

Community College Math Placement Test

AMERICAN RIVER COLLEGE ASSESSMENT CENTER

Math COMPASS TEST

SAMPLE ITEMS

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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. $y = -\frac{3}{2}x + 4$
E. $y = -x + 4$

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

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Community college math placement tests are a crucial component of the academic journey for many students enrolling in community colleges across the United States. These assessments serve the purpose of evaluating a student's proficiency in mathematics, ensuring they are placed in the appropriate courses that align with their skill level. Given the importance of these tests in determining a student's academic path, understanding their structure, purpose, and preparation strategies is essential. This article will delve into the various aspects of community college math placement tests, providing insights into their significance, types, preparation techniques, and more.

What is a Community College Math Placement Test?

A community college math placement test is an assessment designed to measure a student's mathematical skills and knowledge. It typically evaluates areas such as arithmetic, algebra,

geometry, and sometimes statistics. The primary goal is to place students in the correct level of math courses, ensuring they are neither overwhelmed nor under-challenged in their studies.

Why are Math Placement Tests Important?

Math placement tests are vital for several reasons:

1. Ensures Appropriate Course Placement

- Students who are placed in courses that match their skill levels are more likely to succeed academically.
- Proper placement can prevent students from taking remedial courses that may not be necessary, saving time and money.

2. Supports Academic Success

- By assessing their current mathematical abilities, students can build a solid foundation for future math-related courses.
- Success in initial math courses can boost confidence and motivation, leading to better overall academic performance.

3. Influences Financial Aid and Graduation Rates

- Students placed in the correct courses tend to complete their degrees more efficiently, positively impacting graduation rates.
- Many financial aid programs require students to maintain satisfactory academic progress, which can be influenced by proper course placement.

Types of Math Placement Tests

Community colleges may utilize various types of math placement tests. The most common formats include:

1. Accuplacer

- A widely used computer-adaptive test that adjusts the difficulty of questions based on the student's performance.
- Covers arithmetic, elementary algebra, college-level math, and more.

2. ALEKS

- An online assessment that uses adaptive questioning to gauge a student's knowledge and skills.

- Provides personalized learning modules based on the results, allowing students to improve in specific areas.

3. COMPASS

- A computerized test that evaluates skills in math, reading, and writing.
- Offers immediate results and can be used for advising purposes.

4. Other Institution-Specific Tests

- Some community colleges may develop their own tests tailored to their curriculum and student needs.
- These tests may focus on the specific content areas deemed essential for success in their programs.

Preparing for the Math Placement Test

Preparation for the math placement test is crucial for students who wish to perform well and secure a place in the right courses. Here are several strategies to help students prepare effectively:

1. Understand the Test Format

- Familiarize yourself with the types of questions and subjects covered in the test.
- Review sample questions or practice tests available on the college's website or through test preparation resources.

2. Review Fundamental Concepts

- Brush up on basic arithmetic, algebra, geometry, and other relevant math concepts.
- Utilize textbooks, online resources, or community college workshops to reinforce your understanding.

3. Take Practice Tests

- Use practice tests to get a feel for the test's timing and structure.
- Identify areas of weakness and focus your studies on those topics.

4. Use Online Resources

- Websites like Khan Academy, Purplemath, and others offer free tutorials and exercises to strengthen math skills.
- Many community colleges also provide access to online math labs and tutoring services.

5. Form Study Groups

- Collaborate with peers to review material and solve problems together.
- Teaching concepts to others can reinforce your understanding and boost confidence.

6. Seek Help from Instructors or Tutors

- Don't hesitate to reach out to math instructors or academic advisors for guidance.
- Consider hiring a tutor if you feel you need more personalized help.

What to Expect on Test Day

Understanding what to expect on the day of the math placement test can help alleviate anxiety and improve performance. Here are some key points:

1. Arrive Early

- Allow ample time for check-in and any administrative tasks before the test begins.

2. Bring Necessary Materials

- Most tests will provide everything you need, but it's wise to bring a valid ID, any required forms, and possibly a calculator (if permitted).

3. Stay Calm and Focused

- Practice relaxation techniques such as deep breathing to help manage anxiety.
- Read each question carefully and take your time to avoid careless mistakes.

4. After the Test

- Many tests provide immediate results, while others may take time to process.
- Review your scores with an academic advisor to discuss course placement and options.

Common Myths About Math Placement Tests

Several misconceptions surround math placement tests that can lead to unnecessary stress or misinformed decisions. Addressing these myths can help students approach the tests with a clearer mindset.

1. Myth: You Can't Prepare for the Test

- Fact: While the test assesses your current skills, you can and should prepare to improve your chances of a favorable outcome.

2. Myth: The Test Determines Your Entire Academic Future

- Fact: While placement tests are important, they are not the sole determinant of academic success. Students can retake tests or choose different paths.

3. Myth: Only "Bad" Students Need to Take the Test

- Fact: All incoming students are often required to take placement tests, regardless of their previous academic background, to ensure proper course alignment.

Conclusion

Community college math placement tests play an essential role in shaping a student's educational journey. By understanding their purpose, preparing effectively, and approaching the test with confidence, students can set themselves up for academic success. Remember, these tests are just one part of your educational experience, and with the right mindset and preparation, you can navigate them successfully. Embrace the challenge, and use it as an opportunity to enhance your math skills and advance your academic career.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the purpose of a community college math placement test?

The purpose of a community college math placement test is to assess a student's math skills and knowledge to determine the appropriate level of math courses they should enroll in, ensuring they are placed in classes that match their abilities.

How can I prepare for a community college math placement test?

To prepare for a community college math placement test, you can review foundational math concepts, practice with sample questions, utilize online resources or study guides, and consider taking a refresher course if needed.

What topics are typically covered in a community college math

placement test?

A community college math placement test typically covers topics such as arithmetic, algebra, geometry, and basic statistics. The specific content may vary by institution, so it's important to check with your college.

Are community college math placement tests timed?

Yes, community college math placement tests are usually timed, and the duration can vary depending on the institution. It's important to manage your time effectively during the test to complete all questions.

What happens if I don't pass the community college math placement test?

If you don't pass the community college math placement test, you may be required to take remedial or developmental math courses before enrolling in college-level math classes. Some colleges also offer retesting options to improve your score.

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