



**Department of
Civil Service**

A Guide to the Written Test

for the

Probation Series

Titles include: Probation Assistant, Probation Officer 1 Trainee/Probation Officer Trainee, Probation Officer 1/Probation Officer, Probation Officer 1 (Other Language), and Probation Officer 1 (Community Liaison)

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TEST GUIDE

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Introduction: The New York State Department of Civil Service has developed this test guide to familiarize you with the written test used for the Probation *examination series*. The information presented below may help you in preparing to take one or more of the examinations in this examination series.

What is an examination series: An examination series is a collection of examinations that are held on the same date and use the same test booklet(s). Examination series may contain just a few examinations or several hundred.

Determining the Subject Areas in your examination(s): To determine the subject areas that are included in your examination(s), you should refer to the Examination Announcement(s) for the particular examination(s) you will be taking. The subject areas are listed under the heading "Subjects of Examination."

Using the Candidate Directions provided at the test site: When you take your examination(s), you will be given a set of Candidate Directions. Read these very carefully so that you correctly identify the questions you need to answer for the examinations you are taking.

Test questions: All the test questions included in the examination series are multiple-choice questions. See the *sample questions* in the subject area sections in this test guide for examples.

Subject area information: After the list of subject areas, information is provided on how candidates will be tested in each of the subject areas listed. For each subject area, a Test Task is provided. This is an explanation of how questions will be presented and how to correctly answer them. Read each explanation carefully. (Please note: This test guide may not provide information on every subject area included in your examination.)

Sample questions: This test guide provides at least one sample question for each subject area listed. The sample questions will be similar to what will be presented in the test booklet(s). This test guide provides the Solution and correct answer for each sample question presented. You should study these in order to understand how the correct or best answers were determined.

Test security: Please read the brief discussion on Test Security provided at the end of this guide. It provides an explanation of test takers' obligations and responsibilities.

Helpful tips for taking the test: The last section of this guide contains some helpful tips on how to prepare for and take a Civil Service test.

LIST OF SUBJECT AREAS

- 1. APPLYING WRITTEN INFORMATION:** These questions evaluate your ability to read, interpret and apply rules, regulations, directions, written narratives and other related material. You will be required to read a set of information and to appropriately apply the information to various settings. All information needed to answer the questions is contained in the rules, regulations, etc. which are cited.
- 2. EVALUATING CONCLUSIONS IN LIGHT OF KNOWN FACTS:** These questions will consist of a set of facts and a conclusion. You must decide if the conclusion is proved by the facts, disproved by the facts or if the facts are not sufficient to prove or disprove the conclusion. The questions will not be specific to a particular field.
- 3. PREPARING WRITTEN MATERIAL:** These questions test for the ability to write the kinds of reports and correspondence required in criminal justice settings such as probation and parole. Some questions test for the ability to present information clearly and accurately. Others test for the ability to organize paragraphs logically and comprehensibly.
- 4. ADVISING AND INTERACTING WITH OTHERS:** These questions test for the ability to interact with other people, to gather and present information, and to provide assistance and advice in a courteous and professional manner.

SUBJECT AREA 1

APPLYING WRITTEN INFORMATION: These questions evaluate your ability to read, interpret and apply rules, regulations, directions, written narratives and other related material. You will be required to read a set of information and to appropriately apply the information to various settings. All information needed to answer the questions is contained in the rules, regulations, etc. which are cited.

TEST TASK: You will be given a set of rules, regulations, or other written information to read. You will then be asked a question which requires you to apply the rule to a given situation.

SAMPLE QUESTION:

RULE: While patrolling your grounds or building, keep a notebook and pencil with you. Keep the following emergency phone numbers in the notebook: police, fire department, nearby hospitals, alarm company, your supervisor, and the head of your building.

When you observe something out of the ordinary, take notes. Describe what is unusual, people who are unfamiliar, and any suspicious activity. If a crime or offense takes place, record what happened, who was involved, physical appearance of the suspect, clothing worn by the suspect, time and date, names and phone numbers of witnesses, where suspect was last seen, and any physical evidence found.

