

The University Advising Center's preparation guide for taking (or retaking) the College of Management Writing Assessment (CMWA):

1. Get as familiar as possible with the test you will take (see CMWA blog link and sample essay answers below).
2. Prepare as much as possible and **do not** take the test until you feel fully prepared.
3. Understand that this test **MUST** be passed in order for you to enroll in a Business Communication course.
4. Placement in a Business Communication class does not guarantee success. You must pass either BC class with a B- or better to advance.
5. You cannot take 300+ level Management or Marketing classes until BC 290 is completed with a grade of B- or better.
6. Take the CMWA seriously. It is an important, formal test.
7. The test is a two-hour timed assessment with two sections:
 - a. **Multiple choice section**: must get 32/50 to get into BC 230 and 40/50 to get into BC 290
 - b. **Essay section**: must get 7/10 to get into BC 230 and 8/10 to get into BC 290

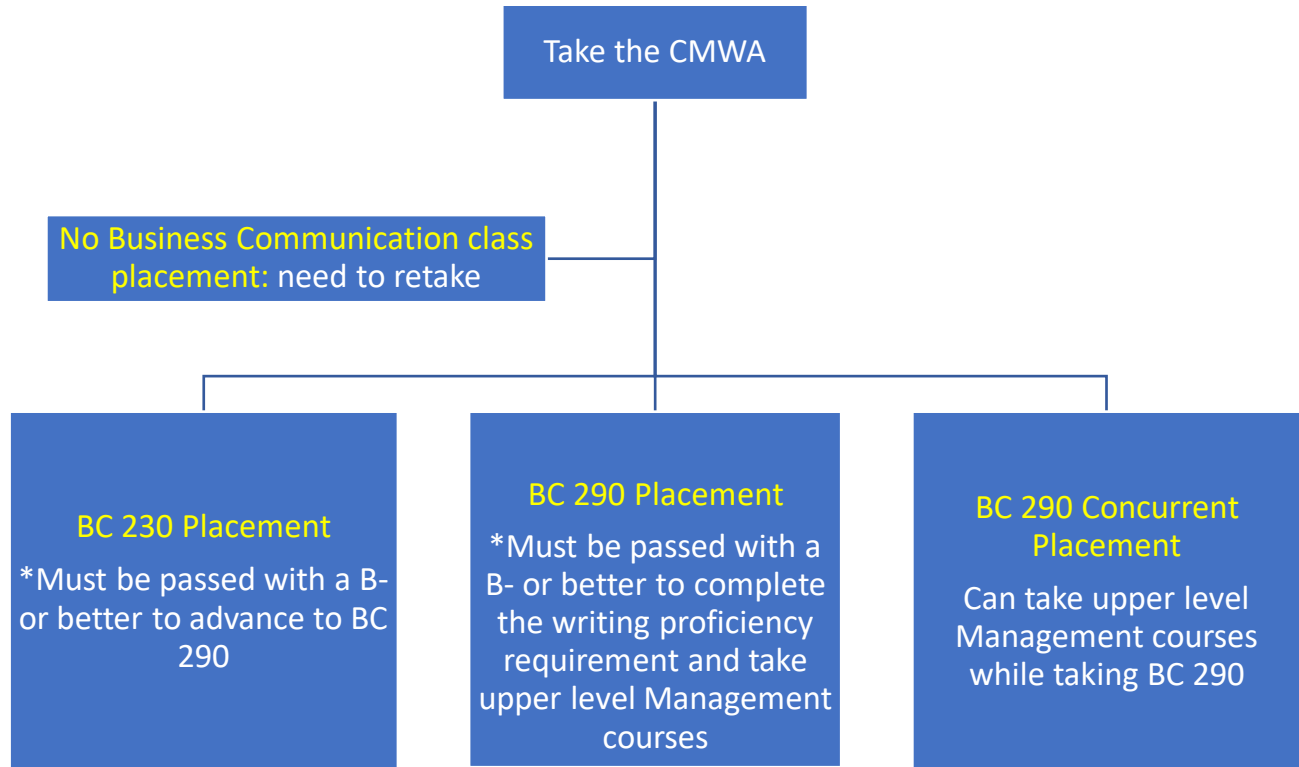
You **do not** need to take the CMWA the semester after completing English 102
If you feel you are not ready, do not be in a rush to take it. **Talk to your advisor** to help make your decision!

