



MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

Grammar, Spelling and Punctuation Exam

Why is the GSP exam required?

The reputation of the Department of Communication at Mississippi State University has long been predicated on excellence in written communication. As this skill is the cornerstone to precise methods of sharing information, faculty members voted in 2015 to institute this exam to validate the most common English language skills.

We require a score of 70 percent or better to register for any writing classes in the department, as do many other state and national universities. The exam we administer coincides with a pool of questions developed by professors from around the U.S., which were later adopted by several sister institutions.

How does the exam affect my progress as a Communication major? If I can't pass the exam, do I have to change my major?

No student may register for or take CO 2413 Introduction to News Writing and Reporting before passing the exam. This class is a prerequisite for nearly all other Communication writing classes.

If you do not pass the exam within three attempts, your only options are either to change your major (or concentration in Communication) to a program that doesn't require CO 2413 or try to take the course at a different school and transfer it back to MSU. In order to do that, you will have to find a course at another school that seems to be equivalent to CO 2413 and have it approved by our department ahead of time. Students who choose to change their major can consider the Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies (BSIS). In this program, students choose two or three areas of study to combine into one degree. Students may choose Communication as one of those emphasis areas and take CO courses that don't have CO 2413 as a prerequisite. Also, because the BSIS degree is housed in the College of Arts & Sciences, a large majority of the requirements students complete early on in the Communication major also count toward the BSIS degree. Students interested in changing to the BSIS major can contact the College of Arts & Sciences Dean's Office.

How many times can I attempt the exam?

Effective April 16, 2018, students are allowed a maximum of three attempts. However, the department counsels students who fail on their first attempt to either apply greater preparation or begin considering a discipline of study outside the department. A third failure means a student can never register for CO 2413 and therefore cannot complete required coursework in the Broadcasting, Journalism or Public Relations concentrations. Our goal is to assist you in proceeding with a degree program in the most expedient manner.

How often do you administer the exam?

The exam is available free-of-charge online through MyCourses. Students can find it listed as an External Course and register for it using their Net ID. We urge students to take the exam as early as possible in their MSU career in order to fulfill this primary requirement without delay. Students may mistakenly delay taking or passing the exam and later regret they did not complete it sooner.

How do you assist prospective Communication majors to prepare? Do you offer any suggestions to prepare for the exam?

No specific class exists at MSU to prepare for this exam. However, the grammar and punctuation rules it requires reflect the teaching at middle- and high-school levels. We base the spelling words on a list we and other university communication programs consider essential for an appropriately broad communication vocabulary.

Naturally, your ability to display mastery of the three fundamental areas (grammar, spelling and punctuation) is the primary goal. Some students return to middle-school level grammar textbooks for guidance. A stern self-assessment of your skill with the possible spelling words, perhaps with the help of a "spelling buddy," can help identify weak areas.

In addition, we provide a spelling and word usage list and a list of numerous helpful internet sites on our website to help you practice and hone your skills. These sites are varied in their style and content; you may find some more helpful than others. To find these resources, visit www.comm.msstate.edu and click "GSP Exam" under the "Academics" tab.



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If I fail the exam, how long must I wait to retake it?

Students who wish to retake the exam must wait five working days between attempts, which is time the student should spend better preparing for the exam.

Where can I find the list of the words from which you prepare the spelling test?

You can find all possible spelling words on our website at www.comm.msstate.edu by clicking "GSP Exam" under the "Academics" tab.

Can I register for any Department of Communication writing class if I plan to take and pass the exam after the semester begins?

No, without exception. You must pass the exam before beginning CO 2413, which is a prerequisite for nearly all other writing classes in the department.

What exceptions do you allow to register for such classes without passing the exam?

Advisors and instructors will analyze the curriculum of any students who already completed a news writing class at an accredited institution. We may allow students whose class work meets the rigorous standards of this fundamental course to register for any Department of Communication writing classes.

Can I take the exam elsewhere and have it apply at MSU?

We deal with such issues on an individual basis, but if you have previously passed the exam at another institution, you should have little trouble with MSU's version.

What is the cost of the exam?

No charge. The exam is self-administered online through Canvas.

Where do I register for the exam?

Log in to your myState account. Click the hamburger button in the top left corner and choose "Self Enroll." In the top right corner, use the drop-down menu under "Canvas Course Self Enrollment" to choose "Grammar, Spelling, and Punctuation Exam." The GSP Exam page will now appear as a course on your Canvas dashboard.

Is the exam the same each time?

No single exam exists for this process. We draw questions and words randomly from a computerized list of questions to ensure that the exam varies from one occasion to the next.

Why can't I see my test?

The faculty of the Department of Communication determined from the outset of adopting this exam that it is not designed for remedial purposes. Frankly, the goal of the exam is not to improve your skills, but to see evidence of your skills and preparedness to succeed in the demanding, writing-intensive classes all fields of study in our department require.

How do I contact the coordinator of the GSP exam?

You may email GSP@comm.msstate.edu for answers to your specific questions. A word of advice: Always check the spelling of your e-mail message before you send it. Developing this habit will help you identify words you may not be aware of misspelling.