

Introduction to the CLAST

The College Level Academic Skills Test (CLAST) was developed in 1982 to ensure that students in Florida's public colleges and universities receive an education of uniform quality. All college sophomores in Florida must pass the test before graduating with an associate in arts degree or entering an upper-division program at a state university. It is a four-hour exam, but you should allow an extra hour for check-in, test distribution, and the break. The test is given three times a year at colleges across the state. You can pick up an exam schedule at your school.

The CLAST includes four tests: an essay; an objective test of grammar, usage, and sentence structure; a reading test; and a mathematics test. This booklet will help you prepare for the essay test and the objective English test. The following chart lists at the left the specific skills that will be tested and on the right the relevant sections of *The Everyday Writer* that you can use to review and practice the skills.

ESSAY AND GRAMMAR SKILLS

SKILL	SECTION IN THE EVERYDAY WRITER
1. Selecting a subject that lends itself to development	6
2. Considering purpose and audience	4b
3. Limiting the subject to a topic that can be developed within the requirements of time, purpose, and audience	4b
4. Formulating a thesis or statement of main idea that focuses the essay	7b
5. Developing the thesis or main idea statement	
a) providing adequate support that reflects the ability to distinguish between general and specific evidence	7b–c, 9
b) Arranging the ideas and supporting details in a logical pattern appropriate to the purpose and focus	7c, 9
c) Writing unified prose in which all supporting material is relevant to the thesis or main idea statement	8a
d) Writing coherent prose and providing effective transitional devices that clearly reflect the organizational pattern and the relationships of the parts of the essay	8e
6. Demonstrating effective word choice	
*a) Using words with appropriate denotations and connotations	39b
b) Choosing appropriate language: avoiding inappropriate use of slang, jargon, clichés, and pretentious language	39a
*c) Removing wordy phrases	26

7. Using conventional sentence structure	
*a) Placing modifiers appropriately	32
*b) Creating coordinate and subordinate structures	22
*c) Creating and maintaining parallel structures	23
*d) Identifying fragments, comma splices, and fused sentences	34, 35
8. Using effective sentence structure	
a) Varying sentence structures	27
b) Avoiding overuse of passive constructions	29f–g
9. Observing the conventions of standard American English grammar and usage	
*a) Using standard verb forms	29b–d
*b) Maintaining subject-verb and pronoun-antecedent agreement	30, 52–55
*c) Understanding pronoun case	33a
d) Maintaining a consistent point of view	9, 24a
*e) Using adjectives and adverbs	31
*f) Recognizing shifts in tense	24a
*g) Making logical comparisons	21a
10. Using standard practice for spelling, punctuation, and capitalization	
Mastering spelling	40
Understanding punctuation conventions	
Using commas	42
Using semicolons	43
Using colons	47d
Using quotation marks	46
Using apostrophes	45
Using capitals	48
11. Revising, editing, and proofreading for clarity, consistency, and conformity to the conventions of standard written American English	9

All of these skills will be considered in the holistic evaluation of the essay. In addition, the skills marked * will be tested on the multiple-choice English Language Skills subtest.

USING THIS BOOKLET

The preceding list of so many complex skills may seem overwhelming to you at first. However, a planned review of grammar and timed practice will help reduce your anxiety. Because the CLAST covers such a broad spectrum of writing skills, cramming will not be helpful. In fact, it may harm you by further raising your anxiety level and filling your head with isolated bits of information. Instead of cramming, try responding with a positive attitude and a positive approach: a planned review period where you can target any weak areas for special study.

This booklet is divided into three sections. Part One gives step-by-step suggestions for writing the essay. Part Two describes the skills tested on the objective test (the English Language Skills Subtest), accompanied by sample directions and example test items with

suggested answers. Part Three consists of a sample essay test and two objective tests that you can use to pinpoint troublesome areas for further study. All three parts indicate the section of *The Everyday Writer* that will be helpful for your review.

If you use this booklet and *The Everyday Writer* to review for the test, you should be familiar not only with the skills to be tested but also with the way the questions are set up on the actual test. An organized plan for studying, as well as a familiarity with the content and appearance of the test, should help decrease your anxiety and increase your confidence and skills.

