

Northeast Iowa Community College
ACCUPLACER Study Packet

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Introductory WritePlacer Plus

REV. 10/12 | Marketing_09\ACCUPLACER\Study Packet Covers

student driven ... community focused



WritePlacer Plus

WritePlacer is intended to function as a direct measure of your writing skills.

You will compose a multi-paragraph essay of about 300-600 words on a specific topic. Assume that your audience is a classroom teacher. You will be given 60 minutes to plan, compose, review, and edit the essay.

The essay will be scored on the basis of how effectively it communicates a whole message on the specified prompt. Your score will be based on your ability to express, organize, and support your ideas and opinions, not the position you take on the essay topic. The following characteristics of written composition will be considered.

- **Focus**—The clarity and consistency with which you maintain your main idea or point of view.
- **Organization**—The clarity with which you structure your response and present a logical sequence of ideas.
- **Development and Support**—The extent to which you elaborate on your ideas and present supporting details.
- **Sentence Structure**—The effectiveness and consistency with which you communicate your message in standard and correct sentence units.
- **Mechanical and Usage Conventions**—The extent to which your writing is free from errors in grammar usage, agreement, punctuation, capitalization, spelling, etc.

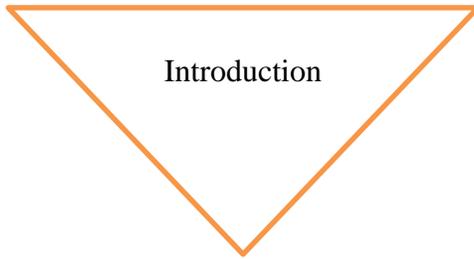
The WritePlacer Plus is published by the same company which puts out the SAT tests. The most recent SAT tests include an essay-writing section similar in format to the one featured on the WritePlacer test. If you would like to examine sample topics and responses, you may want to obtain some recent SAT preparation books, especially ones that focus on the essay-writing section of the SAT. Most libraries and many high school counselors have SAT preparation books.

In writing to the prompt in WritePlacer Plus, you should practice basic essay-writing skills that are taught in standard writing classes. Most conventional essays consist of an introductory paragraph which contains the main idea or summary sentence of the essay. This is called the thesis statement. This thesis statement is then developed and supported with specific details in the next few paragraphs of the essay. Finally, a concluding paragraph finishes up the essay with a summary of the ideas mentioned in the body of the paragraph. Sometimes this final paragraph presents a conclusion based on the details presented in the body of the essay.

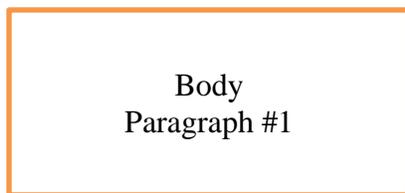
On the back side of this page is a visual and verbal blueprint that gives some idea of how to construct a typical essay based on the guidelines mentioned in the previous paragraph. Some key points to remember are that the essay should be well developed with sufficient appropriate details and that correct sentence structure, grammar conventions, and mechanics should be used.

Organizing the Essay

The essay is written in three sections: the introduction, the body, and the conclusion. The diagram below illustrates the development of each of these sections.

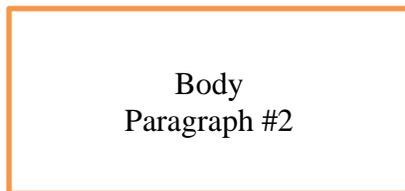


- (1) Broad general statement to the Topic/Thesis.
- (2) Narrows to
- (3) The Thesis Statement/Topic Sentence.

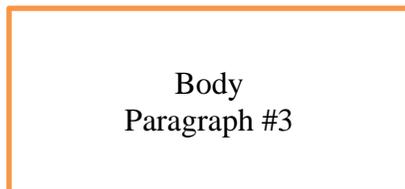


Each paragraph in the body is developed in the following style: Topic Sentence first, followed by supporting details.

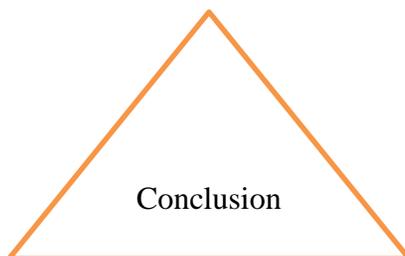
In developing body paragraphs, use one (or any mix) of the following items:



- (1) Concrete details
- (2) Examples/Incidents
- (3) Facts/Statistics
- (4) Reasons



The number of body paragraphs used is determined by the content of the paper.



