



**Department of  
Civil Service**

# A Guide to the Written Test

for the

## Professional Career Opportunities (PCO) and related examinations

Includes the following examinations:

Exam No. 26-570 Professional Career Opportunities (PCO)  
Exam No. 00-464 Public Health Field Services Representative Trainee 1

## Table of Contents

General Information .....	3
List of Subject Areas .....	4
1. Subject Area 1 – Preparing written material .....	5-6
2. Subject Area 2 – Understanding and interpreting written material .....	7
3. Subject Area 3 – Working and interacting with others .....	8
Test Security.....	9
Tips for taking the test.....	9
General test-taking guidelines.....	10-11
Practice test.....	12-15
Practice test key .....	16

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Introduction:** The New York State Department of Civil Service has developed this **Test Guide** to familiarize you with the written test for the **Professional Career Opportunities (PCO)** examination, as well as the transition examination for **Public Health Field Services Representative Trainee 1**. One written test will be used for both of these examinations. Candidates for both examinations will only need to answer the test questions once. The information presented in this Test Guide may help you in preparing to take these examinations.

**Test question format:** All of the test questions in the PCO written test will be multiple-choice questions.

**Time allowance:** The overall time allowance for the written test is **2½ hours**. Because of the large number of test applicants anticipated for these examinations, morning and afternoon sessions will be held on multiple days.

**Subject area information:** This Test Guide provides a detailed description of each subject area in the written test. This includes an explanation of how questions will be presented and how to correctly answer them.

**Sample questions:** This Test Guide provides at least one sample question for each subject area of the written test. The sample questions are similar to what will be presented in the written test. This Test Guide provides the solution and correct/best answer for each sample question presented. You should study these carefully in order to understand how the correct or best answers were determined.

**Test security:** Please read the brief discussion on Test Security provided near the end of this Test Guide. It explains your obligations and responsibilities as a test candidate.

**Practice Test:** At the end of this Test Guide is a Practice Test which contains the types of questions you will see on the written test for these examinations. Answers to the Practice Test are provided on page 16.

**Please refer to the PCO website** at <http://www.cs.ny.gov/pco/index.cfm> for additional information, instructions, updates, and your current status in the PCO application and examination process.

**Special testing accommodations:** Persons with disabilities who require special testing accommodations or arrangements must note this on their examination applications. The examination announcement includes information for candidates who require accommodations or special testing arrangements. Examination announcements can be accessed using the following link: <http://www.cs.ny.gov/jobseeker/public/stateexam.cfm>.

Further information is available from the Test Administration Unit of the Department of Civil Service:

- In the Albany area, call 518-457-2487.
- Outside of the Albany area, call toll free at 1-877-697-5627.
- For TDD services, call NY Relay at 711 or 1-800-662-1220.

**Religious accommodation:** If, due to a conflict with a religious observance or practice, you cannot take the test on the announced test date, check the box under "Religious Accommodation" on your exam application. Arrangements will be made for you to take the test on a different date.

**Multiple candidates in the same household:** If you and other members of your household are taking any of the examinations listed on the cover of this test guide and are scheduled for testing on different days or times, you **must** call one of the phone numbers below to notify us. Staff are available during the week and on the test date to accept your calls.

- in the Albany area at (518) 474-6470.
- or, toll free at 1-877-697-5627 [press 2, then press 1].

## **LIST OF SUBJECT AREAS**

---

There are 3 subject areas for these examinations:

1. **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.
2. **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.
3. **Working and interacting with others:** These questions test for the ability to accomplish work and maintain professional relationships with others in the workplace. Each question presents a situation and a number of possible approaches for handling it. Question topics may include working with supervisors and coworkers; interacting with members of the public; handling conflict; and managing workplace demands and priorities. The questions are not specific to any job title or place of work.

## **SUBJECT AREA 1**

**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.

### **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 A is not correct.
- **Choice B** conveys the incorrect impression that proper precautions caused a personal injury accident. Choice B is not correct.
- **Choice C** best presents the original information. Martin Wilson failed to take proper precautions and this failure caused a personal injury accident. Choice C is the correct answer.
- **Choice D** states that Martin Wilson was in a personal injury accident. The original information states that Martin Wilson caused a personal injury accident; it does not state that Martin Wilson was in a personal injury accident. Choice D is not correct.

## **SUBJECT AREA 1 (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 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 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. Choices A and C are not correct.
- **Choice B** also presents the information in the paragraph out of logical sequence. Choice B places sentence 4 in between sentence 3 and sentence 1, thereby interrupting the logical sequence of the information in the paragraph. Choice B is not correct.
- **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.” 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 correct answer.

