



**Department of
Civil Service**

A Guide to the Written Test

for the

Legal Assistant 1 & 2 Series

INTRODUCTION

The New York State Department of Civil Service has developed this test guide to familiarize you with the written test for Legal Assistant 1 & 2. This test guide provides a general description of the subject areas that 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 test questions will cover the following four subject areas:

1. **LEGAL TERMINOLOGY, DOCUMENTS AND FORMS** - These questions test for the ability to recognize definitions of specific common legal terms or the term which fits a certain description. The questions are presented in various forms such as simple definitions, examples of terminology, and the use of this terminology within documents and forms related to the legal field.
2. **INTERVIEWING** - These questions test for knowledge of the principles and practices employed in obtaining information from individuals through structured conversations. These questions require you to apply the principles, practices, and techniques of effective interviewing to hypothetical interviewing situations. Included are questions that present a problem arising from an interviewing situation, and you must choose the most appropriate course of action to take.
3. **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.
4. **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 four suggestions, the best order for the sentences.

The remainder of this test guide explains how you will be tested in each of the subject areas listed earlier. A **TEST TASK** is provided for each subject area. This is an explanation of how the 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 is 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.

NOTE: When you take your examination, you will be given Candidate Directions, which you should read very carefully so that you correctly identify the blocks of questions you need to answer for the examination you are taking.

SUBJECT AREA 1

LEGAL TERMINOLOGY, DOCUMENTS AND FORMS - These questions test for the ability to recognize definitions of specific common legal terms or the term which fits a certain description. The questions are presented in various forms such as simple definitions, examples of terminology, and the use of this terminology within documents and forms related to the legal field.

TEST TASK: You will be presented with questions that give you a common legal term and require you to recognize the correct definition. Other questions will give you four definitions and require you to recognize the correct legal term.

SAMPLE QUESTION:

Which one of the following best defines the term *deposition*?

- A. the assertion, declaration or statement of a defendant made in response to a complaint
- B. the sworn written testimony of a witness taken before judicial proceedings begin
- C. the stenographic record of a trial.
- D. a written document prepared by a lawyer or party on each side of a dispute and filed with the court in support of their arguments.

The correct answer to this sample question is B.

SOLUTION:

Choice A is not correct. Choice A best defines the term answer.

Choice B is the correct answer. This description best defines the term deposition.

Choice C is not correct. Choice C best defines the term transcript.

Choice D is not correct. Choice D best defines the term brief.

SUBJECT AREA 2

INTERVIEWING - These questions test for knowledge of the principles and practices employed in obtaining information from individuals through structured conversations. These questions require you to apply the principles, practices, and techniques of effective interviewing to hypothetical interviewing situations. Included are questions that present a problem arising from an interviewing situation, and you must choose the most appropriate course of action to take.

TEST TASK: You will be presented with questions that describe specific client-worker situations. Each question will be followed by four choices listing different ways to handle the situation. You must select the most appropriate course of action to take, based on an analysis of the situation, the application of the information provided, and the ramifications of various interviewing principles and strategies. **Note:** *You may be able to think of a better approach than any of the choices provided, but you must pick the best of those provided.*

SAMPLE QUESTION:

You have been reviewing an application for public assistance with a client and are satisfied that you have all the information necessary to make an eligibility determination. However, the client just will not stop talking and is repeating, in slightly different words, the information that he has already given you. Which one of the following is the best way to deal with this situation?

- A. Tell the client that the interview time is up and that if he has more to say, you can set up another appointment for the near future.
- B. Thank the client for the information. Tell him that you believe you have all that you need and that you will contact him if you should need additional information.
- C. Tell the client you would like to hear more, but that it will have to be postponed to some future date.
- D. Thank the client for coming in, but explain that others are waiting so you must end the interview.

The correct answer to this sample question is B.

SOLUTION:

Choice A gives the initiative to schedule another appointment to the client. This may lead to an unnecessary appointment. You already have enough information to make the necessary decisions, and there is no need for another appointment with the client in the near future.

Choice B is the correct answer to this question. By thanking the client for the information, you are being positive. By telling him that you believe you have what you need, you continue in this positive direction. By telling him that you will contact him if you need additional information, you make it clear that you have the necessary data, and you maintain the initiative to schedule another appointment.

Choice C, like choice A, gives the initiative to schedule another appointment to the client and may result in an unnecessary appointment. Also, telling the client you would like to hear more, but postponing it to some future date, is contradictory and sends the client a mixed message.

Choice D begins well -- thanking the client for coming in is positive. However, explaining that others are waiting so you must end the interview leaves the client with the impression that you are rushing him out and that you are more concerned with the people who are waiting than you are with him.

SUBJECT AREA 3

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 4

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 four suggestions, the best order for the sentences.

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

For the first, **Information Presentation**, you will be given information in two or three sentences, followed by four restatements of the information. You must then choose the best version. There will be ten Information Presentation questions on the written test.

For the second, **Paragraph Organization**, you will be given paragraphs with their sentences out of order, and then be asked to choose, from among four suggestions, the best order for the sentences. There will be five Paragraph Organization questions on the written test.

INFORMATION PRESENTATION SAMPLE QUESTION:

Martin Wilson 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. Martin Wilson failed to take proper precautions that caused a personal injury accident.
- B. Proper precautions, which Martin Wilson failed to take, caused a personal injury accident.
- C. Martin Wilson's failure to take proper precautions caused a personal injury accident.
- D. Martin Wilson, 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: Martin Wilson failed to take proper precautions, and this failure caused a personal injury accident.

Choice D states that Martin Wilson was in a personal injury accident. The original information states that Martin Wilson caused a personal injury accident, but it does not state that Martin Wilson was in a personal injury accident.

SUBJECT AREA 4 – 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 human services 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 among occupations in the field of human services 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 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.

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 to 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.

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 the 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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