SITUATION: While you are doing your rounds at 11:20 p.m. you notice a door that has been left ajar. The door opens to the office of the Assistant Director of your facility. The door is typically closed and locked for the day when the Assistant Director leaves, usually between 5:00 and 6:00 p.m. The office is dark and no one is there.

QUESTION: Based solely on the above Rule and Situation, what, if anything, should be recorded in your notebook?

- A. The office was dark when you entered it.
- B. No one was in the office.
- C. The door was open at 11:20 p.m.
- D. No entry needs to be made.

The correct answer to this sample question is choice C.

SOLUTION: *The Situation states that while doing your rounds at 11:20 p.m., you notice a door left ajar. This door is typically closed and locked for the day between 5:00 and 6:00 p.m. by the Assistant Director. The question asks what, if anything, you should record about this incident in your notebook. To answer the question, evaluate all of the choices.*

Choice A *is incorrect. It states that you should record in your notebook the fact that the office was dark when you entered it. The Rule states that you should take notes when you observe something out of the ordinary. It is not out of the ordinary for the Assistant Director's office to be dark at 11:20 p.m. since the Assistant Director usually leaves for the day between 5:00 and 6:00 p.m.*

Choice B *is incorrect. It states that you should record in your notebook the fact that no one was in the office. The Rule states that you should take notes when you observe something out of the ordinary. It is not out of the ordinary for the Assistant Director's office to be unoccupied at 11:20 p.m. since the Assistant Director is not usually at work after 6:00 p.m.*

Choice C is the correct answer to this sample question. *It states that you should record in your notebook the fact that the door was open at 11:20 p.m. The Rule states that you should take notes when you observe something out of the ordinary. It is out of the ordinary for the Assistant Director's office door to be open at 11:20 p.m. because the door is typically closed and locked when the Assistant Director leaves for the day, usually between 5:00 and 6:00 p.m.*

Choice D *is incorrect. It states that you should make no entry in your notebook. The Rule states that you should take notes when you observe something out of the ordinary. It is out of the ordinary for the Assistant Director's office door to be open at 11:20 p.m. because the door is typically closed and locked when the Assistant Director leaves for the day, usually between 5:00 and 6:00 p.m.*

SUBJECT AREA 2

EVALUATING CONCLUSIONS IN LIGHT OF KNOWN FACTS: These questions will consist of a set of facts and a conclusion. You must decide if the conclusion is proved by the facts, disproved by the facts or if the facts are not sufficient to prove or disprove the conclusion. The questions will not be specific to a particular field.

TEST TASK: You will be given a set of **STATEMENTS** and a **CONCLUSION** based on the statements. You are to assume the statements are true. The conclusion is reached from these statements **ONLY** -- NOT on what you may happen to know about the subject discussed. Each question has three possible answers. You must then select the correct answer in the following manner:

Select **A**, if the statements **PROVE** that the **CONCLUSION** is **TRUE**.

Select **B**, if the statements **PROVE** that the **CONCLUSION** is **FALSE**.

Select **C**, if the statements are **INADEQUATE TO PROVE** the conclusion **EITHER TRUE OR FALSE**.

SAMPLE QUESTION:

STATEMENTS: All uniforms are cleaned by the Conroy Company. Blue uniforms are cleaned on Mondays or Fridays; green or brown uniforms are cleaned on Wednesdays. Alan and Jean have blue uniforms, Gary has green uniforms and Ryan has brown uniforms.

CONCLUSION: Jean's uniforms are cleaned on Wednesdays.

- A. statements prove the conclusion TRUE
- B. statements prove the conclusion FALSE
- C. statements are INADEQUATE to prove the conclusion

The correct answer to this sample question is Choice B.

SOLUTION:

Choice A is not correct. Jean's uniforms are blue and blue uniforms are cleaned on Mondays or Fridays.

Choice B is the correct answer to this sample question. The last sentence on the STATEMENTS says that Jean has blue uniforms. The second sentence of the STATEMENTS says the blue uniforms are cleaned on Monday or Friday. The conclusion says Jean's uniforms are cleaned on Wednesday. Wednesday is neither Monday or Friday. Therefore, the conclusion must be FALSE (Choice B).

