



ENGLISH PLACEMENT TEST  
STUDY GUIDE

Fall 2013

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# Welcome!

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Thank you for applying to Humber! This study guide was designed to help you complete the English Placement Test (EPT) to the best of your ability. This study guide will cover the following topics:

1. Tips for Writing the EPT
2. Writing Under Pressure
3. Expository Essays

## **What is the English Placement Test (EPT)?**

The EPT determines which English course students will take when they enter Humber. On the basis of the test results, some students may be required to complete an extra writing course before being permitted to enroll in their required writing course(s). Therefore, it is important to do your best work on the English Placement Test.

During the EPT, you will be given one hour to write an expository essay of 300 words.

## **EPT Test**

Fill in the date, time, and location of your EPT appointment time below.

Date\_\_\_\_\_

Time\_\_\_\_\_

Location\_\_\_\_\_

# Tips for Writing the Placement Test

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When grading placement tests, our readers are looking for coherent, developed, and clear essays. Use the following tips for the English Placement Test:

- Take the test seriously. **Your writing will determine the English course you will be placed in, and you may be required to take an extra course based on your test.**
- Use the entire time that is allotted to you, and write the required number of words (300). Don't rush.
- Use language appropriate for a college setting and avoid slang or clichés.
- Organize your essay into separate paragraphs: introduction, body, and conclusion.
- Provide a clear thesis statement.
- Provide clear topic sentences for your paragraphs, and write paragraphs that are unified and coherent.
- Use convincing and relevant details/examples to fully support your main points.
- Develop your main points clearly and logically.
- Write full sentences (no fragments), and avoid run-on sentences and comma splices.
- Check for correct grammar, e.g. subject / verb agreement.
- Use correct punctuation: e.g. commas and semi-colons.
- Proofread your writing carefully before submitting.

# Writing Under Pressure

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The EPT is a timed writing exercise: you are expected to complete your essay in one hour. Because you only have one hour, you will need to organize your time to be as effective as possible. Breaking any writing task into smaller parts will help you deal with the pressure of performing on demand.

- 1.) **Prepare before you get there.** You know you will write an expository essay, so be familiar with essay structure and use some of the prompts on pp. 12 to practice. This will help you feel more confident and relaxed when you are writing under pressure.
- 2.) **Don't start writing right away**—read **all** the questions and instructions over completely before you start writing. If you read through them all, you might find that the last one was the question that really spoke to you, and you don't want to miss that opportunity.
- 3.) **Read the questions over for cue or key words** (classify, define, discuss, summarize, etc.). Read actively, and underline important parts of the question/prompt.
- 4.) **Set aside some time to brainstorm and outline.** If you organize your thoughts from the beginning, your writing will be smoother and more focused.
- 5.) **Budget your time so that you can complete the task.** Make sure to give yourself time to both **plan** and **revise**.
- 6.) **Carefully proof read your work.**
- 7.) **Relax!** You've earned it

For more information on organizing ideas in exams, click the link below:

[http://www.humber.ca/liberalarts/sites/default/files/essay\\_outlines.pdf](http://www.humber.ca/liberalarts/sites/default/files/essay_outlines.pdf)

For handouts regarding mechanics/grammar, click the link below:

<http://www.humber.ca/liberalarts/las-writing-centre/handouts>

# The Expository Essay

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The essay you will be asked to write for The English Placement Test (EPT) is an expository essay. Expository essays explain or define something to the reader; this is something that we do in our daily lives quite a bit. For instance, this study guide is actually expository writing.

The expository essay you need to produce for the test needs to follow a clear path: there should be a beginning, middle, and end. You will learn more about introductions, body paragraphs, and conclusions in this section.

## Introductions

Introductions have two goals: they introduce what your essay is about, and they catch your reader's attention. Your thesis statement, which is the main idea of your essay, usually appears in the introduction.

### Some things to avoid

- Avoid dictionary definitions (especially for words that your reader likely knows already like love or happiness). Definitions are useful only if you are using a term that a general audience might be unfamiliar with.
- Don't overuse "essay language" (in this essay I will argue, my first point will be, etc).
- Avoid vague or general statements that don't say much about your topic. These statements often begin with phrases like "in today's society," or "throughout history."

## What is a Thesis Statement?

The thesis statement establishes what an essay is about, and the rest of the essay supports the thesis statement. It is a promise to your reader—you must be sure that the rest of the essay keeps that promise. Thesis statements are one of the most important sections of an essay. If a thesis statement is not successful, the rest of the essay can seem unfocused and unorganized.

### Strong thesis statements are specific

When developing a thesis statement, remember the Goldilocks approach—the scope of your thesis shouldn't be too broad or too narrow; you want something that is just right. For instance, consider the following thesis statement:

**Example:** Safe drivers proceed cautiously and keep focused on the road.

This example is specific but not too narrow to limit what can be said.

