

# Rowan University First-Year Writing Program Frequently Asked Questions about Placement

## How are students placed into First-Year Writing courses?

The Department of Writing Arts places students into courses based on scores on the SAT writing section. **Please note that this is not your SAT verbal score.** We use the following ranges:

College Composition I: 530 or above	Intensive College Composition I: 460 – 520	Foundations for College Writing: 450 or below
--	---	--

These ranges are based on comparisons of our past students' scores with their performance in our courses. While a writing sample produced in a restricted testing situation is only a "snapshot" of your writing skills, we have found these scores to be highly reliable predictors of how well you will do.

## Why is placement important?

Placement ensures that you have achieved the level of skills necessary for success in a particular course. If you are placed into a course that is beyond your ability, you will have to work very hard at catching up and may not be prepared to benefit from the learning experiences the course is intended to provide. Even if you pass the course, you may not be sufficiently prepared for the next one, or for the writing assignments you will be expected to do in courses beyond the First-Year Writing Program.

## What if I feel the SAT writing score is not representative of my writing abilities?

**At our discretion,** we will re-evaluate placement based on the following alternative evidence:

**Required:** A writing sample in response to a specific prompt, which we will provide. This essay must be hand-written and done in person. The purpose of this essay is to find out what you can produce in response to a prompt that reflects the learning objectives of our First-Year Writing Program. We require that you come to campus to write it so that we can see what you can do with no assistance. If you cannot come in the summer, we can evaluate your placement when you arrive in the fall.

**Required:** A statement from you about your reading and writing experiences and habits, answering the following questions:

- How much reading do you do outside of assigned reading from classes? What do you read?
- How much writing did you do in high school? What kinds of writing did you do?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses as a writer?
- Do you use a computer to draft and revise essays?

This statement helps us understand the extent to which you are comfortable with written expression and have had substantial practice with it.

**Desirable:** Samples of papers written in high school courses, preferably with teachers' comments. These samples help us see whether you have experience with writing assignments that are comparable to what our First-Year Writing Program requires.

**Optional:** High school transcripts showing grades in English classes. While grades do not directly reflect writing ability, they can show your level of effort with respect to academic work.

## What responsibilities do I have if I am placed into a different course despite a low SAT Writing score?

We are willing to place you into a different course if, on the basis of the additional evidence listed above, we feel confident that you will succeed. However, please be aware that a low SAT Writing score suggests that you may be at risk of not succeeding in the course. It is your responsibility to understand whether you are meeting the expectations of the course and to seek appropriate help from the instructor and/or a tutor as needed. Each course is based on specific assumptions about the level of skills that students have achieved prior to the course. If your skills are not up to those levels, it is your responsibility to make the extra effort to strengthen them.