

Essential English Skills Needed for Entry-Level College Courses

State education needs your help. We would like your opinion about the essential English skills our high school graduates need in order to enter into credit-bearing, general education college coursework without need for remediation. Data from this survey are being used to help align K-12 expectations with those of postsecondary to ensure that the State's high school graduates are prepared.

This survey contains a list of skills that have been identified nationally as potentially important to prepare our high school graduates to enter college. We would appreciate your help in identifying entry-level skills that are essential for specific college classes that most entering freshmen might take.

To complete the survey:

1. Please identify the specific entry-level college course for which you are providing essential skills in English. Please include course number. e.g. *Writing 121*
2. Complete the survey by rating each skill along the range of "not essential" (1) to "very essential" (10) for the entry-level course. Please complete all items, but pay special attention to those marked with an asterisk. These have been identified as potential gaps or areas that may be strengthened in our current standards, and we need your input regarding how important they are for college-readiness. We also need to know if there are some skills that are not critical for your courses, so that we can consider de-emphasizing these in favor of other, more critical ones.
3. Please provide comments or add other essential skills that should be considered.
4. Provide your contact information so that we might follow up should we have questions about any of the information submitted. *Please note that the information you submit will be strictly confidential and survey data will only be presented in summary form.*

My ratings indicate the essential English skills needed for success in the following:

Entry-level English general education
course title/number:

Other entry-level general education
course title/number:

Please submit survey with this coversheet by March 20 to:

Kendall Tyree, Special Assistant
Office of the Secretary of Education
P.O. Box 1475, Richmond, VA 23218
Telephone: (804) 692-2550 / Fax: (804) 371-0154

Contact (name, email): _____

Postsecondary Institution: _____

Thank-you for completing this survey!

Postsecondary Institution: _____

Contact: (name, email) _____

Essential Entry-Level Skills - English - page 1

1 = not essential 10 = most essential

	Rating
Language	
1. Demonstrate control of standard English through the use of grammar, punctuation, capitalization and spelling.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
2. Use general and specialized dictionaries, thesauruses and glossaries (print and electronic) to determine the definition, pronunciation, etymology, spelling and usage of words.*	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
3. Use roots, affixes and cognates to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words.*	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
4. Use context to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words.*	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
5. Identify the meaning of common idioms, as well as literary, classical and biblical allusions; use them in oral and written communication.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
6. Recognize nuances in the meanings of words; choose words precisely to enhance communication.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
7. Comprehend and communicate quantitative, technical and mathematical information.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Literature	
1. Demonstrate knowledge of 18th and 19th century foundational works of American literature.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
2. Analyze foundational U.S. documents for their historical and literary significance (for example, The Declaration of Independence, the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution, Abraham Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address," Martin Luther King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail").*	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
3. Interpret significant works from various forms of literature: poetry, novel, biography, short story, essay and dramatic literature; use understanding of genre characteristics to make deeper and subtler interpretations of the meaning of the text.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
4. Analyze the setting, plot, theme, characterization and narration of classic and contemporary short stories and novels.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
5. Demonstrate knowledge of metrics, rhyme scheme, rhythm, alliteration and other conventions of verse in poetry.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
6. Identify how elements of dramatic literature (for example, dramatic irony, soliloquy, stage direction and dialogue) articulate a playwright's vision.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
7. Analyze works of literature for what they suggest about the historical period in which they were written.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
8. Analyze the moral dilemmas in works of literature as revealed by characters' motivation and behavior.*	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
9. Identify and explain the themes found in a single literary work; analyze the ways in which similar themes and ideas are developed in more than one literary work.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Essential Entry-Level Skills - English - page 2

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	Rating
Communication	
1. Give and follow spoken instructions to perform specific tasks, to answer questions or to solve problems.*	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
2. Summarize information presented orally by others.*	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
3. Paraphrase information presented orally by others.*	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
4. Identify the thesis of a speech and determine the essential elements that elaborate it.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
5. Analyze the ways in which the style and structure of a speech support or confound its meaning or purpose.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
6. Make oral presentations.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
7. Participate productively in self-directed work teams for a particular purpose (for example, to interpret literature, write or critique a proposal, solve a problem, make a decision).	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Writing	
1. Plan writing by taking notes, writing informal outlines and researching.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
2. Select and use formal, informal, literary or technical language appropriate for the purpose, audience and context of the communication.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
3. Organize ideas in writing with a thesis statement in the introduction, well-constructed paragraphs, a conclusion and transition sentences that connect paragraphs into a coherent whole.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
4. Drawing on readers' comments on working drafts, revise documents to develop or support ideas more clearly, address potential objections, ensure effective transitions between paragraphs and correct errors in logic.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
5. Edit both one's own and others' work for grammar, style and tone appropriate to audience, purpose and context.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
6. Cite print or electronic sources properly when paraphrasing or summarizing information quoting, or using graphics.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
7. Determine how, when and whether to employ technologies (such as computer software, photographs and video) in lieu of, or in addition to, written communication.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
8. Present written material using basic software programs (such as Word, Excel and PowerPoint) and graphics (such as charts, ratios and tables) to present information and ideas best understood visually.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
9. Write an academic essay (for example, a summary, an explanation, a description, a literary analysis essay).	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
10. Produce work-related texts (for example, memos, e-mails, correspondence, project plans, work orders, proposals, bios).	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Please identify any other essential benchmarks that most first time freshman need to be successful in your entry-level, credit bearing English course:

