

WRITING PLACEMENT TEST

PART I: Readings, Pages 1-6
PART II: Argumentative Essay, Page 7
PART III: Self-Placement Essay, Page 8

You must complete all 3 parts of the placement test and then email your 2 essays to:
Writing_Placement@bloomfield.edu

Essays must be shared either through a word document or in the body of your email.

PART I: Readings

Read the following three articles about ways to limit distracted driving (Pages 1-6). When you finish the articles, you will be asked to write an argumentative essay based on the readings. The instructions for the essay can be found on Page 6.

Boudette, N. (15 November 2016). Biggest spike in traffic deaths in 50 years? Blame apps. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com>.

The messaging app Snapchat allows motorists to post photos that record the speed of the vehicle. The navigation app Waze rewards drivers with points when they report traffic jams and accidents. Even the game Pokémon Go has drivers searching for virtual creatures on the nation's highways.

When distracted driving entered the national consciousness a decade ago, the problem was mainly people who made calls or sent texts from their cellphones. The solution then was to introduce new technologies to keep drivers' hands on the wheel. Innovations since then — car Wi-Fi and a host of new apps — have led to a boom in internet use in vehicles that safety experts say is contributing to a surge in highway deaths.

After steady declines over the last four decades, highway fatalities last year recorded the largest annual percentage increase in 50 years. And the numbers so far this year are even worse. In the first six months of 2016, highway deaths jumped 10.4 percent, to 17,775, from the comparable period of 2015, according to the [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#).

"This is a crisis that needs to be addressed now," Mark R. Rosekind, the head of the agency, said in an interview.

The Florida Highway Patrol is investigating an Oct. 26 crash near Tampa that killed five people. A passenger in one car, a teenager, recorded a [Snapchat video showing her vehicle traveling](#) at 115 m.p.h. just before the collision.

A lawsuit filed in a Georgia court claims a teenage driver who was in a September 2015 crash near Atlanta [was using Snapchat](#) while driving more than 100 m.p.h., according to court records. The car collided with the car of an Uber driver, who was seriously injured. Alarmed by the statistics, the Department of Transportation in October outlined a plan to work with the National Safety Council and other advocacy groups to devise a "Road to Zero" strategy, with the ambitious goal of eliminating roadway fatalities within 30 years.

The Obama administration's transportation secretary, Anthony Foxx, said that the near-term effort

would involve identifying changes in regulations, laws and standards that could help reduce fatalities. That might include pushing for all states to tighten and enforce laws requiring use of seatbelts in cars and helmets on motorcycles, while cracking down on distracted or drunken driving. The effort might also include tougher regulation of heavy trucks, Mr. Foxx said.

A second, related effort would focus on setting longer-term goals and speeding the introduction of autonomous-driving technologies that many safety experts say have the potential to prevent accidents by removing distracted humans from the driving equation.

One concern so far, though, is that current generations of automated driver-assistance systems, like the Autopilot feature offered by Tesla Motors, may be lulling some drivers into a false sense of security that can contribute to distracted driving.

Whether highway safety officials in the Trump administration will have the same priorities, though, is too soon to say. The names of candidates for transportation secretary have not yet been publicly floated.

Most new vehicles sold today have software that connects to a smartphone and allows drivers to place phone calls, dictate texts and use apps hands-free. Ford Motor has its Sync system, for example. Others, including Honda, Hyundai and Mercedes-Benz, offer their own interfaces as well as Apple's CarPlay and Google's Android Auto.

Automakers say these systems enable customers to concentrate on driving even while interacting with their smartphones.

"The whole principle is to bring voice recognition to customers so they can keep their eyes on the road and hands on the wheel," said Alan Hall, a spokesman for Ford, which began installing Sync in cars in 2007.

Since then, the company has added features to reduce distractions, like a "do not disturb button" that lets drivers block incoming calls and texts.

CarPlay allows use of the [iPhone](#)'s Siri virtual assistant to answer phone calls, dictate texts and control apps like Spotify and Pandora. Both Sync and CarPlay present simplified menus on a car's in-dash display to reduce driver distraction and turn off the phone's screen, eliminating the temptation to use the device itself.

