



**Department of  
Civil Service**

# A Guide to the Written Test

for the

## Entry-Level Correction Officer Series

## INTRODUCTION

The New York State Department of Civil Service has developed this test guide to familiarize you with the written test for the Entry-Level Correction Officer Series. This test guide provides a general description of the subject areas which will be tested and the different types of questions you may see on the test. The Examination Announcement will specify the exact subject areas to be included on the particular examination you will be taking.

The written test for the Entry-Level Correction Officer Series has an overall time allowance of 2 1/2 hours. The test questions will cover the following four subject areas:

1. **OBSERVING AND RECALLING FACTS AND INFORMATION:** These questions test for the ability to observe and recall information presented. You will be presented with information describing or depicting prison scenes or other facts. You will have a short time to observe and memorize the information before it is collected by the monitor. You will then be asked to recall specific details about the information presented.
2. **APPLYING WRITTEN INFORMATION IN A CORRECTIONAL SERVICES SETTING:** These questions test for the ability to read, interpret, and apply rules, regulations, directives, written narratives, and other related material. You will be required to read a set of information, and to appropriately apply the information to situations similar to those typically experienced in a correctional services setting. All the information needed to answer the questions asked concerning the situations presented is contained in the rules, regulations, etc., which are cited.
3. **PREPARING WRITTEN MATERIAL:** These questions test for the ability to present information clearly and accurately, and to organize paragraphs logically and comprehensibly. For some questions, you will be given information in two or three sentences, followed by four restatements of the information. You must then choose the best version. For other questions, you will be given paragraphs with their sentences out of order. You must then choose, from among four suggestions, the best order for the sentences.
4. **UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETING WRITTEN MATERIAL:** These questions test for the ability to understand and interpret written material. You will be presented with brief reading passages and will be asked questions about the passages. You should base your answers to the questions **only** on what is presented in the passages and **not** on what you may happen to know about the topic.

These are the only subject areas that will be included on the written test.

The remainder of this test guide explains how you will be tested in each of the subject areas listed above. A **TEST TASK** is provided for each subject area. This is an explanation of how a question will be presented and how to correctly answer it. Read each explanation carefully. This test guide also provides at least one **SAMPLE QUESTION** for each subject area. The sample question will be similar to the type of questions that will be presented on the actual test. This test guide provides the **SOLUTION** and correct answer to each sample question. You should study each sample question and solution in order to understand how the correct answer was determined.

## **SUBJECT AREA 1**

**OBSERVING AND RECALLING FACTS AND INFORMATION:** These questions test for the ability to observe and recall facts and information, without the aid of notes.

**TEST TASK:** You will be presented with facts or photographs which describe or depict prison scenes. You will have a short time to observe and memorize the material before it is collected by the monitor. You will not be allowed to take notes during this study period. You will then be presented with questions which require you to recall specific details about the material.

**SAMPLE PHOTOGRAPH:** Look closely at the people in the photograph. Who are they? (e.g., correction officer, inmate, or instructor) What are they wearing? What are they doing? Note the setting of the scene. What objects are present? How are the objects positioned? What are the people doing with the objects?

Try to remember all the details about the photograph so that you can answer questions about the photographs later, without the aid of notes.



**INMATES IN PRISON YARD**

### **SAMPLE QUESTIONS:**

You will be presented with two types of questions in the memory test booklet.

- the four-choice, multiple choice question, and
- the two-choice, True/False question

Following are samples of each:

#### **SAMPLE QUESTION 1:**

The following question is based on the photograph labeled "INMATES IN PRISON YARD."

In the photograph, what was the focus of attention of the group?

- A. a weightlifting bench
- B. an inmate holding his fist out
- C. a barbell on the ground
- D. an inmate lifting weights on a bench

*The correct answer to sample question 1 is B.*

**SOLUTION:** To answer this question correctly, you must be able to recall that the group in the photograph appeared to be looking at an inmate holding his fist out. Therefore, the correct answer to sample question 1 is choice B.

#### **SAMPLE QUESTION 2:**

The following question is based on the photograph labeled "INMATES IN PRISON YARD."