Choice C is not correct. The STATEMENTS are adequate to prove the conclusion that Jean's blue uniforms are cleaned on Wednesdays.

SUBJECT AREA 3

PREPARING WRITTEN MATERIAL: These questions test for the ability to write the kinds of reports and correspondence required in criminal justice settings such as probation and parole. Some questions test for the ability to present information clearly and accurately. Others test for the ability to organize paragraphs logically and comprehensibly.

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

- For the first, **Information Presentation**, you will be given information in two sentences and then you must choose the best version.
- For the second, **Paragraph Information**, you will be given paragraphs with their sentences out of order, and then you must choose, from among four choices, the best order for the sentences

SAMPLE INFORMATION PRESENTATION QUESTION:

Which one of the following sentences more clearly indicates who is having the mechanical difficulties?

- A. The officer called in, while following the defendant, that he was having mechanical difficulties and would probably have to pull over.
- B. The officer called in, while following the defendant, that the defendant was having mechanical difficulties and would probably have to pull over.

The correct answer to this sample question is choice B.

SOLUTION:

Choice A is not correct. It does not make it clear who was having the difficulty, the officer or the defendant.

Choice B is the correct answer to this sample question. It states that the defendant was having mechanical difficulties.

SUBJECT AREA 3 (cont.)

SAMPLE PARAGRAPH ORGANIZATION QUESTION:

The sentences below are out of sequence; but, when they are 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 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 an 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 correct 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 the main idea of the paragraph (Sentence 4) in between two detail sentences (Sentences 1 and 3). The logical sequence of the information presented in the paragraph is therefore interrupted.

Choice D is the correct answer to this sample question. It presents the information in the paragraph in the best logical sequence. Sentence 4 introduces the main idea of the paragraph: "choosing an occupation in the field of human services." Sentences 2-3-1 then follow up on this idea by describing, in order, the steps involved in making such a choice. Choice D is the best answer to this sample question.

SUBJECT AREA 4

ADVISING AND INTERACTING WITH OTHERS: These questions test for the ability to interact with other people, to gather and present information, and to provide assistance and advice in a courteous and professional manner.

TEST TASK: You will be presented with a variety of situations in which you must apply knowledge of how best to interact with other people.

SAMPLE QUESTION:

A person approaches you expressing anger about a recent action by your department. Which one of the following should be your **first** response to this person?

- A. Interrupt to say you cannot discuss the situation until he calms down.
- B. Say you are sorry that he has been negatively affected by your department's action.
- C. Listen and express understanding that he has been upset by your department's action.
- D. Give him an explanation of the reasons for your department's action.

The correct answer to this sample question is C.

SOLUTION:

Choice A is not correct. It would be inappropriate to interrupt. In addition, saying that you cannot discuss the situation until the person calms down will likely aggravate him further.

Choice B is not correct. Apologizing for your department's action implies that the action was improper.

Choice C is the correct answer to this sample question. By listening and expressing understanding that your department's action has upset him, you demonstrate that you have heard and understand his feelings and point of view.

Choice D is not correct. While an explanation of the reasons for the action may be appropriate at a later time, at this moment the person is angry and would not be receptive to such an explanation.

TEST SECURITY

The test candidates 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 who violate this policy 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 candidates take the test, other individuals may want to talk with them about the test. Candidates should not discuss the questions and answers, even in general terms. Candidates should be careful that they do not inadvertently violate test security and put themselves at risk.

HELPFUL TIPS FOR TAKING THE TEST

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.
- Read the *General Guide to Written Tests* on our website, www.cs.ny.gov/testing/testguides.cfm.
- Get plenty of rest the night before 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.
- Before choosing an answer, read all of the answer choices.
- Be sure the answer you mark on your answer sheet corresponds to the response option you are choosing.
- Be sure the question number on your answer sheet corresponds to the number of the exam question you are answering.
- Keep track of 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.

It is the policy of the New York State Department of Civil Service to provide reasonable accommodation to ensure effective communication of information to individuals with disabilities. If you need an auxiliary aid or service to make this information available to you, please contact the New York State Department of Civil Service Public Information Office at (518) 457-9375.

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