### Strong thesis statements are focused on one main idea

Be sure not to include information that you will not cover in your paper. Choose one main idea and focus on that.

**Example:** Drivers need to avoid texting while operating a car.

This example tackles one main idea that will be discussed throughout the essay.

For more information on thesis statements, click the link below:

<http://www.humber.ca/liberalarts/sites/default/files/THESIS%20STATEMENT%20FOR%20A%20COLLEGE%20PAPER.pdf>

## Essay Outline

Proper planning will be key to writing a successful essay for the EPT, and you should take (5-10 minutes) to create an outline of your ideas. While that may seem like a lot of time to take, your writing will be much more focused if you take the time to plan in the beginning.

Here is an example outline for an essay that describes student services offered on Humber's North campus.

### Thesis Statement:

*Humber's North Campus has three important services that can help students deal with some of the stresses of college life: the Writing Centre, Counselling Services, and the Athletic Complex.*

### Supporting Point 1:

*The Writing Centre at Humber's North Campus is a welcoming place where all students can get one-on-one help with their writing problems.*

**Examples and explanations:**

- a.) *close to Williams Coffee Pub*
- b.) *furniture gives an inviting feel*
- c.) *tutors help the students*

**Supporting Point 2:**

*Students who need assistance in the many other areas of their lives can make use of Counselling Services.*

**Examples and explanations:**

- a.) *has private rooms (confidential)*
- b.) *Academic, Personal and Career counselling available*
- c.) *Trained counsellors*

**Supporting Point 3:**

*The Athletic Complex offers access to sports and recreational activities to students who want to work off some of their stress in healthy ways.*

**Examples and explanations:**

- a.) *free*
- b.) *Triple Gym*
- c.) *additional facilities*

**Concluding Statement:** *The Writing Centre, Counselling Services, and the Athletic Complex provide valuable services to stressed-out students.*

For more information on brainstorming and planning, click the link below:

[http://www.humber.ca/liberalarts/sites/default/files/essays\\_for\\_exams-pt1-brainstorming.pdf](http://www.humber.ca/liberalarts/sites/default/files/essays_for_exams-pt1-brainstorming.pdf)



## Paragraphs and Topic Sentences

### Paragraphs

A paragraph is a chunk of writing held together by an idea or topic; it can be long or short, but it has its own particular focus. Paragraphs contain a topic sentence that explains what the paragraph is about, and supporting points that back up the topic sentence. Finally, the concluding sentence can reiterate the original point of the paragraph, transition into the next paragraph, or make conclusions.

Every sentence in a paragraph should back up the topic sentence. Consider the following paragraph:

It's ooey, gooey goodness. My sister's cheesecake is, without a doubt, the best cheesecake on the planet. The crumbly graham cracker crust is the perfect mix of salty and sweet. She uses only the best ingredients to make the light, fluffy filling. She's not as good at making cookies, though. However, the cherries that top her cheesecake are the perfect tarty treat to finish her famed dessert.

Does any particular sentence in the paragraph above seem out of place? The sentence that discusses the sister's cookie baking really doesn't fit with the rest of the paragraph. This sentence throws the reader off because it doesn't discuss what the topic sentence promises (cheesecake).

When writing a paragraph, always stop to check each sentence against your topic sentence. Does each sentence say something further about the topic, or does it lead the reader off on a tangent?

For more information on paragraphs, click the link below:

<http://www.humber.ca/liberalarts/sites/default/files/PARAGRAPH%20WRITING.pdf>

### Conclusions

Your conclusion is essentially your last chance to make an impression on your readers; it is a place to explore the implications of your argument. Because your conclusion is the last thing your reader sees, it is an extremely important, and memorable, part of your paper.

## Some things to avoid

- Stay away from phrases like “in conclusion,” “in summary,” or “in closing.” They are very formulaic, and can almost always be removed with no consequence to your writing.
- Do not introduce a new idea or topic that belongs in the body of your essay.
- Avoid ending with a rephrased thesis statement and summary of your essay.

## Example Essay

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Here is an example expository essay. It contains a strong thesis statement, supporting points articulated in clear topic sentences, and strong examples that back up the thesis.