One of the inmates in the prison yard was holding a barbell.

- A. True
- B. False

*The correct answer to sample question 2 is B.*

**SOLUTION:** To answer this question correctly, you must be able to recall that none of the inmates in the photograph were holding a barbell. Therefore, the correct answer to sample question 2 is "False" (choice B).

## **SUBJECT AREA 2**

**APPLYING WRITTEN INFORMATION IN A CORRECTIONAL SERVICES SETTING:** These questions test for the ability to apply written information, such as rules, regulations, directives, narrative reports, and other material, in a correctional services setting.

**TEST TASK:** You will be presented with a set of rules, regulations, or other written information which you must read. You will then be presented with a situation that is similar to those typically experienced in a correctional services setting. For each question, you must apply information in the rule to the given situation in order to answer the question correctly.

### **SAMPLE RULE:**

**Personal Grooming Standards** - Employees shall be well groomed, appropriately dressed, and present a neat, clean appearance while on duty. Moderate amounts of cologne or perfume may be used.

**I. Hair** - The hair must be kept clean and within Department standards. Uniformed staff may not wear hair styles that feature spikes, shaved patterns, lines, tails, symbols, or names cut into the hair. Unnatural color dyes, or any other styles which distract from their professional appearance should be avoided.

**Males** - The hair shall be neatly groomed so as not to fall over the ears or eyebrows or extend more than 1/2" below the top of the uniform collar.

**Females** - While in uniform, the hair shall be neatly groomed and arranged/styled so that it does not extend more than 1/2" below the top of the uniform collar. Pins, combs, or barrettes similar to the color of the hair are permitted, provided they are tasteful, not ostentatious, and concealed as much as possible. Hair ornaments or ribbons shall not be worn.

**II. Facial Hair** - Recruits reporting to the Academy shall keep existing facial hair trimmed as set forth below. Recruits shall not be permitted to grow new facial hair while at the Academy.

**Beards** - Security staff appointed after 1990 are not permitted to wear beards. Security staff appointed prior to 1990 may wear beards, provided they are kept trimmed within one inch.

**Sideburns** – Sideburns shall be neatly trimmed. The base shall be clean shaven on a horizontal line and shall not extend below the lowest part of the exterior ear openings. Muttonchops or flared sideburns are prohibited.

**Mustaches** – Mustaches must be neatly trimmed and not extend beyond the corners of the mouth or fall below the center line of the lips.

### **SAMPLE SITUATION:**

While inspecting the appearance of Correction Officers at pre-shift briefing, a Sergeant observes the following:

- **Officer A** - a male officer wearing his hair 1/4" over his ears and 1/4" below the top of his uniform collar
- **Officer B** - a female officer wearing shoulder-length hair arranged in a single braid
- **Officer C** - a female officer wearing a yellow ribbon in her hair, in recognition of her husband who is overseas with the military
- **Officer D** - a male officer who did not have a mustache when graduating from the Academy, but who has grown a neatly trimmed mustache since reporting to the facility

## **SUBJECT AREA 2 (Continued)**

### **SAMPLE QUESTION:**

Based on the preceding rule, which officer is in compliance with the Personal Grooming Standards?

- A. Officer A
- B. Officer B
- C. Officer C
- D. Officer D

*The correct answer to this sample question is D*

**SOLUTION:** *To answer this question correctly, you must compare the descriptions of the four officers presented in situation, to the relevant sections of the stated rule:*

**Officer A** is wearing his hair  $\frac{1}{4}$ " over his ears. This is in violation of the rule for males, which states that "The hair shall be neatly groomed so as not to fall over the ears..." Therefore, Officer A is not in compliance with the standards.

**Officer B** is wearing a shoulder-length braid. This is in violation of the rule for females, which states that hair should "not extend more than  $\frac{1}{2}$ " below the top of the uniform collar." Therefore, Officer B is not in compliance with the standards.

**Officer C** is wearing a yellow ribbon in her hair. This is in violation of the rule for females, which states that "Hair ornaments or ribbons shall not be worn." Therefore, Officer C is not in compliance with the standards.