But Deborah Hersman, president of the nonprofit National Safety Council and a former chairwoman of the federal [National Transportation Safety Board](#), said it was not clear how much those various technologies reduced distraction — or, instead, encouraged people to use even more functions on their phones while driving. And freeing the drivers' hands does not necessarily clear their heads.

"It's the cognitive workload on your brain that's the problem," Ms. Hersman said. Technology in some new cars is meant to reduce driver distractions or compensate for them.

Dr. William Chandler, a retired neurosurgeon in Ann Arbor, Mich., just bought a 2017 [BMW X5](#) sport utility vehicle that warns him if he drifts out of his lane on the highway or if a car is in his blind spot. His favorite feature is a heads-up display on the windshield in front of him that projects his speed, the speed limit and navigation information.

"It puts all the directions and turns right there in my field of vision," he said. "That's a real safety

factor for distracted driving, because I'm never looking at the map on the screen in the console."

But new cars make up only a small portion of the 260 million vehicles on the road in the United States. Digital diversion is harder to address in older models.

Brett Hudson, 26, a teacher at a [charter school](#) in Jackson, Mich., said his iPhone 6 Plus had become essential to his daily commute in his 2002 [Chevrolet TrailBlazer](#). He uses Apple Maps for navigation, listens to music via Pandora and gets his favorite Michigan football call-in show on iHeart Radio.

To reduce the time he looks at the phone, Mr. Hudson installed an aftermarket Bluetooth system for hands-free phone calls. He mounts the iPhone on a clip attached to an air vent, enabling him to see the screen while still keeping the road in his field of vision.

Mr. Hudson concedes that the setup is not risk-free.

"I've noticed that when I do have to touch the phone," he said, "my brain becomes so totally focused, even in that short period of time, and I don't really remember what's happening on the road in those four or five seconds."

Insurance companies, which closely track auto accidents, are convinced that the increasing use of electronic devices while driving is the biggest cause of the rise in road fatalities, according to Robert Gordon, a senior vice president of the Property Casualty Insurers Association of America.

"This is a serious public safety concern for the nation," Mr. Gordon said at a recent conference in Washington held by the National Transportation Safety Board. "We are all trying to figure out to what extent this is the new normal."

Flanagan, B. (22 September 2016). Assembly committee considers bill to prohibit distracted driving. NJTV News. Retrieved from <http://www.njtvonline.org>.

AAA videos show whether you're texting or making sure your lipstick's on just right, distracted driving takes your eyes off the road, no matter what you're doing. "When your head's down for two seconds, that's kind of the magic point at which you've now lost track of what's happening in front of you," said Robert Molloy.

Molloy's with the [NTSB](#) — National Transportation Safety Board — and told Trenton lawmakers today, traffic fatalities spiked 9 percent nationally in the first half of this year. That means more than 19,000 people died in just six months.

"And I believe one of the reasons we're seeing crashes go up — despite all the great efforts that the states are doing to reduce crashes — is because of the ubiquity of these devices [cell phones]. Reading a text message or talking on a wireless phone can have catastrophic consequences. The NTSB believes a significant number of lives can be saved and injuries avoided if New Jersey expands and strengthens its already strong laws," Molloy said.

Molloy advised banning all non-emergency use of portable electronic devices. He said drivers should pull over to use any app that demands more than two seconds of concentration. The Assembly Transportation Committee's considering a bill to prohibit distracted driving and solicited

testimony from experts.

“The question isn’t whether or not using your cell in the car is a safety risk. Really, the question is, do we value safety over convenience?” Molloy asked.

But some raised concerns about how much government can actually control driver activities. One study showed nearly 30 percent of drivers admitted last year they go online while on the road. And should navigation, voice-to-text or climate control functions be disabled?

“We cool it enough and then all of a sudden it gets too cold. Is that going to be considered a distraction? Do you take the climate control systems out of cars?” asked Assemblyman Scott Rumana.

“If somebody texts me it prints out on my dashboard, the message. It will read it back, but it’s still asking me to hit, ‘Listen,’ ‘Ignore’ or whatever,” said Assemblywoman BettyLou DeCroce.

“We’ve mitigated the manual distraction: you can’t hold your phone. We’ve mitigated the visual distraction: you can’t text it. But crashes keep going up,” said AAA Northeast Director of Public Affairs Cathleen Lewis.

