

Introduction to the CLAST

The College Level Academic Skills Test (CLAST), was developed in 1982 to ensure that students in Florida's public colleges and universities receive an education of uniform quality. All college sophomores in Florida must pass the test before graduating with an associate in arts degree or entering an upper-division program at a state university. It is a four-hour exam, but you should allow an extra hour for check-in, test distribution, and the break. The test is given three times a year at colleges across the state. You can pick up an exam schedule at your school.

The CLAST includes four tests: an essay; an objective test of grammar, usage, and sentence structure; a reading test; and a mathematics test. This booklet will help you prepare for the essay test and the objective English test. The following chart lists at the left the specific skills that will be tested and on the right the relevant sections of *The Bedford Handbook*, Sixth Edition, that you can use to review and practice the skills.

ESSAY AND GRAMMAR SKILLS

SKILL	SECTION IN THE BEDFORD HANDBOOK
1. Selecting a subject that lends itself to development	1a
2. Determining the purpose and the audience for writing	1a
3. Limiting the subject to a topic that can be developed within the requirements of time, purpose, and audience	1a
4. Formulating a thesis or statement of main idea that focuses the essay	1c, 2a
5. Developing the thesis or main idea statement	
a) Providing adequate support that reflects the ability to distinguish between general and specific evidence	18b, 47e
b) Arranging the ideas and supporting details in a logical pattern appropriate to the purpose and focus	1d, 4c-d
c) Writing unified prose in which all supporting material is relevant to the thesis or main idea statement	3a, 4a-c
d) Writing coherent prose and providing effective transitional devices that clearly reflect the organizational pattern and the relationships of the parts of the essay	4e
6. Demonstrating effective word choice	
*a) Using words that convey the denotative and connotative meanings required by context	18a
b) Avoiding inappropriate use of slang, jargon, clichés, and pretentious language	17a-e, 18e
*c) Avoiding wordiness	16a-e

7. Using conventional sentence structure	
*a) Placing modifiers correctly	12a-e
*b) Coordinating and subordinating sentence elements according to their relative importance	14a-d
*c) Using parallel expressions for parallel ideas	9a-c
*d) Avoiding fragments, comma splices, and fused sentences	19a-c, 20a-d
8. Using effective sentence structure	
a) Using a variety of sentence patterns	18a-b, 15a-d
b) Avoiding overuse of passive constructions	8a
9. Observing the conventions of standard American English grammar and usage	
*a) Using standard verb forms	27a-e
*b) Maintaining agreement between subject and verb, pronoun and antecedent	21a-h, 22a-d
*c) Using proper case forms	24a-g, 25a-b
d) Maintaining a consistent point of view	3a, 13a
*e) Using adjectives and adverbs correctly	26a-d
*f) Avoiding inappropriate shifts in tense	3a, 13b-c
*g) Making logical comparisons	10c, 11a-c
*10. Observing standard practice for spelling, punctuation, and capitalization	
Spelling	43a-d
Punctuation	
Comma	32a-j; 33a-h
Semicolon	34a-d
Colon	35a-d
Quotation marks	37a-g
Apostrophe	36a-e
Capitalization	45a-g
11. Revising, editing, and proofreading for clarity, consistency, and conformity to the conventions of standard written American English	All sections

All of these skills will be considered in the holistic evaluation of the essay. In addition, the skills marked * will be tested on the multiple-choice English Language Skills subtest.

USING THIS BOOKLET

The preceding list of so many complex skills may seem overwhelming to you at first. However, a planned review of grammar and timed practice will help reduce your anxiety. Because the CLAST covers such a broad spectrum of writing skills, cramming will not be helpful. In fact, it may harm you by further raising your anxiety level and filling your head with isolated bits of information. Instead of cramming, try responding with a positive attitude and a positive approach: a planned review period where you can target any weak areas for special study.

This booklet is divided into three sections. Part One gives step-by-step suggestions for writing the essay. Part Two describes the skills tested on the objective test (the English

questions are set up. An organized plan for studying, knowledge of what the test will cover, and familiarity with how it will appear should help decrease your anxiety and increase your confidence as well as your skills.

This booklet is divided into three sections. Part I gives step-by-step suggestions for writing the essay and an explanation of the scoring system. Part II describes the multiple-choice test, explains the directions, and provides example test items with answers. Part III consists of sample essay topics and a multiple-choice test with answers which you can use to pinpoint troublesome areas that you will need to study further. All three parts indicate the sections of *The Bedford Handbook* that will be helpful in your review.