Basic Skills/ TAP Test
Language Arts BootCamp Study Guide

The Basic Skills/ TAP Test of Language Arts examines skills required to write effectively at the college level.

Comparison Basic Skills to TAP:
Lang.Arts: BS300 - 42 multiple choice; TAP400- 60 multiple choice online

The information herein was gathered by members of the Associated Colleges of Illinois.

The links provided are in the process of being cited fully in the text.
Grammar & Usage

Standard 7 Demonstrate command of standard usage in edited English in the US.

The following are examples of content that may be covered under this standard.

Subject-verb agreement
Singular subjects need singular verbs; plural subjects need plural verbs.
My brother is a nutritionist.
My sisters are mathematicians.

Capital Community College Foundation, Hartford, Connecticut
http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/sv_agr.htm

Purdue Online Writing Lab
Quiz on Subject-verb agreement

Verb tense
See Purdue Online Writing Lab, “Sequence of Tenses.”
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/601/01/

English has three time frames: past, present, and future
Past- Last year I went on vacation to Disney World.
Present- Right now I am on Spring vacation in Mexico.
Future- Tomorrow I will go on vacation to Mexico.

Quiz/Tutorial on verb tense http://www.englishpage.com/verbpage/verbtenseintro.html

Consistency of verb tense
http://www.towson.edu/ows/tenseconsistency.htm
Keep tenses consistent within sentences.
Do not change tenses when there is no time change for the action.

• During the movie, Sam stood up and then dropped his popcorn.

Pronouns
http://www.towson.edu/ows/pro_antagree.htm
Generally (but not always) pronouns stand for (pro + noun) or refer to a noun, an individual or individuals or thing or things (the pronoun’s antecedent) whose identity is made clear earlier in the text. Pronouns are words like I, me (personal pronouns) or my, mine (possessive pronouns) which take the place of a noun. In the following sentence, instead of repeating President Lincoln, the pronoun his takes its place.

President Lincoln delivered his Gettysburg Address in 1863.
Pronoun-antecedent agreement

An antecedent is a word for which a pronoun stands. (ante = "before")

Pronoun antecedent agreement is when the pronoun agrees in number (referring to singular or plural) and person (referring to first, second, or third person) with its antecedent.

- When an employee does not agree with his boss's decision, the employee should not support that decision.

Antecedent (Employee) is singular therefore the Pronoun (his) agrees with it in number.

Possessive pronouns

Certain pronouns called possessive pronouns show ownership. Some are used alone; some describe a noun.

- That computer is hers.
- It belongs to me, it’s mine.

More examples: http://a4esl.org/q/h/vc-pronouns-lb.html

Quiz on possessive pronouns http://a4esl.org/q/h/vc-pronouns-lb.html

Relative pronouns

A relative pronoun is a pronoun that introduces a relative clause. It is called a "relative" pronoun because it "relates" to the word that it modifies. Here is an example:

- The person who phoned me last night is my teacher.

In the above example, "who":

- relates to "person," which it modifies
- introduces the relative clause "who phoned me last night"

Quiz on relative pronouns http://www.englischhilfen.de/en/exercises/pronouns/relative Pronouns.htm
Demonstrative pronouns

A demonstrative pronoun represents a thing or things:
- near in distance or time (this, these)
- far in distance or time (that, those)

Examples:
- This tastes good.
- Have you seen this?
- These are bad times.
- Do you like these?

Demonstrative pronoun quiz

Adverbs

Adverbs are words that modify:
- a verb (He drove slowly. — How did he drive?)
- an adjective (He drove a very fast car. — How fast was his car?)
- another adverb (She moved quite slowly down the aisle. — How slowly did she move?)

Adverb Quiz

Adjectives

Adjectives are words that describe or modify another person or thing in the sentence. The Articles — a, an, and the — are adjectives.

Examples:
- a six-year-old child
- the unhappiest, richest man

Adjectives Quiz:
Prepositional phrases

http://www.chompchomp.com/terms/prepositionalphrase.htm

A prepositional phrase will function as an adjective or adverb. As an adjective, the prepositional phrase will answer the question Which one?

Prepositional Phrase Examples:

The book on the bathroom floor is swollen from shower steam.
    Which book? The one on the bathroom floor!