Lewis says millions of cars now feature built-in voice recognition technology — and that’s even more distracting.

“As we put these devices in cars, we give people a false sense of security that it is safer. It’s been put in your vehicle, it is now safe for you to do. We know that’s not the case,” she said.

The committee didn’t vote on any distracted driving bills. Federal agencies and AAA say they plan to meet with car makers and electronics companies like Apple. The objective: keep their apps useful, but at the same time keep drivers’ eyes on the road.

Yee, V. (17 August 2016). A distracted-driving ban in New Jersey? Some say it threatens a way of life. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com>.

Texting, we have all come to admit, is the enemy of road safety everywhere. Applying makeup behind the wheel: more or less universally frowned upon. Few would condone driving while reading a book, rooting around in the back seat or eating anything that involves utensils.

In New Jersey, where suburban sprawl has elevated cars from mere possessions to four-wheeled appendages, and driving from an activity to a near-perpetual state of being, things are slightly more complicated.

“The relationship between people and their cars, it’s almost like a Second Amendment thing — it may not be enshrined in the Constitution, but people think it is,” said State Assemblyman John Wisniewski, the chairman of the Transportation and Independent Authorities Committee. “But there’s not a consistent philosophy. We have a ‘live free or die’ mentality when it comes to things like driving distractions, but we’re O.K. with, ‘You [can’t serve yourself](#) at a gas station.’”

He added: “That’s the peculiarity of New Jersey. And there was an outcry.”

The outcry in question detonated this month when [NJ.com learned](#) that Mr. Wisniewski, a Democrat, had months before reintroduced a three-year-old bill that would impose fines of up to \$800 on drivers caught engaging in distracting behavior behind the wheel. The headline: “Cops Could Soon Ticket You for Drinking a Coffee While Driving in N.J.”

This is the state where local identity is routinely expressed in turnpike or parkway exit numbers. Where basic tasks like withdrawing cash from an A.T.M. are most easily accomplished from inside a car. Where the most infamous instance of political mischief in recent history hinged on a colossal [traffic jam](#) at the George Washington Bridge.

It should be noted that Mr. Wisniewski’s [bill](#), which mimics a distracted-driving law in Maine, does not ban drinking coffee, eating or any other specific activity. It does, however, empower police officers to issue a summons to drivers doing anything “unrelated to the operation of the vehicle, in a manner that interferes with the safe operation of the vehicle.”

Cathleen Lewis, the director of public affairs and government relations for AAA of New Jersey, said: “Your car is your space, but what people need to understand is that your space is a moving vehicle that interacts with other people’s safety. This is not about banning someone from drinking coffee. This is about figuring out a way to ensure that people are safe behind the wheel.”

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 10 percent of fatal crashes and 18 percent of crashes that caused injuries in 2014 were reported to involve drivers distracted by activities including eating, smoking, adjusting the radio or air-conditioning, or being “lost in thought/daydreaming.” They caused 3,179 deaths, injuring an estimated additional 431,000 people. In 2014, for the fifth straight year, distracted driving was the [top cause](#) of fatal crashes in New Jersey.

The state already bans texting or other cellphone use while driving, a prohibition that Mr. Wisniewski acknowledges has not appeared to dissuade many from doing so.

Still, for some, his bill poses an existential threat.

“Now they’re reaching into the car and taking the Dunkin’ Donuts out of your hand and taking the lipstick out of your hand,” Jim Sillence, 44, of Morris Plains, said in the parking lot of a Morristown CVS one recent afternoon. “What are they going to do, outlaw drive-throughs?” (Mr. Sillence had chosen not to take advantage of the CVS’s drive-through pharmacy.)

Mr. Sillence, who acknowledged that neither grooming nor eating while driving was “the best idea,” was once rear-ended by someone who claimed to be looking at a GPS app at the time. Another time, he tried to change lanes after realizing that the driver ahead was texting, but all of the drivers around him appeared to be using their cellphones, too.

Still, to him, the ban stank of government overreaching. “I’m not smart enough to come up with the right answer,” he said, shrugging.

