

Math Placement Tests Overview

- ✓ In order to earn any two or four year degree in the state of Washington, a student must demonstrate mastery of Intermediate Algebra which is usually accomplished by passing a placement test.
- ✓ A study conducted in 2007 found that over 65% of Northshore graduates that enrolled at Cascadia Community College placed into a precollege level math class as their first math class.
- ✓ Precollege level math classes cost money (current tuition at Cascadia is \$379 per 5 credit class) and time (many are prerequisite classes for college level classes in other disciplines).

Two math placement tests that are regularly used by colleges and universities in the state of Washington are the Mathematics Placement Test and the COMPASS test.

1. A description of the Mathematics Placement Test follows, as found on the University of Washington website.

The Mathematics Placement Test (MPT) was first administered in 1984 and is currently taken by approximately 10,000 students annually. It has been developed collaboratively by math faculty at Washington State public baccalaureate institutions to assist students, together with their academic advisers, in selecting first-year mathematics courses for which they are best prepared.

Two versions of the test enable accurate placement of students with varying levels of academic preparation:

- *The Intermediate Math Placement Test is intended for students who have less than three or four years of high school math. It consists of 35 items covering Elementary Algebra, Intermediate Algebra, and Precalculus I.*
- *The Advanced Math Placement Test is directed toward students who have taken at least three or four years of high school math. It consists of 30 items covering Intermediate Algebra and Precalculus I and II.*

For sample problems of the Mathematics Placement Test:

http://www.washington.edu/oea/services/testing_center/apt/practice.html

2. The COMPASS placement test is used by many community colleges in the state of Washington. A description of this test follows, as found on the Cascadia Community College website.

To support success at Cascadia Community College, the college requires all students who take credit classes to assess their current skill levels in English and Math with the COMPASS placement test. Multiple-choice items in each of the five mathematics placement areas test the following:

- **basic skills**—performing a sequence of basic operations
- **application**—applying sequences of basic operations to novel settings or in complex ways
- **analysis**—demonstrating conceptual understanding of principles and relationships in mathematical operations

For sample problems of the COMPASS Placement Test: <http://www.act.org/compass/sample/math.html>