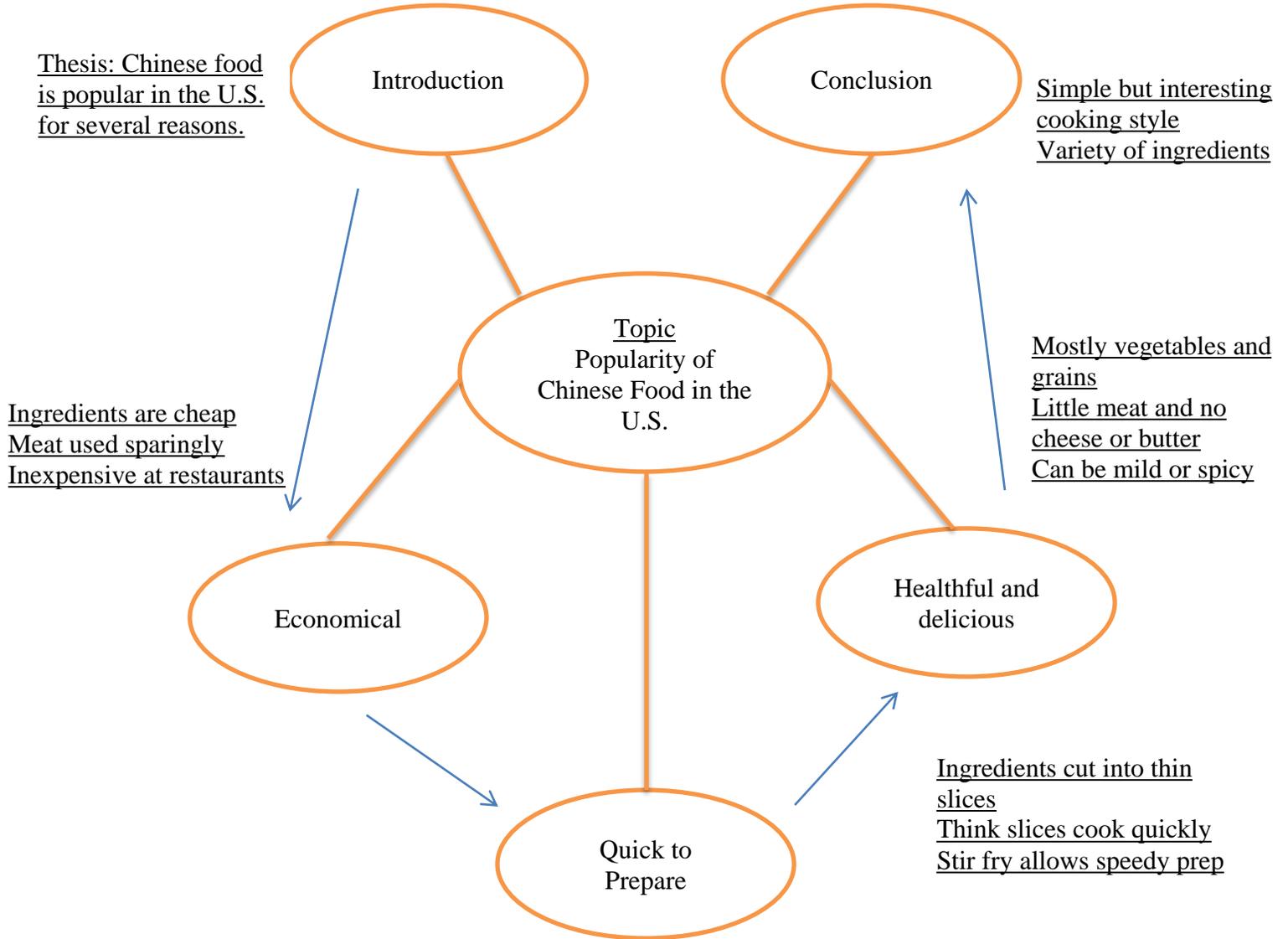
- (1) Restatement of Thesis using different language.
- (2) Repetition of one other key word or idea from the introduction.
- (3) Repetition of several key words or ideas—one from each body paragraph.
- (4) A broadening sentence which relates what has been said in the essay to
 - a. More people
 - b. More areas of life
 - c. The future

