Transfer Orientation
Writing Skills Test (WST)
Information Session

Peer Connections
2015

Created by
Manuel Vasquez and Amy Lehman

Adapted by
Pauline Le

Agenda

- Introduction to the WST

- The Essay Section

- Preparation for the WST

Introduction to the WST

- **GWAR** (Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement)

- **Prerequisite for WST:** Completion of an Area A2 course with a "C" or better (e.g. English 1A).

- **Passing WST:** Eligible for enrollment in 100W and SJSU Studies courses.

- Completion of a second semester composition course is strongly recommended (e.g. Area A3 course or English 1B at SJSU).

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Introduction to the WST

WST Test Format

- Timed personal essay
- 1 hour and 10 minute essay
  - 15 minutes for planning
  - 45 minutes for essay writing
  - 10 minutes for proofreading

- Score report within 2-3 weeks
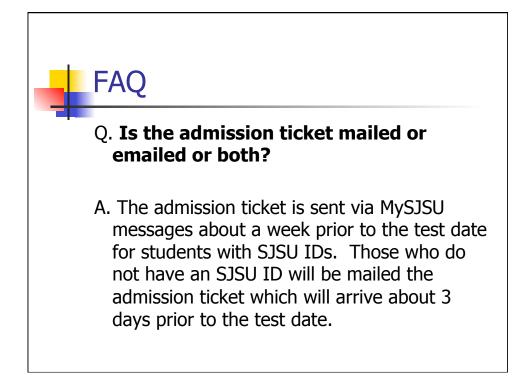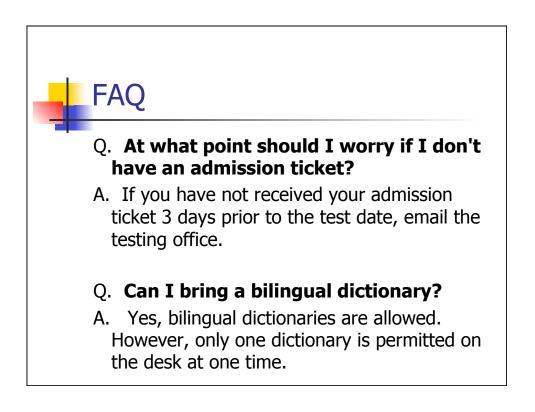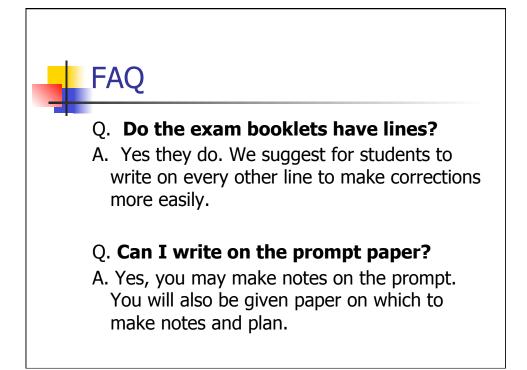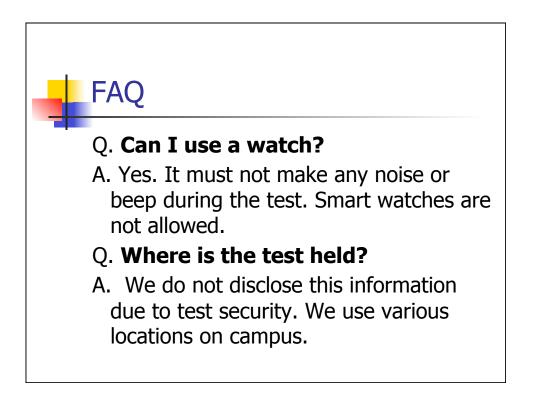
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WST Test Dates 2015

Test Date	Registration Deadline	Accommodation Deadline **	Late Registration Begins	Number of Late Registration Sessions
February 7, 2015	January 15, 2015	January 7, 2015	January 20, 2015	N/A
April 25, 2015	April 2, 2015	March 25, 2015	April 7, 2015	N/A
June 6, 2015	May 14, 2015	May 6, 2015	May 19, 2015	N/A
July 18, 2015	June 25, 2015	June 18, 2015	June 30, 2015	N/A
September 19, 2015	August 27, 2015	August 19, 2015	September 1, 2015	N/A
October 31, 2015	October 8, 2015	October 1, 2015	October 13, 2015	N/A

Currently, testing fee of **$38.00** and late registration fee of **$15.00** are non-refundable. Fees are subject to change.

What do I need?
(Refer to Information Bulletin)

- Printout of admission ticket
- Required photo ID *(valid, state or federal, photo ID issued within the US or a valid recognizable foreign passport)*
- Pens for the essay section *(black or blue)*
- Paper Dictionary without a thesaurus

Photos from montrealpens.com and keetsa.com

FAQ

Q. **Is the admission ticket mailed or emailed or both?**

A. The admission ticket is sent via MySJSU messages about a week prior to the test date for students with SJSU IDs. Those who do not have an SJSU ID will be mailed the admission ticket which will arrive about 3 days prior to the test date.

FAQ

Q. **At what point should I worry if I don't have an admission ticket?**

A. If you have not received your admission ticket 3 days prior to the test date, email the testing office.

Q. **Can I bring a bilingual dictionary?**

A. Yes, bilingual dictionaries are allowed. However, only one dictionary is permitted on the desk at one time.

FAQ

Q. **Do the exam booklets have lines?**

A. Yes they do. We suggest for students to write on every other line to make corrections more easily.

Q. **Can I write on the prompt paper?**

A. Yes, you may make notes on the prompt. You will also be given paper on which to make notes and plan.

FAQ

Q. **Can I use a watch?**

A. Yes. It must not make any noise or beep during the test. Smart watches are not allowed.

Q. **Where is the test held?**

A. We do not disclose this information due to test security. We use various locations on campus.

FAQ

Q. **What if I need a special accommodations?**

A. Please contact the Testing Office or the Accessible Education Center no later than 4 weeks before the test date to make any special requests.