It is important to understand that the CMWA does not emphasize the same writing competencies as English 101 and English 102.

There is more of a focus on form including sentence structure, punctuation, appropriate professional vocabulary, and correct word usage. The writing section should be in standard 5 paragraph format and follow academic writing conventions.

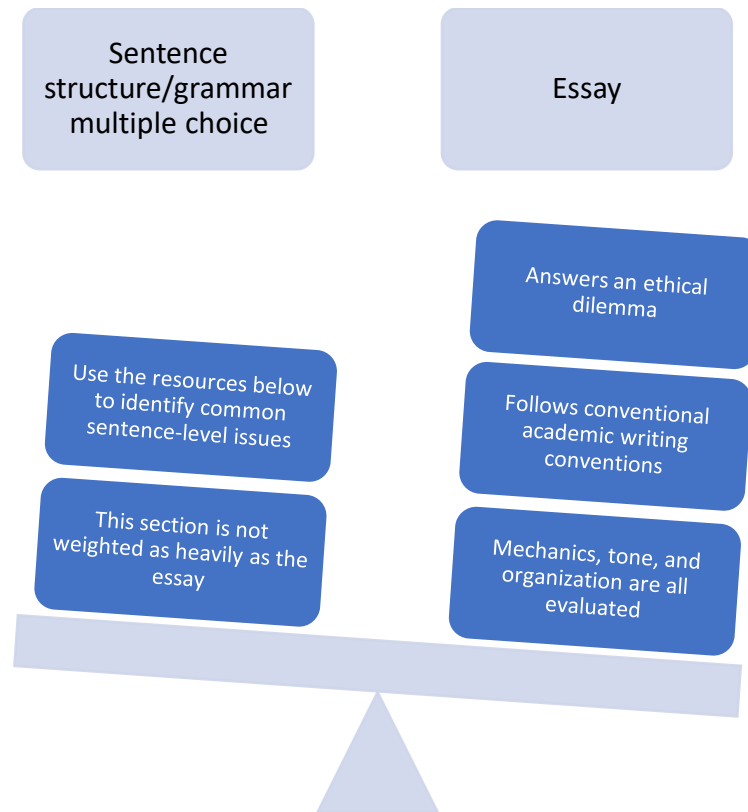
Remember to take advantage of free on-campus resources that can help you develop your writing skills **before** you attempt the CMWA ([Reading, Writing, and Study Strategies Center](#) is an excellent resource!)

The CMWA writing portion typically asks you to deal with [an ethical dilemma](#) in the form of a five paragraph essay.



*If you do not pass a Business Communication class with a B- or better, ***you will need to retake it.***

The CMWA has two sections:



Additional grammar and writing resources:

- [Grammar Bytes](#) – free, online resource
- [Proofreading and Editing book](#) – 20 minutes per day lessons
- [Understanding a writing prompt](#)
- [Finding and fixing comma splices](#)
- [Short answer writing](#)
- [Writing a 5 Paragraph Essay](#)

College of Management's [CMWA blog](#) with additional information.

Questions? Contact the CMWA Program at CMWA@umb.edu

Planning and Writing sample for the Essay Writing Section of the CMWA

Sample Essay Answers by Joe Marois (University Advising Center)

**Final essays should be 4-5 paragraphs, roughly 350-500 words.*

Sample Question Prompt #1 (from www.corporatecomplianceinsights.com)

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The manufacturing cost of the widgets your company makes has dropped by 50%. One of your customers, Sam, tells you he knows this because he is best friends with your company's VP of production and asks you for a discount on his order. Your boss okays the discount. Your other customer, Sue (who is one of your best friends and knows nothing about the drop in manufacturing costs), places the exact same order for widgets as Sam. Do you offer her a similar discount? Do you tell her about the drop in manufacturing costs?

