

## COMPASS Reading Test

### What is COMPASS?

COMPASS is an untimed, computerized test that helps students evaluate their skills and place them into appropriate courses.

The Reading Placement Test can help determine if students have the skills to succeed in standard entry-level college courses or if they need developmental reading courses.

Items have multiple-choice response options. Five types of reading comprehension passages are used:

- Practical Reading
- Prose Fiction
- Humanities
- Social Sciences
- Natural Sciences

### Tips for taking the COMPASS Reading Test

Be sure you understand the directions for each test before that test session begins.

Read each question carefully until you understand what the question is asking. If answering an item requires several steps, be sure you consider them all.

Be sure to answer every item. You are not penalized for guessing. Your score will provide more useful placement information if you answer every item, even if you guess.

Oakton is trying to determine how well you can handle college-level textbook material. As a learner, this information will be important to you, so help us evaluate your reading ability as accurately as possible.

## ACT COMPASS Reading Sample

### Sample Practical Reading Passage

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 of carbon dioxide or percent of 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.

Adapted from Alex Wilson and John Morrill, *Consumer Guide to Home Energy Savings*. ©1993 by the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy.

#### (Reasoning)

1. The passage suggests that 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 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.

## Sample Humanities Reading Passage

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 like 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.

Adapted from Gretel Ehrlich, *The Solace of Open Spaces*. ©1985 by Gretel Ehrlich.

(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

These items are not actual items from COMPASS<sup>®</sup> but are similar in content and format. These items are presented for illustrative purposes and do not constitute a full representation of item content.

<http://www.act.org/compass/sample/index.html>