**Officer D** has a neatly trimmed mustach. This complies with the rule on mustaches, which states that "Mustaches must be neatly trimmed..." Officer D is in compliance with the standards. Therefore, the correct answer to this sample question is choice D.

## **SUBJECT AREA 3**

**PREPARING WRITTEN MATERIAL:** These questions test for the ability to present information clearly and accurately and for the ability to organize paragraphs logically and comprehensibly.

**TEST TASK:** There are two separate test tasks in this subject area:

- In the first, **Information Presentation**, you will be presented with information in two or three sentences, followed by four restatements of the information. You must choose the version that presents the original information most clearly and accurately.
- In the second, **Paragraph Organization**, you will be given paragraphs with their sentences out of order. You must choose, from among four suggestions, the best order for the sentences.

### **INFORMATION PRESENTATION SAMPLE QUESTION:**

Correction Officer Gilson failed to take proper precautions. His failure to take proper precautions caused a personal injury accident.

Which one of the following best presents the information above?

- A. Correction Officer Gilson failed to take proper precautions that caused a personal injury accident.
- B. Proper precautions, which Correction Officer Gilson failed to take, caused a personal injury accident.
- C. Correction Officer Gilson's failure to take proper precautions caused a personal injury accident.
- D. Correction Officer Gilson, who failed to take proper precautions, was in a personal injury accident.

*The best answer to this sample question is C.*

### **SOLUTION:**

**Choice A** conveys the incorrect impression that proper precautions caused a personal injury accident.

**Choice B** conveys the incorrect impression that proper precautions caused a personal injury accident.

**Choice C** best presents the original information: Correction Officer Gilson failed to take proper precautions and this failure caused a personal injury accident.

**Choice D** states that Correction Officer Gilson was in a personal injury accident. The original information states that Gilson caused a personal injury accident, but it does not state that Gilson was in a personal injury accident.

## **SUBJECT AREA 3 (Continued)**

### **PARAGRAPH ORGANIZATION SAMPLE QUESTION:**

The following question is based upon a group of sentences. The sentences are shown out of sequence, but when correctly arranged, they form a connected, well-organized paragraph. Read the sentences, and then answer the question about the best arrangement of these sentences.

1. Eventually, they piece all of this information together and make a choice.
2. Before actually deciding upon a corrections job, people usually think about several possibilities.
3. They imagine themselves in different situations, and in so doing, they probably think about their interests, goals, and abilities.
4. Choosing a correctional services occupation is an important decision to make.

Which one of the following is the best arrangement of these sentences?

- A. 2-4-1-3
- B. 2-3-4-1
- C. 4-2-1-3
- D. 4-2-3-1

*The best answer to this sample question is D.*

### **SOLUTION:**

**Choices A and C** present the information in the paragraph out of logical sequence. In both **A** and **C**, sentence 1 comes before sentence 3. The key element in the organization of this paragraph is that sentence 3 contains the information to which sentence 1 refers; therefore, in logical sequence, sentence 3 should come before sentence 1.

**Choice B** also presents the information in the paragraph out of logical sequence. Choice **B** places sentence 4 in between sentence 1 and sentence 3, thereby interrupting the logical sequence of the information in the paragraph.

**Choice D** presents the information in the paragraph in the best logical sequence. Sentence 4 introduces the main idea of the paragraph: "Choosing a correctional services occupation." Sentences 2-3-1 then follow up on this idea by describing, in order, the steps involved in making such a choice.

## **SUBJECT AREA 4**

**UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETING WRITTEN MATERIAL:** These questions test for the ability to understand and interpret written material.

**TEST TASK:** You will be provided with brief reading selections and will be asked questions relating to the selections. All of the information required to answer the questions will be provided in the selections. You will not be required to have any special knowledge relating to the subject areas of the selections.