Introductory Paragraph: Summarize the issue and include all key points

- a. Manufacturing cost of widgets has dropped by 50%
- b. The best friend of the VP has been approved for a discount on purchase of widgets
- c. Your friend has the same widget order
- d. Should you offer her the same discount order?

Sample Introductory paragraph:

The company I work for makes widgets, and the cost to manufacture them has dropped by 50%. One of my customers, Sam, heard about the drop in manufacturing cost from our company's VP, who is his best friend. Using this information, he asked for and was given a discount on his widget order. My best friend, Sue, is also a customer for our widgets. My dilemma is whether or not to give her the information on widget costs so she can also get a discount.

Body Paragraph 1: Analysis of one side of the dilemma

- a. Sue does not know about the drop on manufacturing cost
- b. Her order at the usual cost will mean increased profit for my company
- c. The information on manufacturing cost is not public yet

Sample body paragraph 1:

On one hand, Sue has no knowledge of the new reduced cost of manufacturing widgets. She expects to pay the amount she usually does for her order. I would not be cheating her by charging her this amount as it is the listed price for widgets. Additionally, if Sue pays the usual price, my company will make an increased profit off of this sale. That could also lead to an economic benefit to me as the salesperson.

Body Paragraph 2: Analysis of the other side of the dilemma

- a. Sue is my best friend
- b. Another customer has already benefited from insider knowledge
- c. It is unfair and unethical to withhold this information from Sue and other customers

Sample Body Paragraph 2:

On the other hand, it does not seem fair that Sam has access to inside information that gives him an economic benefit. Although this is due to Sam's friendship with our VP, Sue is my best friend and it does not seem right for her not to get the same discount. In a larger sense, it is unfair to all of our customers who purchase widgets. Finally, the company will still make a profit on the sale of widgets.

Concluding Paragraph: Summarize the dilemma and indicate your decision

- a. Choose a solution
- b. Explain and support your solution

Sample Concluding Paragraphs:

After considering both sides, I believe the best thing to do is tell Sue about the reduced cost of manufacturing widgets and recommend that she ask for a discount. Furthermore, I will also make the case to my boss that all customers should be immediately offered the discount based on the manufacturing cost reduction. This is the fairest and most ethical solution and it will also benefit the company by improving customer loyalty.

Or

In conclusion, I will not tell Sue about the reduced cost of manufacturing widgets as the company has not made this information public yet. Although I do not think this is completely fair to Sue, it is not my decision. I do not have the same privilege as the VP to share information with friends. My company will be able to make a higher profit on the sale of widgets to Sue and my other customers. Since they do not know about the reduced manufacturing cost, they will not feel like they were cheated. Both I and my company will benefit economically.

Full sample question and essay answer

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The manufacturing cost of the widgets your company makes has dropped by 50%. One of your customers, Sam, tells you he knows this because he is best friends with your company's VP of production and asks you for a discount on his order. Your boss okays the discount. Your other customer, Sue (who is one of your best friends and knows nothing about the drop in manufacturing costs), places the exact same order for widgets as Sam. Do you offer her a similar discount? Do you tell her about the drop in manufacturing costs?

Sample Essay answer (as written above):

The company I work for makes widgets, and the cost to manufacture them has dropped by 50%. One of my customers, Sam, heard about the drop in manufacturing cost from our company's VP, who is his best friend. Using this information, he asked for and was given a discount on his widget order. My best friend, Sue, is also a customer for our widgets. My dilemma is whether or not to give her the information on widget costs so she can also get a discount.

On one hand, Sue has no knowledge of the new reduced cost of manufacturing widgets. She expects to pay the amount she usually does for her order. I would not be cheating her by charging her this amount as it is the listed price for widgets. Additionally, if Sue pays the usual price, my company will make an increased profit off of this sale. That could also lead to an economic benefit to me as the salesperson.