Mr. Wisniewski said he had received more feedback on the distracted-driving bill than he had over several years of proposing to raise the state’s gas tax, which by [remaining low](#) has become another New Jersey peculiarity. Maine, he noted, had not experienced a similar level of outrage.

He could also draw inspiration from Britain, where “driving without due care and attention” can result in large fines and penalty points. The law’s most notorious recent target: a woman who was

[fined 145 pounds](#) and three penalty points on her license for eating a banana in a traffic jam. (“This is the most expensive banana I’ve ever had in my life,” she told her local newspaper.)

At home, however, critics of the bill are loud and persistent, arguing that the state’s existing laws against careless or reckless driving are sufficient. A few critics have questioned whether police officers will take advantage of the bill’s intentional vagueness to abuse their traffic-stop powers.

To Steve Carrellas, a longtime driver advocate who is the head of the New Jersey chapter of the National Motorists Association, the proposal is merely the latest of many “shenanigans” intended to squeeze drivers, including unduly low speed limits, the cellphone ban and toll roads. Fortunately, Mr. Carrellas said, red-light cameras are gone.

“This bill has the appearance of a money grab,” he said.

Mr. Wisniewski denied this, saying the fines were intended to be a deterrent.

An unscientific survey of drivers in two strip mall parking lots in suburban New Jersey found many self-proclaimed careful drivers who cheered the idea of cutting down on distracted driving. Indignantly, they listed the things they had seen other drivers do: reading a newspaper draped over the steering wheel; watching a video; changing clothes; applying makeup; reaching down to pick up dropped food; fist-fighting with a passenger. Then a certain amount of sheepishness set in.

“I’ll admit, when I was younger, I put makeup on in the car,” Tawanna Cotten, 43, of Morristown, said. She had had a small epiphany about her mascara-to-go habit, she said, “after running my mouth about the texting — it just kind of hit me.”

Brendan Carti, 19, a rising sophomore at the College of Charleston in South Carolina, admitted to a few instances of distracted driving, despite repeated injunctions from his drivers’ education teachers.

“There’s been times when I’ve looked up and said, ‘Oh my God, I shouldn’t have done that,’” he said, adding that he fully supported the bill.

Across the parking lot, Vince Capano, a beer writer, was giving no quarter.

“The next thing, they’re going to be outlawing sneezing or coughing,” he said. “Where does the line start?”

Mr. Capano would probably not be happy to learn about another New Jersey bill, introduced in March, that would punish pedestrians caught using their cellphones while walking along public roads with a fine.

It has not come up for a vote.

PART II: Argumentative Placement Essay Instructions

The major goal of the writing program is to teach students to write argumentative papers with a clear thesis, logical development, and correct source use. As such, the College needs to know how well you can perform these tasks before you begin, which is what this section of the placement test is designed to do.

This essay is the first academic impression you will make to the College and to your future writing instructor, so do your best and **remember everything you may have previously learned about thesis statements, topic sentences, quotations, and citations.**

As with most of the essays you write in college, you may seek outside help for this essay. You may consult with family, friends, tutors, and/or teachers. They may give you feedback and help you think of ideas, but ultimately the ideas and writing must be your own. The point of this placement test is to determine what class will best serve your needs. If the essay you send in does not reflect your actual writing abilities, then you will struggle in your writing class.

Using the sources you were previously provided, write a 2-3 paged (double spaced) argumentative essay in which you answer the following question:

Background: After decreasing for decades, in 2016 the number of traffic fatalities rose sharply. Many people have argued that this increase is largely caused by a rise in distracted driving, which is caused mainly by drivers using smartphones.

Background: Many states, including New Jersey, already have laws prohibiting driving while holding a cell phone. However, the increased use of smartphones and their associated apps has raised questions about the effectiveness of these laws and their enforcement. In response, in New Jersey several lawmakers are proposing potentially controversial legislation to toughen laws governing smartphone use while in a vehicle. The proposed laws would raise penalties for using a smartphone while driving, and they would, more controversially, allow police to demand a driver's phone immediately following an accident to examine it for evidence of distracted driving.

Question: In what additional ways, if any, should the government of New Jersey attempt to limit distracted driving? Please remember that this is an academic essay, so the readers will not be looking for your personal experience. Instead, readers will expect you to mention, quote, and cite the news articles that you were given (a works cited page is also expected).

