

MTC Writing Placement (WSAMP)

Scores & Essay Characteristics

Below you will find each WSAMP essay score, along with a description of the qualities and characteristics of the typical essay as it is scored at each level.

For complete information about how a combination of your WSAMP writing placement score AND your COMPASS or ASSET reading scores determine course placement at MTC, see the “MTC Writing Placement Overview and FAQs document” also found on this site.

WSAMP Score of 30

An essay that earns a WSAMP score of 30 generally demonstrates the following characteristics:

Purpose/Focus

Responds clearly and fully to the question asked in the prompt chosen:

- Does not revert to a much more general topic
- Does not dwell primarily on just one part of the issue specified by the prompt
- Does not go off on an extended tangent

Audience

Demonstrates an awareness of the ideas or background that an academic, educated audience of readers might bring to any discussion of the topic/issue raised by the prompt by

- Acknowledging different perspectives (and reasons behind those perspectives) on the issue, including those that may be different from those of the writer
- Using examples from the news or from previous courses, reading, history, etc. that connect with a larger societal “conversation” about the issue

Structure

Shows familiarity with essay structure and the conventions of essay as a genre:

- Responds clearly to the question asked in the prompt.
- Includes an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion
- States a central thesis that addresses the prompt and makes a claim that needs support
- Breaks down the overall thesis into supporting ideas, reasons, or points in body paragraphs

Development

Develops body paragraphs by

- Providing explanations that make connections and reasoning clear
- Presenting and discussing relevant, specific examples that further develop the main idea

Style/Transitions/Vocabulary

Enhances meaning and connections for readers through stylistic choices, including:

- Variety of sentence structures
- Transitional phrases and words
- Appropriate diction
- Precise word choice

Editing

Shows familiarity with and an ability to edit in accordance with standard written English.

WSAMP Score of 20

An essay that earns a WSAMP score of 20 has several but not all the features of an essay scoring 30; an essay earning a WSAMP score of 20 generally demonstrates the following characteristics:

Purpose/Focus

Responds to the question asked in the prompt chosen:

- May begin well, but revert to a much more general topic
- May focus on only one part of the issue specified by the prompt, becoming repetitive

Audience

Demonstrates some awareness of audience and different perspectives on the issue:

- May not seem to acknowledge or value other perspectives
- May seem unaware of or confused about standard terms used in discussing the issue

Structure

Shows some sense of essay structure:

- Has a central thesis that makes a claim in response to the topic or prompt
- Constructs a beginning, middle, and ending, though paragraphing may not as clearly reflect the level of organization found in an essay that earns a 30
- May not organize all ideas, points, reasons that support the thesis into separate body paragraphs

Development

Does not fully develop body paragraphs; body paragraphs

- May be very short and/or are very general
- May restate or repeat the same idea
- May lack clear progression of ideas
- May lack specific examples, or may not provide discussion of examples needed to clearly connect those examples to the body paragraph's main idea and the essay's thesis.

Style

Stylistic strategies are less sophisticated and varied than in essays earning a 30:

- May revert to simple sentence structures without much variety
- Seems less able to make distinctions between different kinds of logical connections through transitional words and phrases
- May use transitions primarily in mechanical ways when they are used

Editing

Shows some familiarity with standard written English, but

- May have sentence structure errors or make poor word choices that indicate lack of fluency with standard written English
- May move without purpose or awareness between more formal and informal diction or vocabulary choices
- May have grammatical errors that, in places, interfere with communication

WSAMP Score of 10

An essay that earns a WSAMP score of 10 generally demonstrates one or more of the following characteristics:

Purpose/Focus

- May not address the question asked in the prompt chosen

Audience

- Demonstrates little awareness of audience or different perspectives on the issue

Structure

Shows very little familiarity with conventions of essay genre:

- May begin essay with “I’m going to talk about . . .,” or “This essay will be about . . .,” or may jump right into an answer assuming the audience already knows the question
- May not have a central thesis OR may have a central thesis but does not break the thesis down into supporting points, reasons, or ideas
- May attempt 1-2 paragraphs but these paragraphs do not provide a clear structure

Development

- Contains general, abstract statements and few or no specific examples
- May demonstrate unclear thinking or illogical arguments or connections

Style & Editing

- May seem to lack vocabulary for expressing distinctions, leaving many connections unstated
- May use very simple sentence structures OR convoluted sentence structures with many errors
- May have many unedited grammatical errors that greatly interfere with communication

WSAMP Score of 0

(and Course Options)

In general, a WSAMP score of “0” indicates that the student lacks knowledge of or experience in putting ideas into writing. A writing sample of zero usually has several major problems in communicating and/or lacks enough evidence of writing ability to earn a 10.

An essay that earns a WSAMP score of 0 generally demonstrates one or more of the following characteristics:

Purpose/Focus

- Does not refer/relate to question asked
- Supporting ideas and details do not relate to question asked or thesis and topic sentences

Audience

- Lacks understanding of the needs of a reader and how to communicate via written text with a reader who does not know the writer.
 - May simply copy or repeat the question as an opener.
 - May jump right into an answer, as if talking to someone physically present whom the writer knows. First sentence may read, “Yes, because it’s important to children.”

Structure

- Lacks overall organization even if paragraphed
- No coherent flow of ideas

- Confusing sentence structure- reader has difficulty discerning what exactly the writer is referring to or discussing

Development

- Shorter essay responses may be both under-developed and confusing to the reader because connections are left unstated on the page.
- Longer essay responses are often repetitious, illogical or contradictory
- Unclear/illogical thinking throughout; contradictory ideas appear in the same sentence or paragraph

Style & Editing

- Excessive grammar, usage, and spelling errors suggest writer is unfamiliar with written English; for example, “yousd” for *used*, “perons” for *parents*
- Undeveloped vocabulary
- Little or random punctuation
- May have few complete sentences
- Errors that interfere with communication are numerous

Course Options:

Students whose WSAMP earns a score of “0” are required to

- Pass the reading course they place into BEFORE attempting ENG 032

In addition, for additional practice with written texts, students whose WSAMP earns a score of “0” will be recommended to take

- ENG 012 (English Grammar) and/or
- COL 104 (Basic Vocabulary)