Sample Practical Reading Passage: Reading Placement

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 of fuel is the main contributor to low efficiency. If the technician cannot raise the 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 system to increase its efficiency.


(Reasoning)
1. The passage suggests that the presence of carbon monoxide in the atmosphere:
   A. can provide information regarding combustion efficiency.
   B. is found in 75% of heating systems tested.
   C. can be reduced by decreasing heating system draft.
   D. is the main cause of low efficiency in heating systems.
   E. is more reliable than flue temperature as an indicator of combustion efficiency.

(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.

Answers:

1. A
2. C

These items are not actual items from COMPASS™ but are similar in content and format. These items are presented for illustrative purposes and do not constitute a full representation of item content.
Sample Humanities Passage: Reading Placement

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 West. 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 1880s 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 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.


(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.

Answers:
1. D  2. B

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Sample Essay: Writing Skills Placement

Examinees are presented with an essay similar to the one below and are asked to look for errors in grammar, punctuation, usage, and style. When examinees find what they believe to be errors, they move the mouse pointer to the appropriate part of the text and click the mouse. On the right side of the screen five options appear for revising that area of text. Note that the first option is always identical to the original wording in the text, and thus represents a NO CHANGE option. Examinees can choose to revise any section of the essay. After revising the essay, examinees are routed to two items focusing on rhetorical strategies.

The essay below contains the same number and types of errors that an actual Writing Skills Test unit would contain; however, for demonstration purposes, only a handful of the segments below have been selected for revision. These segments are indicated by bold type, and the items associated with them are shown below. (Note: There are additional errors in the essay that are not in bold that a student in an actual testing situation would need to respond to.)

An increasing number of lakes and rivers in the northern United States invaded are being by a mussel no larger than a fingernail.

The zebra mussel probably steamed aboard a transatlantic ship sometime in the mid-1980s from the Caspian Sea into U.S. waters. Despite its growth was explosive, partly because the species was preyed upon by very few native predators in its new environment. As a consequence, the zebra mussels did find a plentiful food supply. They eat huge amounts of phytoplankton, which tiny free-floating sea organisms that dwell in water. Scientists are concerned when the mussels may compete aggressively with other species that depend on the same food supply.

Others concerned by the invading species are industry, public utilities, and boat owners. Zebra mussels cluster in huge colonies, being anchored themselves to any hard surface. These colonies can clog your water intake pipes of electric and water treatment plants. Fishery specialists are currently casting about and baiting their hooks to gun down control methods that will cause the lowest amount of damage to water supplies and other aquatic species. Two of the alternatives exploring are interrupting the species reproductive cycle and finding a bacterium harmful only to zebra mussels.

(End of Essay)

(Basic Grammar and Usage: Ensuring Grammatical Agreement)

Segment 1

A. An increasing number of lakes and rivers
B. An increasingly number of lakes and rivers
C. A number increasing of lakes and rivers
D. A number increasingly of lakes and rivers
E. An increasing of lakes and rivers
(Style: Avoiding Redundancy)
Segment 2
A. was preyed upon by very few native predators in its new environment.
B. found very few predators in its new environment.
C. found very few native predators and was seldom eaten in its new environment.
D. was preyed on by very few native predator species in its new environment.
E. was seldom eaten or preyed on by native predator species in its new environment.

(Sentence Structure: Relating Clauses)
Segment 3
A. Scientists are concerned when the mussels
B. Scientists are concerned that if the mussels
C. Scientists are concerned wherein the mussels
D. Scientists are concerned that the mussels
E. Scientists are concerned as if the mussels

(Strategy: Making Decisions about Cohesive Devices)
Item 4 (end-of-passage)
The writer wishes to add a sentence at the end of Paragraph 1 that will serve as a transition between Paragraphs 1 and 2 and will establish the main focus of the essay. Which of the following sentences most effectively fulfills that purpose?
A. The zebra mussel will provide a difficult challenge for public utility managers.
B. The zebra mussel is only the latest in a series of newly introduced species to thrive in the U.S.
C. No one knows how far south and west the zebra mussel is likely to spread, but scientists think they may be on the trail of important clues.
D. Although small in size, the zebra mussel may become a huge problem for pleasure boat owners in North American waterways.
E. Despite its size, however, the zebra mussel may have a dramatic effect on North American waterways.