Planning and Developing Details for a WriterPlacer Essay

If a prompt such as “Why is Chinese cuisine so popular in the United States?” were given as a topic, you might choose to organize your thoughts in your head without any kind of formal pre-writing activity, but this would not be recommended. Or you might organize your thoughts by means of a formal outline as presented below. An alternate form of organizational pre-writing would be a conceptual map or diagram as presented on the opposite side of this page. You will be required to hand in any pre-writing or planning notes after you complete your essay. However, the planning notes will not be used in the evaluation of your essay. Regardless of the method you might select to organize your thoughts, the details included in the examples on these pages offer illustrations of the kinds of appropriate details that could be used to develop a well-organized, multi-paragraph essay on the topic “Why is Chinese cuisine so popular in the United States?” (Please note that this topic is being used only as an example. This will not be the topic that you will be directed to write on during the WriterPlacer test.)

- I. Introduction
 - A. Thesis statement: Chinese cuisine is popular in the United States for several reasons.
 - B. Background/other information
 1. Chinese restaurants and take-out shops everywhere
 2. This style is widely used in homes
- II. Economical
 - A. Cost of Ingredients
 1. Inexpensive ingredients such as rice
 2. Meat used in small amounts
 - B. Cost of meals eaten out
 1. Most restaurants inexpensive
 2. Take out reasonably priced
- III. Quick to prepare
 - A. Before cooking
 1. Ingredients sliced into thin strips
 2. Thin strips cook more quickly
 - B. Cooking
 1. Many foods stir-fried
 2. A quick method of cooking
- IV. Generally healthful and delicious
 - A. Mostly vegetables, grains (rice, noodles)
 - B. Uses little meat, no cheese or butter
 - C. Unusual combinations of foods
 - D. Can be mild or spicy
- V. Conclusion
 - A. Chinese cuisine is one of the world’s most interesting cooking styles
 - B. Varied—everyone bound to find something to like

Organizing my ideas



1. How can I group my ideas into categories?

2. How can I order my ideas?

For sample essays go to: professionals.collegeboard.com

Supporting with Details

Now you're ready to support your main ideas with subtopics and specific details. That is, you'll think of ways to convince your reader that what you say in your thesis is true. How could you convince your reader that buying and selling on eBay has taught you about business and geography? You might write

I have learned a great deal about business and geography by buying and selling items on eBay. (because)

1. I must be honest in my dealings with other buyers and sellers.
2. I have to keep good records and be very organized.
3. I learn about places I have never heard of before by shipping packages all over the world.

Note—Sometimes if you imagine a *because* at the end of your thesis statement, it will help you write your reasons or subtopics clearly and in parallel form.

Types of Support

The subtopics developing a thesis and the details presented in a paragraph are not always reasons. Supporting points may take many forms based on the purpose of the essay or paragraph. They may be:

- Examples (in an illustration)
- Steps (in a how-to or process paper)
- Types or kinds (in a classification)
- Meanings (in a definition)
- Similarities and/or differences (in a comparison/contrast)
- Causes or effects (in a cause-and-effect analysis)

Whatever points you choose, supporting points should develop the main idea expressed in the thesis or topic sentence and prove it to be true.

You should have several details to support each topic sentence. If you find that you have little to say after writing the topic sentence, ask yourself what detail or examples will make your reader believe that the topic sentence is true.

Transitional Expressions

Transitional expressions within a paragraph and between paragraphs in an essay help the reader move from one detail or example to the next and from one supporting point to the next.