Scores

Essay Score	Status
11-12	Waiver Eligible
7-10	Pass
6 or lower	Fail

Scoring Guidelines

- Six point scale for essay
  - 6 is the highest
  - 0 is the lowest*

- Two readers

- Readers' scores are added to make essay out of 12.

Note: A WST score of "0" will be reported on MySJSU as "0.1"

Your essay score...

- Is determined by 2 readers who grade your essay from 0-6

- Is graded on the following:
  - Maturity of thought and expression
  - Understanding and response to the topic
  - Organization, support, and development
  - Fluency with language, syntactic variety
  - Grammar and sentence mechanics

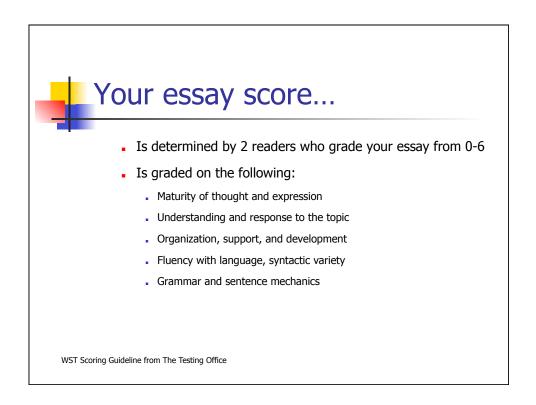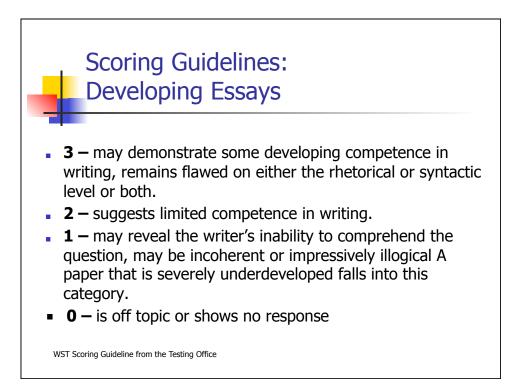WST Scoring Guideline from The Testing Office

Scoring Guidelines: Passing Essays

- **6 –** demonstrates superior competence in writing on both rhetorical and syntactic levels.

- **5 –** demonstrates clear competence in writing on both the rhetorical and syntactic levels, though it may have occasional minor errors.

- **4 –** demonstrates competence in writing on both the rhetorical and syntactic levels.

WST Scoring Guideline from the Testing Office

Scoring Guidelines: Developing Essays

- **3 –** may demonstrate some developing competence in writing, remains flawed on either the rhetorical or syntactic level or both.
- **2 –** suggests limited competence in writing.
- **1 –** may reveal the writer's inability to comprehend the question, may be incoherent or impressively illogical A paper that is severely underdeveloped falls into this category.
- **0 –** is off topic or shows no response

WST Scoring Guideline from the Testing Office

15 minute planning phase

- You have 15 minutes to prepare before writing your essay. How do you use this time?
    - Read and **reread** the prompt.
    - **Mark** the prompt.
    - Brainstorm and outline.

Direct or Guided Prompt

For this type of prompt, the essay structure is given, or suggested.

- Multi-part question
- Argument

"Describe a special skill that you have acquired on your own. How did you first become interested in acquiring this skill, and how have you been able to utilize it in your life?"

"College students should have the liberty to choose their own coursework. Do you agree or disagree with this statement?"

Open-Ended Prompt

In this type of prompt, students
- may have few guidelines
- determine the structure/organization

"Describe the ideal work environment."

"Describe a pastime that has helped you persevere through a difficult time in your life."

Quote Prompts

In this type of prompt, you will read a quotation and might be asked to
- interpret it in your own words
- agree or disagree
- apply it to your own life

"It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness."
– John F. Kennedy

"It is not the hours we put in on the job, it is what we put into the hours that counts."
– Sidney Madwed

How to Prepare

- Essay overview
- Practice the pre-write and prompt
- Work with a writing tutor at Peer Connections or The Writing Center
- Attend general writing workshops from The Writing Center

How to Prepare

Barron's
How to Prepare for the California State University Writing Proficiency Exams

BARRON'S
HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY WRITING PROFICIENCY EXAMS
3RD EDITION

Photo from betterworldbooks.com

How to Prepare

WEBSITES:
- Purdue University's Online Writing Lab:
    - http://owl.english.purdue.edu

BOOKS:
- <u>501 Writing Prompts</u> published by Learning Express
- <u>Rules for Writers</u> by Diana Hacker
- <u>Elements of Style</u> by William Strunk and E.B. White

Multiple Attempts

Photo from wea-sw.org.uk

- After two failed attempts, you can enroll in ENGL or LLD 100A, <u>and pass</u>, to meet the WST requirement.

- Continue taking writing courses and workshops to assist you in meeting University writing standards.

- Visit tutors to review specific test-taking/writing skills.

SJSU Campus Resources

- Peer Connections
  - SSC 600: http://peerconnections.sjsu.edu/
  - Peer Mentor request: http://bit.ly/pmrequestform
- Writing Center
  - Clark 126: www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/
- Testing Office
  - IS 228: testing.sjsu.edu
- Accessible Education Center
  - Admin 110: www.sjsu.edu/aec
- Counseling and Psychological Services
  - Admin 201: www.sjsu.edu/counseling/
  - Spartan Success Series Workshops