

COMPASS

READING SKILLS SAMPLE TEST

The COMPASS Reading Skills Placement Test focuses on items that assess reading comprehension, the ability to find meaning from what is read. You are given a passage (average length of 215 standard words). Passages are of five types: *prose fiction* passages emphasize the narration of events and revelation of character; *humanities* passages describe or analyze ideas or works of art and craft; *social science* passages present information gathered by research; *natural sciences* passages present a science topic along with an explanation of its significance, and *practical reading* passages present information that is relevant to vocational or technical courses. The reading level of all passages is approximately equal to that encountered in the first year of college; much of the passage material comes from essays, journals, and magazines commonly used in entry-level college courses.

The five reading comprehension items that accompany each passage are of two general categories; *referring* (3 of the 5 items) and *reasoning* (2 of the 5 items).

Referring items pose questions about material explicitly stated in the passage.

Reasoning items assess your proficiencies at making appropriate inferences, developing a critical understanding of the text, and determining the specific meanings of difficult, unfamiliar, or ambiguous words based on the surrounding context.

At the end of some passages, you will encounter *prior-knowledge* items. While these items do not contribute directly to your score, they are intended to provide an indication of your general, overall knowledge of the material presented in the passage and to provide supplemental information that may help in the interpretation of your score.

Sample Passage 1-Humanities

When I'm in New York but feeling lonely for Wyoming I look for the Western movie ads in the subway. But the men I see in those posters with their stern, humorless looks remind me of no one I know in the East. In our earnestness to romanticize the cowboy we've ironically disesteemed his true character. If he's "strong and silent" it's because there's probably no one to talk to. If he "rides away into the sunset" it's because he's been on horseback since four in the morning moving cattle and he's trying, fifteen hours later, to get home to his family. If he's "a rugged individualist" he's also part of a team: ranch work is teamwork and even the glorified open-range cowboys of the 1880's rode up and down the Chisholm Trail in the company of twenty or thirty other riders. It's not toughness but "toughing it out" that counts. In other words, this macho, cultural artifact the cowboy has become is simply a man who possesses resilience, patience, and an instinct for survival. "Cowboys are just like a pile of rocks—everything happens to them. They get climbed on, kicked, rained and snowed on, scuffed up by the wind. Their job is "just to take it", one old-timer told me.

Adapted from Gretel Enrich, *The Solace of Open Spaces*. © 1985 by Gretel Enrich. Bolded headings appear only in the sample test.

Referring

1. According to the passage, cowboys are probably "strong and silent" because:
 - A. Their work leaves them no time for conversation.
 - B. They have been cautioned not to complain.
 - C. They are stern and humorless.
 - D. There is no one nearby to listen to them.
 - E. Their work makes them too tired to talk.

Reasoning

2. For which of the following statements does the passage give apparently Contradictory evidence?
 - A. The cowboy's work takes endurance.
 - B. Cowboys work alone.
 - C. Cowboys are adequately paid.
 - D. The cowboy's image has become romanticized in American culture.
 - E. Cowboys think of themselves as humorless.

Prior-Knowledge

3. A subway can best be described as:
 - A. A bus route through town.
 - B. An underground train.
 - C. A pedestrian right-of-way.
 - D. An exit ramp.
 - E. A bicycle path.

Regular tune-ups of your heating system will cut heating costs and will most likely increase the lifetime and safety of the system. When a service technician performs a tune-up, he or she should test the efficiency of your heating system.

The technician should measure the efficiency of your system both before and after servicing it and provide you with a copy of the results. Combustion efficiency is determined indirectly, based on some of the following tests: 1) temperature of the flue (or chimney); 2) percent carbon dioxide or percent oxygen in the atmosphere; 3) presence of carbon monoxide in the atmosphere; and 4) draft. Incomplete combustion efficiency up to at least 75% after tuning your heating system, you should consider installing a new system or at least modifying your present to increase its efficiency.

Adapted from Alex Wilson and John Morrill, *Consumer Guide to Home Energy Savings*. © 1993 by American Council for and Energy-Efficient Economy. Bolded headings appear only in the sample test.

Reasoning

1. The passage suggests that, if carbon monoxide is present in the atmosphere, it is likely that the:
 - A. Heating system is losing efficiency due to incomplete combustion.
 - B. Heating system only needs minor repairs and will most likely function for a number of years.
 - C. Temperature of the flue will be lower than expected.
 - D. Heating system cannot be repaired and must be replaced.
 - E. Costs for running the heating system will decrease.

Referring

2. According to the passage, when performing a tune-up of a heating system, the service technician should:
 - A. Ensure that the combustion efficiency is at least 25%.
 - B. Modify the heating system before initially measuring efficiency.
 - C. Measure combustion efficiency both before and after servicing the system.
 - D. Provide his or her supervisor with a written report of the system's Efficiency.
 - E. Ignore the age of the heating system.

Prior-Knowledge

3. Combustion can best be described as a process of:
 - A. Fueling.
 - B. Charging.
 - C. Spinning.
 - D. Burning.
 - E. Cooling.