Addition signals: one, first of all, second, the third reason, also next, another, and, in addition, moreover, furthermore, finally, last of all

Time signals: first, then, next, after, as, before, while, meanwhile, soon, now, during, finally

Space signals: next to, across, on the opposite side, to the left, to the right, above, below, near, nearby

Change-of-direction signals: but, however, yet, in contrast, although, otherwise, still, on the contrary, on the other hand

Illustration signals: for example, for instance, specifically, as an illustration, once, such as an illustration, once, such as

Conclusion signals: therefore, consequently, thus, then, as a result, in summary, to conclude, last of all, finally

WritePlacer Plus Scoring Guide

Score of 8	score of 7	score of 6	Score of 5
An essay in this category demonstrates <i>clear and consistent</i> mastery, although it may have a few minor errors. A typical essay	An essay in this category demonstrates <i>reasonably consistent</i> mastery, although it will have occasional errors or lapses in quality. A typical essay	An essay in this category demonstrates <i>uneven but reasonably consistent</i> mastery, although it will have some errors and lapses in quality. A typical essay	An essay in this category demonstrates <i>adequate</i> mastery, although it will have lapses in quality. A typical essay
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> effectively and insightfully develops a point of view on the issue and demonstrates outstanding critical thinking, using clear appropriate examples, reasons, and other evidence to support its position. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> effectively develops a point of view on the issue and demonstrates strong critical thinking, generally using appropriate examples, reasons, and other evidence to support its position 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> effectively develops a point of view on the issue and demonstrates strong critical thinking, generally using appropriate examples, reasons, and other evidence with notable exceptions, to support its position 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develops a point of view on the issue and demonstrates competent critical thinking, using adequate examples, reasons, and other evidence to support its position
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is well organized and clearly focused, demonstrating clear coherence and smooth progression of ideas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is well organized and focused demonstrating coherence and progression of ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is mostly organize and focused demonstrating coherence and progression of ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is generally organized and focused, demonstrating some coherence and progression of ideas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> exhibits skillful use of language, using a varied, accurate, and apt vocabulary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> exhibits facility in the use of language, using appropriate vocabulary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> exhibits a fairly consistent use of language, using appropriate vocabulary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> exhibits adequate but inconsistent facility in the use of language, using generally appropriate vocabulary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrates meaningful variety in sentence structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrates variety in sentence structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrates a fairly consistent variety in sentence structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrates some variety in sentence structure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is free of most errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is generally free of most errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is generally free of most errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics with notable exceptions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> has some errors in grammar usage, and mechanics

Score of 4	score of 3	score of 2	score of 1
An essay in this category <i>demonstrates a nearly adequate mastery</i> , although it will have some lapses in quality. A typical essay	An essay in this category <i>demonstrates developing mastery</i> , and is marked on ONE OR MORE of the following weaknesses:	An essay in category <i>demonstrates little mastery</i> , and is flawed by ONE OR MORE of the following weaknesses:	An essay in this category <i>demonstrates very little or no mastery</i> and is severely flawed by ONE OR MORE of the following weaknesses:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develops a point of view on the issue, mostly demonstrating competent critical thinking, adequate examples, reasons, and other evidence to support its position 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develops a point of view on the issue, demonstrating some critical thinking, but may do so inconsistently or use inadequate examples, reasons, or other evidence to support its position 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develops a point of view on the issue that is vague or seriously limited and demonstrates weak critical thinking, providing inappropriate or insufficient examples, reasons, or other evidence to support its position 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develops no viable point of view on the issues, or provides little or no evidence to support its position
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is somewhat organized and focused, demonstrating some coherence and progression of ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is limited in its organization or focus, or may demonstrate some lapses in coherence or progression of ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is poorly organized and/or focused, or demonstrates serious problems with coherence or progression of ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is disorganized or unfocused, resulting in a disjointed or incoherent essay
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> exhibits uneven facility in the use of language, and a few notable lapses in vocabulary or word choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> displays developing facility in the use of language, but sometimes uses weak vocabulary or inappropriate word choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> displays very little facility in the use of language, using very limited vocabulary or incorrect word choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> displays fundamental errors in vocabulary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrates limited sentence structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lacks variety or demonstrates problems in sentence structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrates frequent problems in sentence structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrates several flaws in sentence structure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> has moderate errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> contains an accumulation of error in grammar, usage and mechanics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> contains errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics so serious that meaning is somewhat obscured 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> contains pervasive errors in grammar, usage, or mechanics that persistently interfere with meaning

Score of 0

No holistic score—This writing sample has not been given a holistic score or the six dimension scores because it is either a blank page, incoherent, insufficient (too short to assess), in a foreign language, or off topic.