

# **Introduction to CLEP**

Zach's Musings

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In this booklet (I just can't justify calling a three-page article a book), we're going to demystify earning credits with CLEP. The first section is about what CLEP is, and the second is how to do it.

## WHAT IT IS

CLEP is formally the College Level Examination Program, which is owned by the College Board. Lots of other information is available for your consuming at Wikipedia, and we aren't in too much competition with them so here we'll stay as practical as we can.

The basic five word summary is earning college credits through exams. At least to some extent, 2900, or 70% of colleges accept CLEP credit. Some accept only a few, or most of them, but some accept unlimited credits. This way, you could earn your degree for a couple thousand.

## BENEFITS

If you've heard of CLEP before, two major benefits are saving money and learning on your own.

The obvious one, saving money, is possibly the biggest one. Example: You spend \$100 on the exam (the exams are \$80, but the testing center charges a fee), \$20 on prep (a used textbook off Amazon plus some practice tests). Compare the \$120 for anywhere from three to twelve college credits to public and private tuition. In-state public university would cost nearly \$800 for 3 credits. An out-of-state public university would cost nearly \$2000. A private school would cost nearly \$3000.

So benefit one: way cheaper.

Next, you can learn on your own. A few hours a day is all it takes. If you have a decent schedule, all you have to do is follow it. No teachers, no nothing. Just study how you want, take the test, earn your credits.

## HOW TO DO IT

Now that I sold you on CLEP (I just got a 15% commission!), let's go over the how. So our case will be the CLEP exam Principles of Marketing. That's because I just took that exam, and I generally remember how I studied for

it. According to free-clep-prep.com, this is one of the two easiest exams, so I decided to try it. Let's start with what materials.

## MATERIALS

Used college textbook

*If you're interested, the textbook I used was called Basic Marketing. It's a really long textbook, but it covered pretty much everything on the test.*

CLEP review guide with practice tests

*Specifically, it's called REA. They are basically cram guides with tests. The cram guide for Marketing was super lacking. I would say the exams are harder than the actual exam.*

Official CLEP study guide

*Invaluable. Gives you an introduction to CLEP plus practice tests for all 33 exams.*

Free-clep-prep.com

*Pretty useful. Check out their ranking of the exams easiest to hardest.*

Flashcards

*I hope I don't have to explain these...*

Quizlet.com

*Basically a free online flashcard tool.*

## STUDY ROUTINE

Since this was my first CLEP exam, I spent a way too long time studying. I'm glad I overstudied.

So I started by taking the REA Diagnostic Test. I got a 70% which I believe is barely a pass. I thought that the REA book was sufficient for getting a good grade (mistake!). When I took the final two practice test, I got more C-'s or possibly even a D+.

Finally I realized I needed to study the Basic Marketing textbook. I spent anywhere from 2-5 hours studying per day, and went crazy memorizing. The whole thing is about memorizing. Memorize, memorize, memorize, and memorize some more.

I wrote all the terms on flashcards, transferred them to Quizlet, and studied that for two weeks. Then I retok the practice tests. I improved my REA grades to lower 90s. I took the official practice test, got a 95%, kept reviewing what I was weak at, and then took the test.

## ACTUALLY TAKING THE TEST

So I brought a signed passport, a birth certificate, the CLEP registration ticket, the test center receipt, and two pencils. Overkill. All they needed was the passport and the registration ticket.

The tests are administered on a computer. You can get a feel for it by watching [this video from CLEP](#).

The test was really a lot easier than I thought. It was 100 questions and they give you 90 minutes. I went through it thrice, not twice, then reviewed all the questions I was unsure of, and by then, I had 5 minutes left.

I submitted the test and instantly was granted my score, which was 75. 80 is perfect, 50 is pass. My understanding is a CLEP 75 is pretty much a 94% or maybe 95%.

I overstudied, but I don't regret it.

## WHAT I WOULD DO NEXT TIME

Next time, next course, I would pretty much just study the textbook, turn the key terms into flashcards, work through them a lot, review the REA book, and take the first REA test. If my grade was high, I would take the next test. Otherwise, I'd review the stuff I messed up. Then I'd do the second test. And finally the Official CLEP Study Guide test. After some final cramming, I'd take the test.

It's a really simple process, but for me it works well.

## AND FINALLY

I'm not paid to endorse CLEP, but I can see how useful this can be for so many people (homeschoolers, high schoolers, college students, people trying to finish their degree, maybe some two-year-old genius...)

Hopefully you found this useful. If you have any questions, please email me at [zachsmusings@gmail.com](mailto:zachsmusings@gmail.com) and maybe I'll add more stuff on CLEP in the future!