*When students go to college, they can be overwhelmed by the demands of their new academic life. However, colleges like Humber offer many services for students when they need help coping with those demands. Humber’s North Campus has three important services that can help students deal with some of the stresses of college life: the Writing Centre, Counselling Services, and the Athletic Complex.*

*The Writing Centre at Humber’s North Campus is a welcoming place where all students can get one-on-one help with their writing problems. The Writing Centre is near Williams Coffee Pub, where coffee-drinkers and muffin-eaters can satisfy their daily craving while on their way to improving their English. Inside the Writing Centre, the glass wall, large windows, and round tables make the room feel inviting to students who may feel uneasy about getting help. It’s possible to drop in, but since the Centre gets very busy later in the semester, students are advised to make an appointment first. During the tutoring sessions, a tutor reads the student’s work carefully and then offers suggestions on how to improve it. The Writing Centre’s trained and experienced staff includes University of Waterloo co-op tutors, Humber peer tutors, English teachers, coordinators, and Writing Centre supervisors. Overall, the Writing Centre has a comfortable atmosphere that encourages students to learn to be their own editors.*

*Secondly, students who need assistance in the many other areas of their lives can make use of Counselling Services. The Counselling Services office can be found in D128. The office has private rooms where students can speak confidentially with trained counsellors. Counselling Services provides many different types of help. For example, academic counselling is available for students who are finding learning at college a challenge. Students can also make an appointment for a one-on-one meeting with a counsellor, attend study skills workshops, or pick up learning and stress-management handouts. Counselling Services staff can also connect students with peer tutors who are trained to tutor in all academic subjects. There are two other types of counselling offered as well. Career counselling is available so students can choose the right career. Personal counselling is available to help with personal problems and is fully confidential. Counselling Services has a small space but many trained professionals who can help with just about any problem that Humber students might face.*

*Finally, the Athletic Complex offers access to sports and recreational activities to students who want to work off some of their stress in healthy ways. The Athletic Complex is located in the A wing, past the well-known student pub, CAPS. Students need a valid student card get in, but then they can use athletic facilities free of charge. For many students, the main attraction in the Athletic Complex is the triple gym, where the Humber Hawks play their basketball games, but all students can use the gym for their own basketball, volleyball, or badminton games too. There is also a squash court available on the main floor. Upstairs there are additional facilities, such as a fitness studio where aerobics classes are held and the weight room that overlooks the gym. The weight room has treadmills, bikes, steppers, weight machines, and free weights. Humber's Athletic Complex is outstanding, because it has all the things an expensive fitness club has, but without the high price.*

*The Writing Centre, Counselling Services, and the Athletic Complex provide valuable services to stressed-out students. Whoever said that the best things in life are free was right. Humber's student services are the best, and, better yet, they are free.*

# Practice Prompts

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Practicing your essay writing will help you complete the EPT to the best of your ability. Here is a list of prompts similar to the ones found on the EPT. To practice for the test, time yourself and write a 300 word essay responding to one of the prompts.

1. Describe how to live on a budget.
2. Explain 3 disadvantages of using a laptop in class.
3. What are the key skills required for someone in your chosen field of work?
4. Describe an important holiday/celebration in your culture.
5. Explain 3 characteristics of the perfect vacation.
6. Discuss the benefits of reading frequently.
7. Explain 3 qualities of a good employer.
8. What are some ways that we can be more “green” or environmentally friendly in our day-to-day lives?
9. Describe the benefits of participating in team sports.
10. Describe the ways that you use social media.

# Good Luck!

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Reading through this study guide is the first step to successfully completing Humber's English Placement Test. By being prepared, you give yourself a better chance of writing a strong placement test.

Once you are in your program, we will offer you the following supports:

## The Writing Centre

The Writing Centre is available to give you additional help with your English skills. Staff in the Writing Centre can help with grammar and provide practice exercises. They can also explain errors in writing and suggest ways for you to improve your writing. You can visit the Writing Centre website for hours of operation and to book an appointment with a writing instructor. Please take note of busy periods and book appointments well in advance.

<http://www.humber.ca/liberalarts/las-writing-centre>

North Campus: GH-202 (Guelph-Humber building)	(416) 675-6622, ext. 6258
Lakeshore Campus: F201	(416) 675-6622, ext. 3313

## Peer Tutoring

A peer tutor is a Humber student who can meet with you for one or two hours per week to help with the course. For a small administration fee (\$10), you receive eight one-hour tutoring sessions. You can apply for a tutor by contacting your campus office or by visiting the Peer Tutoring website.

<http://www.humber.ca/peertutoring>

North Campus: H217	(416) 675-6622, ext. 4616
Lakeshore Campus: H201	(416) 675-6622, ext. 3340

## Disability Services

Humber seeks to create a welcoming environment where equity, diversity and safety of all groups are fundamental. Humber is dedicated to providing equal access to students with disabilities. The Disability Services staff are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations. If you require academic accommodations, contact:

Disability Services: <http://www.humber.ca/disabilityservices/>

North Campus:

(416) 675-6622 ext. 5180

We wish you success on your placement test and in your studies. We look forward to working with you.