These tests play a significant role in determining the level of math coursework a student will be eligible to take, which can influence their academic path and overall college experience. This article will provide a comprehensive guide on how to prepare effectively for college math placement tests, including understanding the test structure, essential study strategies, and resources that can help boost your confidence and skills.

## Understanding the College Math Placement Test

Before diving into preparation strategies, it is essential to understand what

a college math placement test is and why it matters.

## **What is a College Math Placement Test?**

A college math placement test is an assessment used by colleges and universities to evaluate a student's math skills. The results help academic advisors place students in appropriate math courses. Common tests include:

- Accuplacer
- ALEKS
- COMPASS

Each of these tests covers a range of topics, including:

- Arithmetic
- Algebra
- Geometry
- Trigonometry
- Pre-calculus

## **Why is It Important?**

The results of these tests can significantly impact your college experience by determining:

- The math courses you will need to take
- The length of time it will take to complete your degree
- Your preparedness for other required courses, such as science or engineering classes

## **Preparing for the Test**

Effective preparation for college math placement tests requires a structured approach. Here is a step-by-step guide to help you get started.

### **1. Assess Your Current Skills**

Before beginning your preparation, it is essential to evaluate your current math skills. You can do this by:

- Taking a diagnostic test online to identify your strengths and weaknesses.
- Reviewing your high school math records or talking to your former math teachers.

This assessment will guide your study plan to focus on areas where you need improvement.

## 2. Understand the Test Format

Familiarize yourself with the structure of the specific placement test you will be taking. This includes:

- The number of questions
- The types of questions (multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, etc.)
- The time limit

Many colleges provide sample questions or practice tests on their websites, which can be a valuable resource.

## 3. Create a Study Plan

Develop a study schedule that outlines what topics you will cover each week leading up to the test. Your plan should include:

- Daily or weekly study goals
- Time allocated for each topic
- Breaks to avoid burnout

Consider using the following structure for your study plan:

1. Week 1: Review basic arithmetic and number operations.
2. Week 2: Focus on algebraic expressions and equations.
3. Week 3: Dive into geometry and measurement.
4. Week 4: Study functions and graphing.
5. Week 5: Take practice tests and review weak areas.

## Study Strategies

Once you have a plan, it's time to implement effective study strategies. Here are several techniques that can enhance your preparation.

### 1. Use Online Resources

Utilize online platforms that offer free or low-cost resources for math test preparation. Some popular options include:

- Khan Academy: Offers comprehensive video tutorials and practice exercises.

- IXL: Provides tailored practice problems based on your skill level.
- Mathway: A problem solver that can help you understand how to work through math questions.

## **2. Practice with Sample Questions**

Working through sample questions is one of the best ways to prepare. This practice allows you to:

- Become familiar with the test format.
- Identify recurring question types and topics.
- Build your speed and accuracy.

You can find sample questions in the study materials provided by your college or through online resources.

## **3. Join a Study Group**

Studying with peers can be highly beneficial. Consider forming a study group with classmates preparing for the same test. This approach allows you to:

- Share knowledge and resources.
- Explain concepts to each other, reinforcing your understanding.
- Stay motivated and accountable.

## **4. Hire a Tutor**

If you find yourself struggling with specific concepts, consider hiring a tutor for personalized instruction. A tutor can help you:

- Clarify difficult topics.
- Provide additional practice problems.
- Develop test-taking strategies tailored to your learning style.

## **5. Focus on Test-Taking Strategies**

In addition to mastering the content, developing effective test-taking strategies is crucial. Here are some tips:

- Read instructions carefully: Ensure you understand what is being asked before answering.
- Manage your time: Keep an eye on the clock and pace yourself throughout the test.

- Eliminate wrong answers: If unsure about an answer, try to eliminate the most obviously incorrect options.
- Guess intelligently: If you cannot determine the correct answer, make an educated guess rather than leaving a question blank.

## **Day of the Test: Final Preparation**

As the test day approaches, ensure you are adequately prepared both mentally and physically.

### **1. Get Plenty of Rest**

A good night's sleep before the test is essential. Being well-rested will help you focus and think clearly during the exam.

### **2. Eat a Healthy Meal**

Fuel your body with a nutritious breakfast. Foods rich in protein and whole grains can provide sustained energy and concentration.

### **3. Arrive Early**

Plan to arrive at the testing location early to avoid unnecessary stress. This gives you time to relax, review any last-minute notes, and settle into the environment.

## **Post-Test Reflection**

After completing the placement test, take a moment to reflect on your performance. Regardless of the outcome, consider the following:

- What areas did you feel confident in?
- Which topics require further review or study?
- How can you apply what you learned in your future college courses?

This reflection will not only help you understand your current standing but also guide your future studies.

# Conclusion

**College math placement test prep** is an essential component of a successful transition to higher education. By understanding the test format, creating a structured study plan, and utilizing effective study strategies, you can improve your math skills and confidently approach the exam. Remember, preparation is key to success, and taking the time to study will pay off in your academic journey. Good luck!

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What topics are commonly covered in college math placement tests?

Common topics include algebra, geometry, trigonometry, and sometimes basic calculus. Students may also encounter questions on functions, statistics, and mathematical reasoning.

### How can I effectively prepare for a college math placement test?

Effective preparation involves reviewing key math concepts, practicing with sample questions, utilizing online resources and study guides, and taking practice tests to familiarize yourself with the test format.

### Are there any specific study materials recommended for placement test prep?

Yes, many students find success using prep books from publishers like Kaplan or McGraw-Hill, online platforms like Khan Academy, and practice tests available on college websites.

### What is the format of a typical college math placement test?

Most college math placement tests are computer-based and consist of multiple-choice questions. They adapt in difficulty based on the student's responses, allowing for a tailored assessment of math skills.

### How important is the college math placement test for incoming students?

The placement test is crucial as it helps determine the appropriate math course for students, ensuring they enroll in classes that match their skill level, which can impact their academic success.

## Can I retake the college math placement test if I'm not satisfied with my score?

Many colleges allow students to retake the placement test, but policies vary. It's essential to check with your specific institution for their retake policy and any waiting periods.

**What strategies can I use during the test to maximize my score?**

Some strategies include carefully reading each question, eliminating clearly wrong answers, managing your time wisely, and using estimation when possible. If stuck, move on and return to difficult questions later.

**How far in advance should I start preparing for the placement test?**

It's advisable to begin preparing at least a month in advance. This allows ample time to review material, practice, and identify areas needing improvement.

## Is it possible to prepare for the placement test without a tutor?

Absolutely! Many students successfully prepare independently using online resources, textbooks, study groups, and practice tests. A tutor can be helpful, but it's not a requirement for success.

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