Preposition review quizzes
http://aliscot.com/bigdog/prep_exercise.htm
http://www.softschools.com/quiz_time/language_arts/preposition/theme156.html

Reviewing frequent grammar mistakes
Conventions and Usage

Standard 8

Understand and apply knowledge of mechanical conventions in edited English in the U.S.

The following are examples of content that may be covered under this standard.

Comma splice

See Capital Community College Foundation, Hartford, Connecticut
http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/runons.htm

When two independent clauses are connected by only a comma, they constitute a run-on sentence that is called a comma-splice.
Example: The sun is high, put on some sunblock.

When you use a comma to connect two independent clauses, it must be accompanied by a little conjunction (and, but, for, nor, yet, or, so).

You can also turn one of the clauses into a subordinate or dependent clause with a subordinating conjunction (if, because, although, when, where, etc.)

Quiz on comma splices: See Capital Community College Foundation, Hartford, Connecticut
http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/quizzes/nova/nova4.htm

Punctuation Marks

See Capital Community College Foundation, Hartford, Connecticut
http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/marks/marks.htm

Period:

Use a period after a complete sentence.
Example: A hangover is the wrath of grapes.

Use a period after a command.
Example: Please close the door behind you.

Use a period after most abbreviations.
Examples: Dr., Ms., Jr.

Don't use a period after the individual letters in an acronym.
For example, write NATO, not N.A.T.O.

Use a period after an initial.
Example: John F. Kennedy

Use a period after each Roman numeral, letter, or number in an outline.
Example: 1.

Always place a period inside a quotation mark that ends a sentence.
Example: The sign read, “A pest is a friend in need.”
Question Mark:

Use a question mark after a question.

*Example:* Isn’t the Mason-Dixon line what separates y’all from youse guys?

Place the question mark inside of closing quotation marks if it *is* part of the quotation.

*Example:* In a dream, I heard someone asking, “Isn’t atheism a nonprophet organization?”

Place the question mark outside of the closing quotation marks if it is *not* part of the quotation.

*Example:* Was it your mother who said, “The Lord prefers common-looking people; that’s the reason he made so many of them”? (In such a circumstance, it’s okay to drop the period from the quotation.)

Exclamation Point:

Use an exclamation mark after an exclamatory sentence even though it is far more convincing to create emphasis by the force of your words rather than the force of your punctuation.

*Example:* “Apparent” is a large, old bossy person who tortures youth!

Colon:

Used after a statement that introduces a quotation, an explanation, an example, or a series.

• "The airplane plip-plopped down the runway to a halt before the big sign: WELCOME TO CYPRUS.” (Leon Uris, *Exodus*, 1958)

• "A liberal arts education creates citizens: people who can think broadly and critically about themselves and the world."

• "I have never made but one prayer to God, a very short one: 'O Lord, make my enemies ridiculous.' And God granted it." (Voltaire)

• "There are three choices in this life: be good, get good, or give up." (Dr. House, *House, M.D.*).
**Semicolon:**

Use a semicolon between two independent clauses

- The sixteen-year-old girl is a full-time student; she is also a full-time waitress.

Also use semicolons in series in which the individual elements in the series have commas:

- The experimental report was split into an abstract; an introduction, which contained a hypothesis; a methods section; the findings, which reported on the data; and the discussion/analysis sections.

**Hyphen:**

A hyphen is used between parts of a compound word or name. It is also used to split a word by syllables to fit on a line of text.

- The sixteen-year-old girl is a full-time student.

**Dash:**

The *Dash* is generally confined to cases where there is a sudden break from the general run of the passage. Of all the punctuation marks it is the most misused.