When you are done with the essay, you should email it (in the body of the email or as a MS Word document), along with your self-recommendation, to Writing_Placement@bloomfield.edu. Please remember to include your name, student ID number, date of birth, and address.

PART III: Self-Placement Essay Instructions

Now that you have written an argumentative essay based on readings, you should think about writing it and your other experiences with reading and writing and make a recommendation about which writing class you think you should be in.

You should write a one-page (double spaced) essay in which you recommend the writing course that you think you belong in based on your abilities. You should provide specific supporting evidence for why you belong in the class you chose.

The coordinator of the writing program or the director of the writing center will read your argumentative essay and your recommendation essay to see if the skills evident in your argumentative essay match the class you recommend. If you place yourself at a level that your argumentative essay does not justify, the coordinator of the writing program will contact you for a conversation about your writing placement.

Below are descriptions of the three writing courses from which you may choose. Below the descriptions are behaviors typical of successful students in each class. Use these as a guide for making your choice, and remember to include specific evidence for your choice.

WRITING 106: Accelerated Analytic and Argumentative Writing

About 25% of new students take this course. It meets twice a week and focuses on writing thesis-based analytic and argumentative papers. Students who pass this course with a C- or better take WRITING 109 the next semester. Students should choose WRT 106 if they:

- Could distinguish between the readings' main points and the supporting evidence.
- Used evidence from the sources in their paper, instead of personal experience.
- Integrated quotes from the provided readings as evidence.
- Felt comfortable planning and organizing the paper.
- Are comfortable reading roughly 10 pages of text for each class.
- Are comfortable writing 5 page papers.
- Are familiar with the ideas of thesis, topic sentence, and counterargument.
- Are familiar with and use the writing process, including writing multiple drafts for papers.
- Consider themselves good readers and writers.

WRITING 105: Analytic and Argumentative Writing

About 60% of new students take this course. It meets three days a week and focuses on writing thesis-based analytic and argumentative papers. Reading and writing assignments are the same as those assigned in WRITING 106, but students receive more time to complete the assignments and more feedback from instructors. Students who complete WRT 105 with a C- or better take WRT 109 the next semester. Students should choose WRT 105 if they:

- Could mostly distinguish between the readings' main points and the supporting evidence, but sometime became confused by the articles.
- Used evidence from the sources in their paper.
- Provided quotes from the readings, but didn't always fit them in well to the rest of the paper.
- Felt comfortable planning and organizing the paper.
- Are comfortable reading roughly 7 pages of text for each class.

- Are a little nervous about writing 5page papers.
- Can use the five-paragraph structure to write a paper
- Have used the writing process, including writing multiple drafts for papers.
- Have heard of, but are not completely sure of, the terms “thesis,” “topic sentence,” and “counterargument.”
- Grew up speaking a language other than English at home and are fairly confident in their ability to control written English.
- Are sometimes unsure about the correctness of their grammar.
- Consider themselves “ok” readers and writers.

WRITING 102: Enhanced Analytic and Argumentative Writing

About 15% of new students take this class. It meets four days a week and focuses on writing thesis-based analytic and argumentative papers. Reading and writing assignments are the same as those assigned in WRITING 105 and 106, but students receive more time to complete the assignments and more feedback from instructors. Students who complete WRT 102 with a C- or better take WRT 108 the next semester. Students should choose WRT 102 if they:

- Struggled to understand the readings.
- Relied mostly on personal experience, rather than textual evidence, to answer their paper.
- Had difficulty developing an answer to the placement essay question.
- Are often unsure how to plan and develop a paper.
- Often are not comfortable with knowing when paragraphs should end and begin.
- Are not comfortable writing 5page essays.
- Are unfamiliar with the terms “thesis,” “topic sentence,” and “counterargument.”
- Are often unsure about the correctness of their grammar.
- Grew up speaking a language other than English at home and are not confident in their ability to control written English.
- Consider themselves poor readers and writers.

When you are done with the essay, you should email it (as MS Word document or in the body of the email), along with your argumentative essay, to Writing.Placement@bloomfield.edu. Please remember to include your name, student ID number, date of birth, and address.