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Sample Question Prompt #2 (written by Joe Marois)

You work as a financial director at Apex, a large publicly-traded company and have been given information about a takeover bid to acquire Bolex, a rival company. This takeover bid will greatly increase Bolex's value even if the bid is unsuccessful. A good friend with some financial problems is considering selling stock shares in Bolex and has asked you, as an expert in the industry, for advice on this matter. You know that his shares will soon be worth much more so he shouldn't sell. However, telling him this is insider trading, which is sharing non-public information and is illegal. What should you do?

Introductory Paragraph: Summarize the issue and include all key points

- a. You have access to inside information on a takeover bid
- b. This bid will significantly increase the value of Bolex's stock
- c. Your friend wants advice on selling his Bolex stock
- d. Giving him advice is illegal insider trading

Sample Introductory paragraph:

My good friend is in some financial difficulty and wants advice on selling stock shares in a company in the same industry as my company. I know that my company, Apex, is planning to make a takeover bid for that company, Bolex. Whether or not the bid is successful, Bolex's stock price will increase. I want to tell my friend to keep his stock in Bolex as it will soon be much more valuable. However, I would be using non-public information to tell him this. In fact, I would be committing the crime of insider trading.

Body Paragraph 1: Analysis of one side of the dilemma

- a. Tell my friend to keep his stock
- b. He is a friend who needs help
- c. Acknowledge that this may be illegal, but I am not benefitting from it

Sample body paragraph 1:

Although I know that using the information I have to help my friend is illegal, he is in financial trouble. He is already asking me for advice on selling his stocks so I can just tell him that I think he shouldn't. If he asks why he shouldn't, I will not be able to tell him. Without explicitly telling him of the upcoming takeover bid, I can protect him. Even though telling him to keep his stock is illegal, I am not personally benefitting so it does not feel too unethical.

Body Paragraph 2: Analysis of the other side of the dilemma

- a. Do not give my friend advice
- b. Follow the rules on insider trading
- c. Could damage our friendship

Sample Body Paragraph 2:

Conversely, telling my friend that I cannot give him advice will be difficult. Since I work in the industry, he has an expectation that I can help him with his decision. Due to his financial problems, this might be a very important decision for him. However, the rules of insider trading are clear. Breaking those rules to help my friend can put me and my company in legal and financial jeopardy.

Concluding Paragraph: Summarize the dilemma and indicate your decision

- a. Choose a solution
- b. Explain and support your solution

Sample Concluding Paragraphs:

In the end, I cannot disregard my responsibilities to my company and its shareholders by sharing the information on the takeover bid and advising my friend to keep his stock shares in Bolex. Although this may cause damage to my friendship, it is ethically the right decision. It not only protects me from criminal liability, but it also protects my company and its shareholders. I will tell my friend that I cannot advise him in this matter due to a conflict with my responsibilities as a financial director at Apex.

Or

In conclusion, helping my friend out of financial difficulty is more important to me than my duty to my company and its shareholders. I will tell my friend to keep his stock in Bolex but advise him not to ask me why. I am willing to risk charges of insider trading because my defense is that I did not directly benefit. I can also say that I did not specifically tell my friend that my company would be making a takeover bid for Bolex. It might be ethically questionable, but I think my continuing friendship can justify my actions.

Full sample question and essay answer

Sample Question Prompt #2 (by Joe Marois)

You work as a financial director at Apex, a large publicly-traded company and have been given information about a takeover bid to acquire Bolex, a rival company. This takeover bid will greatly increase Bolex's value even if the bid is unsuccessful. A good friend with some financial problems is considering selling stock shares in Bolex and has asked you, as an expert in the industry, for advice on this matter. You know that his shares will soon be worth much more so he shouldn't sell. However, telling him this is insider trading, which is sharing non-public information and is illegal. What should you do?

Sample Essay answer (as written above):

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In the end, I cannot disregard my responsibilities to my company and its shareholders by sharing the information on the takeover bid and advising my friend to keep his stock shares in Bolex. Although this may cause damage to my friendship, it is ethically the right decision. It not only protects me from criminal liability, but it also protects my company and its shareholders. I will tell my friend that I cannot advise him in this matter due to a conflict with my responsibilities as a financial director at Apex.

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