1. It is employed to denote sudden change in construction or sentiment: "The Heroes of the Civil War,—how we cherish them." "He was a fine fellow—in his own opinion." [Note that it is not usual to put a comma before a dash or parenthesis]
2. When a word or expression is repeated for oratorical effect, a dash is used to introduce the repetition: "Shakespeare was the greatest of all poets—Shakespeare, the intellectual ocean whose waves washed the continents of all thought."
3. The Dash ...indicates a conclusion without expressing it: "He is an excellent man but—"
4. It is used to indicate what is not expected or what is not the natural outcome of what has gone before: "He delved deep into the bowels of the earth and found instead of the hidden treasure—a button."
5. It is used to denote the omission of letters or figures: "J—n J—s for John Jones; 1908-9 for 1908 and 1909; Matthew VII:5-8 for Matthew VII:5, 6, 7, and 8.
6. When an ellipsis of the words, *namely, that is, to wit, etc.*, takes place, the dash is used to supply them: "He excelled in three branches—arithmetic, algebra, and geometry."
7. A dash is used to denote the omission of part of a word when it is undesirable to write the full word: He is somewhat of a r——l (rascal). This is especially the case in profane words.
8. Between a citation and the authority for it there is generally a dash: "All the world's a stage."—*Shakespeare.*
9. When questions and answers are put in the same paragraph they should be separated by dashes: "Are you a good boy? Yes, Sir.—Do you love study? I do."
Parentheses:
http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/marks/parentheses.htm

Use parentheses [ ( ) ] to include material that you want to de-emphasize or that wouldn't normally fit into the flow of your text but you want to include nonetheless. If the material within parentheses appears within a sentence, do not use a capital letter or period to punctuate that material, even if the material is itself a complete sentence. (A question mark or exclamation mark, however, might be appropriate and necessary.) If the material within your parentheses is written as a separate sentence (not included within another sentence), punctuate it as if it were a separate sentence.

- Thirty-five years after his death, Robert Frost (we remember him at Kennedy's inauguration) remains America's favorite poet.
- Thirty-five years after his death, Robert Frost (do you remember him?) remains America's favorite poet.
- Thirty-five years after his death, Robert Frost remains America's favorite poet. (We remember him at Kennedy's inauguration.)

Brackets:

You can use them to include explanatory words or phrases within quoted language:

Example: Lew Perkins, the Director of Athletic Programs, said that Pumita Espinoza, the new soccer coach [at Notre Dame Academy] is going to be a real winner.

If you are quoting material and you've had to change the capitalization of a word or change a pronoun to make the material fit into your sentence, enclose that changed letter or word(s) within brackets:

Example: Espinoza charged her former employer with "falsification of [her] coaching record."

Ellipsis:

A series of marks that usually indicate an intentional omission of a word, sentence or whole section from the original text being quoted. An ellipsis can also be used to indicate an unfinished thought or, at the end of a sentence, a trailing off into silence (aposiopesis). It can also be used at the end of a sentence to emphasize a statement. When placed at the beginning or end of a sentence, the ellipsis can also inspire a feeling of melancholy longing.

Example: Let's take the sentence, "The ceremony honored twelve brilliant athletes from the Caribbean who were visiting the U.S." and leave out "from the Caribbean who were":

The ceremony honored twelve brilliant athletes ... visiting the U.S.
Apostrophe:

We use an apostrophe [ ‘ ] to create possessive forms, contractions, and some plurals (see below). The apostrophe shows where a letter or letters have been left out of a contracted verb:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>am = I'm</th>
<th>you are = you're</th>
<th>she is = she's</th>
<th>it is = it's</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>do not = don't</td>
<td>she would = she'd</td>
<td>he would have = he would've</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>let us = let's</td>
<td>who is = who's</td>
<td>she will = she'll</td>
<td>they had = they'd</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In possessives, the placement of the apostrophe depends on whether the noun that shows possession is singular or plural.

Generally, if the noun is singular, the apostrophe goes before the s.

Example: The witch's broom.

If the noun is plural, the apostrophe goes after the s.

Example: The witches' brooms.

Quotation marks

http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/capitals.htm

Use quotation marks [ “ ” ] to set off material that represents quoted or spoken language. Quotation marks also set off the titles of things that do not normally stand by themselves: short stories, poems, and articles.

Usually, a quotation is set off from the rest of the sentence by a comma; however, the typography of quoted material can become quite complicated.

Examples:
The phrase "lovely, dark and deep" begins to suggest ominous overtones.
My father always said, "Be careful what you wish for."
Comma:
http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/commas.htm

Use a comma **to separate the elements in a series** (three or more things), including the last two.

Examples: "He hit the ball, dropped the bat, and ran to first base."

Use a comma + a little conjunction (and, but, for, nor, yet, or, so) **to connect two independent clauses**.

