The Parkite’s Guide To Surviving The Writing Competency Test

- Read the material in advance. Highlight significant passages from the readings and take notes in the margins so that you can find material quickly during the exam.
- Prewrite to get ideas for your essay. Find out what the readings say to you. What meaning do you make from the readings? Brainstorm, ask questions, freewrite, etc. to come up with ideas about the topic.
- Develop a working thesis. (FOCUS) The thesis is a sentence which states the main point of your essay. It is more than a topic: it tells what point you are making about the topic. A working thesis may change somewhat once you have the essay planned.
- Prove your point. (DEVELOPMENT) Once you have a thesis, come up with at least three main ideas to prove your thesis. (Your prewriting should be helpful in providing these ideas.) Each major point should be supported by at least three details. Some details should come from the readings while others should be based on your own thinking.
- Organize the essay. (ORGANIZATION) The essay should include three sections: an introduction, body, and conclusion. Your thesis statement should appear clearly in the introduction. The body of the paper is made up of the information you use to prove your thesis (See IV above). The conclusion should restate your thesis in slightly different language. An outline might help you organize your thoughts.
- Write a draft. While you cannot take a completed draft into the exam, you may find it helpful to practice writing the essay in advance. Time yourself so that you get a feel for the amount of time available. Do not try to memorize the draft. You will only
panic if you cannot remember what you wrote and cause yourself needless anxiety and wasted time. A prewritten draft should help you with organization and development and give you a sense of what you can accomplish in a limited amount of time.

- Determine correct citation for the sources which you intend to use. Include all significant information: author and/or editor, title, place of publication, publisher, date, and page numbers. Exact information will vary according to the type of material used, but remember that the point of citation is to direct your reader back to the source of the information. What would a reader need to know to go to the library and find your source? It is acceptable to **handwrite** your Works Cited list on a blank page in your packet to take into the testing room with you. Remember to copy it into your blue book! Blue books with Works Cited lists stapled into the blue book, whether handwritten or typed, will disqualify your essay from being scored!

**Adequate preparation is the greatest key to success in the Writing Competency Test. The more preparation you do in advance the more time you can concentrate on actual writing during the test. If you are well-prepared, you will also feel more self-confident and will be less likely to panic during the test.**

**Taking The Test**

- Arrive early enough select a seat where you feel comfortable and to avoid being rushed. Having sufficient time will help prevent anxiety.
- Read the instructions carefully. Keep in mind the criteria for grading. You may wish to circle key words in the instructions to help yourself remember them.
• Stay focused on the task at hand. Leave your personal problems outside the door. If you become distracted, you will waste valuable time and mental energy.

• Budget your time wisely:
  ▪ Spend a few minutes going over the outline you have written in your packet. Give yourself a few minutes to collect your thoughts before you begin writing.
  ▪ Write the essay. The bulk of your time should be spent writing the essay. Remember to maintain a clear focus based on your thesis and prove your point with at least three main ideas and accompanying details. Focus, clarity and organization are far more important in the WCT than length, so concentrate on quality not quantity.

There are two options for drafting the essay:

1. Write a fast draft, edit the draft, and recopy it.
2. Write a careful draft, edit it, and make legible revisions.

Practice good handwriting when recopying or writing the careful draft. Not only is it easier for graders to read, you are less likely make errors or leave out important words and ideas if you slow down enough to write neatly.

• Whichever drafting option you choose, you should spend 15-20 minutes editing your paper. Check grammar, spelling, and clarity of language.

• Cite your sources. All borrowed material must be credited to the author whether you quote it directly or not. Remember to cite sources within the paper, and don't forget your Works Cited list on a separate page at the end of the essay.
Handling Test Anxiety
If you feel anxious or panicky while taking the WCT, try the following steps:

- Close your eyes.
- Take a long, deep breath.
- Concentrate on your breathing.
- Press your feet hard against the floor and count to five.
- Return to concentrating on your essay.