Answers:

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VOCABULARY

Circle the correct answer:

1. The two old friends had not seen each other for years, but a lucky _____________ brought them together.
   a. enclosure  
   b. encounter  
   c. justification  
   d. visibility  
   e. installment

2. Painting the house was an _____________ task. It was not surprising that they were exhausted when they were finished.
   a. estranged  
   b. opportune  
   c. enviable  
   d. arduous  
   e. insensitive

3. The teacher asked Todd to speak more _____________ so that everyone in the class would be able to hear him.
   a. fondly  
   b. hurriedly  
   c. enthusiastically  
   d. conveniently  
   e. loudly

4. The artisan used a knife to _____________ the piece of wood into the shape of a bird.
   a. grind  
   b. twist  
   c. whittle  
   d. whisk  
   e. issue

Answers: 1. b  2. d  3. e  4. c
Vocabulary (Con’t)

Circle the correct answer:

5. A skilled administrator knows when to ______________ responsibility.
   a. prolong
   b. pretend
   c. delegate
   d. escape
   e. impress

6. Good study habits result in students being ______________ for class.
   a. on time
   b. present
   c. absent
   d. prepared
   e. late

7. The soda fountain is a ______________ place to meet other students.
   a. distinguished
   b. popular
   c. affordable
   d. disappointing
   e. grandiose

   a. thorough
   b. neat
   c. astounding
   d. difficult
   e. conspicuous

Answers: 5.c, 6.d, 7.b, 8.a
MORE WRITING SKILLS

(Circle the correct answers)

Punctuation:

1. What time is it I am afraid we are going to be late.
   a. NO CHANGE
   b. it, I
   c. it, I
   d. if? I
   e.

2. There's always the possibility that Trina's sisters won't want to go with us but let's invite them.
   a. NO CHANGE
   b. Add two commas and three apostrophes.
   c. Add one comma and three apostrophes.
   d. Add one comma and four apostrophes.

Other:

3. Which of the alternatives places the following sentences in the most logical order?
   (1) When I arrived, fifty customers were waiting outside. (2) I read in the newspaper that Bill's
   Furniture Mart was having a big sale. (3) "The store hasn't opened yet," one of them said.
   (4) I got in my car and drove to the store.
   a. NO CHANGE
   b. 1, 4, 3, 2
   c. 2, 4, 1, 3
   d. 4, 3, 2, 1

4. Three of the sentences below are grammatically correct. Which one is NOT correct?
   a. The curtain had just rose, and the play was supposed to begin, Danny could not
      remember his lines.
   b. The curtain had just risen; the play was supposed to begin, but Danny could not
      remember his lines.
   c. The play was about to begin; the curtain rose, but Danny forgot his lines.
   d. As the curtain was rising and the play was about to begin, Danny panicked and forgot
      his lines.

5. In which of the following sentences is the meaning expressed most clearly and effectively?
   a. Because the day seemed to be a good one for these activities, Tracy and Chris went to
      the park, which was a long walk from downtown, for an outdoor picnic lunch and an
      afternoon of going to fly kites, which Tracy liked, and which Chris liked too.
   b. An outdoor repast, or picnic, and an afternoon of recreation was experienced
      approvingly by Chris as well as her younger sibling, or brother, Tracy.
   c. Chris and Tracy, who is her younger brother, equally enjoyed the food and the fun
      outdoors,
   d. Both Chris and her younger brother Tracy enjoyed their walk to the park for a picnic
      and an afternoon of kite flying.

Answers:
1. d  2. d  3. c  4. a  5. d