Example: "He hit the ball well, **but** he ran toward third base."

Use a comma **to set off introductory elements** [phrases of 5+ words in MLA it would be used after conjunctive adverbs, common transitions]

Examples:
- *Running toward third base*, he suddenly realized how stupid he looked.
- In conclusion, the three-minute method should be used.

Use a comma **to set off parenthetical elements**

Example "The Founders Bridge, **which spans the Connecticut River**, is falling down."

QUIZ ON PUNCTUATION MARKS:
http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/quizzes/quotes_quiz.htm

Capitalization
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/592/1/

The first words of a sentence
Example: When he tells a joke, he sometimes forgets the punch line.

The pronoun "I"
Example: The last time I visited Atlanta was several years ago.

Proper nouns (the names of specific people, places, organizations, and sometimes things)
Example: Worrill Fabrication Company
- Golden Gate Bridge
- Supreme Court
- Livingston, Missouri
- Atlantic Ocean
- Mothers Against Drunk Driving

Family relationships (when used as proper names)
Example: I sent a thank-you note to Aunt Abby, but not to my other aunts.
Here is a present I bought for Mother; did he buy a present for his mother?
The names of God, specific deities, religious figures, and holy books

*Example: God the Father*
the Virgin Mary, Moses
the Bible, the Old Testament, the Torah
the Greek gods
Shiva
Buddha
Zeus

Titles preceding names, but not titles that follow names

*Examples: She worked as the assistant to Mayor Hanolovi.*
*I was able to interview Miriam Moss, mayor of Littonville.*

Directions that are names (North, South, East, and West when used as sections of the country, but not as compass directions)

*Examples: The Patels have moved to the Southwest.*
*Jim's house is two miles north of Otterbein.*

The days of the week, the months of the year, and holidays (but not the seasons used generally)

*Examples: Friday, October, Halloween*
*but winter, spring, fall, summer*

**Exception: Seasons are capitalized when used in a title.**

*Example: The Fall 1999 semester*

The names of countries, nationalities, and specific languages

*Examples: Costa Rica*
*Spanish, French, English*

The first word in a sentence that is a direct quote

*Example: Emerson once said, "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds."*

The major words in the titles of books, articles, and songs (but not short prepositions [of 5 or fewer letters] or the articles "the," "a," or "an," if they are not the first word of the title)

*Example: One of Jerry's favorite books is The Catcher in the Rye.*

Members of national, political, racial, social, civic, and athletic groups

*Examples: Chinese, Democrats, Anti-Semitic*
*African-Americans, Friends of the Wilderness, Green Bay Packers,*

Periods and events (but not century numbers)

*Examples: Victorian Era, Great Depression*
*Constitutional Convention*
*but sixteenth century*

Trademarks

*Examples: Pepsi, Honda, IBM, Microsoft Word*

Words and abbreviations of specific names (but not names of things that came from specific things but are now general types)

*Examples: Freudian, UN, NBC*
*but not pasteurize, french fries, italics*

Spelling [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/660/01/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/660/01/)
[www.greyorgray.com/100-most-commonly-misspelled-words.html](http://www.greyorgray.com/100-most-commonly-misspelled-words.html)
[http://academic.cuesta.edu/acasupp/as/819.htm](http://academic.cuesta.edu/acasupp/as/819.htm)
Critical Terms About Writing to Know and Be Able to Apply

Vocabulary for Language Arts

Main idea – The main idea of a paragraph is what all sentences are about. After reading a paragraph, ask, “What’s your point?” That will help you zero in on the main idea.

Introductory sentence – Introductory sentences are general sentences that open paragraphs and precede the development sentences. Introductory sentences are not developed throughout the paragraph.

Cohesion – Concerns that flow of sentences and paragraphs from one to another. It involves the typing together of old information and new.

