

What is the right composition course for you?

You have different strengths and weaknesses in your academic abilities when we enter college. It is important that you select the right course that gives you the support you need to improve, develop, and succeed as a student.

There are two different types of first-year writing courses at Western Michigan University: Preparatory and Tier One.

- ⊗ ENGL 1000 is a *preparatory* writing course. It is designed to help students work in all disciplines and prepare them for many tasks of college-level writing.
- ⊗ BCM 1420, ENGL 1050, and IME 1020 are *Tier One* writing courses. These courses are entry-level writing courses for college-writing in various disciplines.

It is important to choose the course that best fits your writing experiences and confidence with writing. The writing course you choose will help you become a successful student because it will meet your needs and prepare you for future experiences with writing at the college level.

If you are a good to excellent writer, with a lot of confidence in your abilities, you should definitely place yourself into a Tier One course. If you are concerned about your abilities, however, you should consider ENGL 1000.

Why Self-Placement?

There are lots of academic reasons why we allow students to place themselves into their composition courses – motivation, ownership, and others – but, mostly, it boils down to one simple fact: we trust students to make the best decision for themselves. We have found that students are usually far better at finding the best fit for themselves than we are.

How does placement work?

Once you are accepted at Western Michigan University, you will be given a user name and a temporary password for our Fast Track admission and enrollment system. This password will give you official access to the WMU directed self-placement survey. This survey is a means for you to make the best decision possible about your own placement. The results will also be available to your advisor, but the ultimate decision is yours. (THIS SHOULD BE REVISED BY ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT in relation to the actual process.)

How do I choose the right course?

The following survey will assist you in your decision-making process. Answer it with honest and well-thought out responses. The answers will guide you to make the best decision about what course you are ready for. We will not tell you what course to take. We respect your ability to make decisions about your own skills in writing. If you do find yourself in the wrong course, you have two-weeks to meet with your advisor and switch into a more appropriate course.

First Year Writing Courses @ Western Michigan University

Preparatory Course

ENGL 1000: The Writing Process

Open to all students at WMU. This course focuses on developing a strong writing process that can be used throughout college. Students meet in ‘whole group’ sessions for two-hours per week. In addition, they work for an hour weekly in small group ‘writing studio’ sessions with WMU Writing Center consultants and have bi-weekly individual consultations with their instructor. Students create a wide range of writing, including analytic, narrative, creative, and research projects. *(NOTE: This course is currently titled “Basic Writing Skills.” I have proposed a title change)*

Tier 1 Writing Courses

BCM 1420: Informational Writing

Open to students in majors including . . . ADD MAJORS. Development of the basic composition skills required of the competent writer in business and professions. Through continuing directed practice in writing, students develop competence in the organization and presentation of facts and information in writing.

ENGL 1050: Thought and Writing

Open to students in majors including . . . ADD MAJORS. A writing course in which the students will work closely with the instructor to develop their sense of language as a means of shaping and ordering their experience and ideas, and to develop imagination, thought, organization, and clarity in their written work. Does not count as credit towards English major or minor.

IME 1020: Technical Writing

Open to students in majors including . . . ADD MAJORS. Principles of objective presentation of factual material in written, oral, and electronic communication, with emphasis on the research process. Content, format, and mechanics, as well as a clear, concise style are important components of individual and collaborative assignments.

First-Year Composition at Western Michigan University
Directed Self-Placement Survey

Look at the series of statements in the columns below. For each statement, choose an answer that best describes you.

Perceptions of Writing

When I am assigned a school writing task, I am confident in my ability to be successful.		
Strongly Agree (3)	Somewhat Agree (2)	Disagree (1)
I consider myself a 'good' writer.		
Strongly Agree (3)	Somewhat Agree (2)	Disagree (1)
Total: _____		

Writing Skills: Style and Grammar

When I make grammar mistakes, I have the ability to diagnose my own errors and fix them.		
Strongly Agree (3)	Somewhat Agree (2)	Disagree (1)
I know how to change my writing style for various audiences and purposes.		
Strongly Agree (3)	Somewhat Agree (2)	Disagree (1)
Total: _____		

Writing Skills: Research

I know how to conduct academic research and how to evaluate sources of information.		
Strongly Agree (3)	Somewhat Agree (2)	Disagree (1)
I know how to summarize and synthesize information and integrate it in my writing.		
Strongly Agree (3)	Somewhat Agree (2)	Disagree (1)
Total: _____		

Writing and Reading Dispositions

I like to read; I am someone who reads challenging materials for enjoyment.		
Strongly Agree (3)	Somewhat Agree (2)	Disagree (1)
I like to write; I often write for my own enjoyment.		
Strongly Agree (3)	Somewhat Agree (2)	Disagree (1)
Total: _____		

Study Skills

I am well organized; I generally complete tasks on time.		
Strongly Agree (3)	Somewhat Agree (2)	Disagree (1)
I know how to prioritize multiple tasks.		
Strongly Agree (3)	Somewhat Agree (2)	Disagree (1)
Total: _____		

Overall score _____

You should use your answers to make the best judgment about which course best fits your needs. The following scores will give you some basic guidelines, but ultimately, the decision is yours.	
25-30:	You are most likely well prepared for one of the Tier 1 Writing courses (ENGL 1050, BCN 1420, IME 1020)
17-25:	Either ENGL 1000 or a Tier 1 writing course could be appropriate for you.
16-Below:	ENGL 1000 is probably the best writing course for you.