Essential Entry-Level Skills - English - page 3

1 = not essential 10 = most essential

	Rating
Research	
1. Define and narrow a problem or research topic.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
2. Gather relevant information from a variety of print and electronic sources, as well as from direct observation, interviews and surveys.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
3. Make distinctions about the credibility, reliability, consistency, strengths and limitations of resources, including information gathered from Web sites.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
4. Report findings within prescribed time and/or length requirements, as appropriate.*	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
5. Write an extended research essay (approximately six to 10 pages), building on primary and secondary sources.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Logic	
1. Distinguish among facts and opinions, evidence and inferences.*	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
2. Identify false premises in an argument.*	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
3. Describe the structure of a given argument; identify its claims and evidence; and evaluate connections among evidence, inferences and claims.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
4. Evaluate the range and quality of evidence used to support or oppose an argument.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
5. Recognize common logical fallacies, such as the appeal to pity (<i>argumentum ad misericordiam</i>), the personal attack (<i>argumentum ad hominem</i>), the appeal to common opinion (<i>argumentum ad populum</i>) and the false dilemma (assuming only two options when there are more options available); understand why these fallacies do not prove the point being argued.*	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
6. Analyze written or oral communications for false assumptions, errors, loaded terms, caricature, sarcasm, leading questions and faulty reasoning.*	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
7. Understand the distinction between a deductive argument (where, if the premises are all true and the argument's form is valid, the conclusion is inescapably true) and inductive argument (in which the conclusion provides the best or most probable explanation of the truth of the premises, but is not necessarily true).*	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
8. Analyze two or more texts addressing the same topic to determine how authors reach similar or different conclusions.*	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
9. Construct arguments (both orally and in writing).*	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Please identify any other essential benchmarks that most first time freshman need to be successful in your entry-level, credit bearing English course:

Essential Entry-Level Skills - English - page 4

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	Rating
Media	
1. Evaluate the aural, visual and written images and other special effects used in television, radio, film and the Internet for their ability to inform, persuade and entertain (for example, anecdote, expert witness, vivid detail, tearful testimony and humor).*	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
2. Examine the intersections and conflicts between the visual (such as media images, painting, film and graphic arts) and the verbal.*	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
3. Recognize how visual and sound techniques or design (such as special effects, camera angles and music) carry or influence messages in various media.*	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
4. Apply and adapt the principles of written composition to create coherent media productions using effective images, text, graphics, music and/or sound effects – if possible – and present a distinctive point of view on a topic (for example, PowerPoint presentations, videos).*	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Informational Text	
1. Follow instructions in informational or technical texts to perform specific tasks, answer questions or solve problems.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
2. Identify the main ideas of informational text and determine the essential elements that elaborate them.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
3. Summarize informational and technical texts and explain the visual components that support them.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
4. Distinguish between a summary and a critique.*	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
5. Interpret and use information in maps, charts, graphs, time lines, tables and diagrams.*	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
6. Identify interrelationships between and among ideas and concepts within a text, such as cause-and-effect relationships.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
7. Synthesize information from multiple informational and technical sources.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
8. Draw conclusions based on evidence from informational and technical texts.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
9. Analyze the ways in which a text's organizational structure supports or confounds its meaning or purpose.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
10. Recognize the use or abuse of ambiguity, contradiction, paradox, irony, incongruities, overstatement and understatement in text and explain their effect on the reader.*	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
11. Evaluate informational and technical texts for their clarity, simplicity and coherence and for the appropriateness of their graphics and visual appeal.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Please identify any other essential skills that first time freshman need to be successful in your entry-level, credit bearing English course.

Essential Entry-Level Skills – English - page 5

1 = Not essential 10 = Most essential

English subject strands essential for this course:	
Language	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Literature	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Communication	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Writing	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Research	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Logic	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Media	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Informational Text	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Please identify any other essential skills that first time freshman need to be successful in your entry-level, credit bearing English course.