Sentence structure – The grammatical arrangement of words in sentences. 
http://www.towson.edu/ows/sentencestruct.htm

Writing Styles – Descriptive, Analytical, Reflective

Patterns of Organization
• Time Order
• Comparison and/or Contrast
• Cause and Effect
• Definition and Example
• Classification
• Order of importance
• Problem-Solution
• Process
• Mixed Patterns

Point of View
• Objective Point of View: With the objective point of view, the writer tells what happens without stating more than can be inferred from the story’s action and dialogue. The narrator never discloses anything about what the characters think or feel, remaining a detached observer.
• Third Person Point of View: There the narrator does not participate in the action of the story as one of the characters, but lets us know exactly how the characters feel. We learn about the characters through this outside voice.
• **First Person Point of View:** In the first person point of view, the narrator does participate in the action of the story. When reading stories in the first person, we need to realize that what the narrator is recounting might not be the objective truth. We should question the trustworthiness of the accounting.

• **Omniscient and Limited Omniscient Points of View:** The narrator who knows everything about all the characters is all knowing, or omniscient.

• **Shift Point of View:** A point of view shift is when the narrator of the story changes positions or becomes non-existent. Consider a shift from first to third person. Instead of saying “I” the narrator will say “He.” Point of view is often consistent in novels, however, it is not very difficult or uncommon to change point of views. Sometimes the author will change the point of view when the character has a flash back. Sometimes the author will change the point of view... to focus on an event that does not directly involve the main character(s). It can be a powerful literary tool.

**Persuasive writing:** The writer presents his or her opinion and tries to convince the reader to agree. Here you’ll find help for writing a variety of persuasive essays.

**Writer’s Purpose:** To inform, persuade, or entertain

**Tone:** Position from which a writer addresses a topic to include beliefs, assumptions, and biases.

**Audience:** Three categories of audience are the “lay” audience, the “Managerial” audience, and the “experts.”

  • Lay audience – has no special or expert knowledge. They connect with the human interest aspect of articles. They usually need background information; they expect more definition and description and they may want attractive graphics or visuals.

  • Managerial audience – may or may not have more knowledge than the lay audience about the subject, but they need knowledge so they can make a decision about the issue. Any background information, fact, statistics needed to make a decision should be highlighted.

  • Expert Audience – may be the most demanding audience in terms of knowledge, presentation, and graphics or visuals. Experts are often “theorists” or “practitioners.” For the expert audience, document formats are often elaborate and technical, style and vocabulary may be specialized or technical, sour citations are reliable and up-to-date, and documentation is accurate.

**Persuasive Techniques:** Repetition, reasons why, consistency, social proof, comparisons, agitate & solve, prognosticate, go tribal, address objections, storytelling

**Fallacies:** Common errors in reasoning that will undermine the logic of your argument. Fallacies can be either illegitimate arguments or irrelevant points, and are often identified because they lack evidence that supports their claim.
Bias: One kind of bias is a strong opinion about something. You can be biased in favor of something or biased against it. In either case, you may have some facts to support your position, but a bias is based more on feelings and opinions than on facts. In some cases, bias results from the person’s past experiences.

Symbolism: the “deeper meaning,” that the author is trying to convey to you. A simple example would be writing about the Phoenix may be a symbol for reincarnation.

Imagery: Used in literature to refer to descriptive language that evokes sensory experience. Such images can be created by using figures of speech such as similes, metaphors, personification, and assonance. Imagery can also involve the use of relatable action words or onomatopoeias that trigger images in the reader’s mind.

Metaphor: a figure of speech in which a term or phrase is applied to something to which it is not literally applicable in order to suggest a resemblance, as in “A mighty fortress is our God.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Writing</th>
<th>Author’s Purpose</th>
<th>Point of View and Tone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-fiction</td>
<td>To inform, explain, give directions, illustrate, or present information.</td>
<td>The author’s point of view and tone is primarily neutral.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News articles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbooks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biographies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documentaries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Manuals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charts, graphs, tables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persuasive Pieces</td>
<td>To persuade by expressing an opinion to convince readers to think/feel/act a certain way.</td>
<td>The point of view clearly reflects the author’s attitude about a subject. Sometimes the opinion is directly stated and other times it is implied. The author may try to convince readers by using tone to appeal to their feelings and/or values.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editorials</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertisements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaign speeches</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bumper stickers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billboards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercials</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some charts and graphs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiction</td>
<td>To illustrate a theme, event, or story that conveys a mood. Usually written to entertain.</td>
<td>The author may use characters or narrators to express attitudes in the story. The tone might be light and humorous or serious and sad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short story</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novels</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>