### **SAMPLE QUESTION:**

Transporting Inmates

Correction officers who are transporting inmates are responsible for the safety and security of such inmates from the time they leave the jail until the inmates are delivered to their destination or until the inmates are returned to the jail. The officers should not make any stops during the trip unless it is absolutely necessary. If stopping is absolutely necessary, the officers must take all possible precautions to maintain their own safety and the safety and security of the inmates. If an unavoidable delay is experienced (for example heavy traffic, car trouble, or bad weather) the officers must take the first opportunity to notify the jail of the delay. If a situation occurs which is not covered by specific instructions, the officers must contact their jail's watch commander if it is possible. If it is not possible to contact the watch commander, the officers must exercise their best judgment to fulfill their responsibility to maintain the safety and security of the inmates.

Which one of the following statements concerning the transportation of inmates is best supported by the passage above?

- A. If it appears that the trip might be delayed, the officers transporting the inmates should notify the jail immediately.
- B. If it is necessary to make a stop, the inmates should be secured with leg-irons and handcuffs.
- C. The officers transporting the inmates are responsible for maintaining the safety and security of the inmates at all times during the trip.
- D. If the vehicle transporting the officers and the inmates becomes involved in a traffic accident, the first thing the officers should do is notify their watch commander.

*The correct answer to this sample question is C.*

### **SOLUTION:**

*To answer this question correctly, you must evaluate each choice against information in the passage..*

**Choice A** states, if it appears that a trip might be delayed, the officers should notify the jail immediately. However, the passage states, if a delay is experienced, the officers must take the first opportunity to notify the jail of the delay. Choice A is not supported by information in the passage. Therefore, choice A is not correct.

**Choice B** states, if it is necessary to make a stop, the inmates should be secured with leg-irons and handcuffs. However, the passage states, if stopping is absolutely necessary, the officers must take all possible precautions to maintain their own safety and the safety and security of the inmates. It does not state that inmates must be secured with leg-irons and handcuffs. The appropriate method will vary depending on the nature of the inmates, the purpose of the trip, and the circumstances of the stop. Therefore, choice B is not correct.

**Choice C** states that the officers transporting the inmates are responsible for maintaining the safety and security of the inmates at all times during the trip. Information in the passage states that correction officers who are transporting inmates are responsible for the safety and security of such inmates from the time they leave the jail until the inmates are delivered to their destination or until the inmates are returned to the jail." Choice C is supported by information in the passage.

**Choice D** states, if the vehicle transporting the officers and the inmates becomes involved in a traffic accident, the first thing the officers should do is notify their watch commander. However, the passage makes no mention of notifying the watch commander if the transport vehicle becomes involved in a traffic accident. Therefore, choice D is not correct.

## **TEST SECURITY**

The test you will be taking is the property of the New York State Department of Civil Service. Candidates may not remove test material from the test site and may not reproduce, reconstruct, or discuss the test content with others. Unauthorized possession or disclosure of the test material is prohibited by law and punishable by imprisonment and/or a fine. Additionally, candidates may be disqualified from appointment to the positions for which the examination is being held and from being a candidate for any civil service examination for five years. After you take the test, other individuals may want to talk with you about the test. You should not discuss the questions and answers, even in general terms. You should be careful that you do not inadvertently violate test security and put yourself at risk.

## **CONCLUSION**

Your attitude and approach to the test will influence how well you perform. A positive attitude will help you do your best.

### **Before the test ...**

- Study and review this guide to familiarize yourself with what the test will cover.
- Study and review the subject areas that will be covered on the test.

### **On the day of the test ...**

- Arrive at the test site on time.
- Bring your Admission Notice, two No. 2 pencils, a photo ID containing your signature, a quiet lunch or snack, and any other **allowed** materials.
- Do **NOT** bring this test guide to the test site.

### **At the test site ...**

- Do **NOT** bring cell phones, beepers, headphones, or any electronic or other communication devices to the test site.
- The use of such devices anywhere on the grounds of the test site (this includes the test room, hallways, restrooms, building, grounds, and parking lots) could result in your disqualification.

### **During the test ...**

- Read and follow all directions on your Admission Notice, test booklets, answer sheets, and Candidate Directions.
- Follow the Monitor's instructions.
- Keep track of the time.

### **After the test ...**

- Do **NOT** remove any test materials from the test room.
- Do **NOT** paraphrase, reconstruct, or reproduce the test material in any way.
- Do **NOT** discuss the test material with others.

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# Department of Civil Service

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