Preparing for the COMPASS

The COMPASS is a fully computerized test that adapts itself to match your skill level as you take it. This means that if you answer a question right, you can expect the next question to be harder. If you answer a question wrong, expect the next question to be easier. The purpose is not to give you a passing or failing grade but to evaluate your skills and determine an appropriate course of study.

Reading:
This portion of the test checks for reading comprehension. Skills to develop include:
- Determining the **purpose** of a passage
- Finding the **main idea** of an entire text or single paragraph
- Using context clues to determine the meaning of **vocabulary** items
- Making logical **conclusions** based on available evidence

Writing Skills:
This portion requires you to read passages in order to identify and correct errors, usually of one of the following types:
- **Word Choice**: Which word fits best in a given context.
- **Grammar**: How words combine and interact following the conventions of formal writing.
- **Punctuation**: How symbols such as commas and periods should be used in a text.
There may be more than one possible answer, so be sure to read all answer choices carefully and select the one that fits **best**.

Essay:
This portion will evaluate your response to a given prompt based on several factors:
- Whether you include an **introduction**, at least two **body** paragraphs, and a **conclusion**
- The strength of your stance on the issue and its communication through a clear, developed **thesis** statement (located in the introduction)
- How well this position is supported with an organized presentation of coherent, logical **evidence** and **argumentation**
- The extent to which the essay stays **focused** on the assigned topic

English as a Second Language (ESL):
If English is not your native language, then you may need to answer additional multiple-choice questions. These will again test your skills in **reading** and **grammar**, but there is also a **listening** section.

For more information or to sign up for a **test prep seminar**, visit the Testing Center in C203, or call 936-273-7373.