## **SUBJECT AREA 2**

**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.

### **SAMPLE QUESTION:**

"Increasingly, aggressive driving is being viewed as a public health issue because of the number of accidents related to it. Such behavior is often a reaction to the feeling that one has not been treated courteously by another driver. It is much less likely to occur if a driver is treated courteously. Courtesy on the road includes not only the observance of traffic regulations, but also driving in a considerate manner. This kind of driving is based on respect for other drivers and on a strong desire to make the roads safe for everyone. Good highway manners should become just as much a matter of habit as other kinds of manners."

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

- A. Courteous driving contributes to road safety.
- B. Those who are generally polite are also courteous drivers.
- C. Unlike driving courtesy, the observance of traffic regulations is a matter of habit.
- D. Being courteous when driving is more important than observing traffic regulations.

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

### **SOLUTION:**

- **Choice A** states, "Courteous driving contributes to road safety." Choice A is supported by the statement in the passage that, "It is much less likely to occur if a driver is treated courteously." Choice A is the correct answer.
- **Choice B** states "Those who are generally polite are also courteous drivers." Choice B is not supported by the written passage. The written passage does not mention "those who are generally polite" at all. Choice B is not the correct answer.
- **Choice C** states "Unlike driving courtesy, the observance of traffic regulations is a matter of habit." Choice C is not supported by the written passage. The passage only suggests that "Good highway manners should become just as much a matter of habit as other kinds of manners." Also, the passage does not state that the observance of traffic regulations is a matter of habit; rather, the passage indicates (in the final sentence) that the observance of traffic regulations should become a matter of habit. Choice C is not the correct answer.
- **Choice D** states "Being courteous when driving is more important than observing traffic regulations." Choice D is not supported by the written passage. The passage states "Courtesy on the road includes not only the observance of traffic regulations but also driving in a considerate manner." It does not state that being courteous is more important than observing traffic regulations. Choice D is not correct.

## **SUBJECT AREA 3**

**WORKING AND INTERACTING WITH OTHERS:** These questions test for the ability to accomplish work and maintain professional relationships with others in the workplace. Each question presents a situation and a number of possible approaches for handling it. Question topics may include working with supervisors and coworkers; interacting with members of the public; handling conflict; and managing workplace demands and priorities. The questions are not specific to any job title or place of work.

### **SAMPLE QUESTION:**

You are part of a team that is working on an important project with strict deadlines. Your team leader gave you an assignment to complete on your own in five days. You have been working as hard as you can for the past three days, but have been able to complete only a small portion of your assignment and have been unable to make further progress. Your assignment is now due in two days and it is clear that, at this rate, you will not be able to complete your assignment by the due date.

Which one of the following is the best action to take at this time?

- A. Ask the team leader for guidance regarding the situation.
- B. Tell the team leader that the assignment is unreasonable.
- C. Ask the other team members whether your team leader frequently gives them unrealistic deadlines.
- D. Continue to work on your own to get as much done as possible by the due date.

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

### **SOLUTION:**

- **Choice A:** *Asking the team leader for guidance regarding the situation is the best action to take at this time. Although you have been working as hard as you can, you have been unable to make much progress. You should inform the team leader of this and ask for guidance. The team leader could then suggest alternatives or make adjustments before the due date. Choice A is the correct answer.*
- **Choice B:** *Telling the team leader that the assignment is unreasonable is inappropriate and not the best action to take at this time. There are still two days before the due date. You should ask the team leader for guidance as to how to complete the assignment on time. Choice B is not correct.*
- **Choice C:** *Asking the other team members whether your team leader frequently gives them unrealistic deadlines is inappropriate and is not the best action to take at this time. Implying to the other team members that the team leader gives unrealistic deadlines is not useful. It could cause them to think that the team leader is unfair or may make them uncomfortable. Instead, you should ask the team leader for guidance regarding the situation. Choice C is not correct.*
- **Choice D:** *Continuing to work on your own to get as much done as possible by the due date is not the best action to take at this time. If you continue to work at this rate, you will not complete the assignment by the due date. If you ask the team leader for guidance at this time, adjustments can be made and you will still have two days to complete your assignment. Choice D is not correct.*



## **TEST SECURITY**

- All test materials for these examinations are 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.
- Candidates found to have violated test security may be disqualified from appointment to positions for which the examination is being held and from being a candidate for any NYS civil service examination for a period of five years.
- You should **not** discuss the questions and answers, even in general terms, after you take the test.
- You should be careful that you do not inadvertently violate test security and put yourself at risk.

## **TIPS FOR TAKING THE TEST**

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

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

- Study and review this guide to become familiar with what the test will cover.
- Study and review the subject areas that will be covered on the test.
- Study and review the New York State Department of Civil Service publication, "How to take a written test." It is available on the same page as this and other test guides through [www.cs.ny.gov](http://www.cs.ny.gov).

Click on Job Seekers, then Employment Opportunities with NYS Government, then State Examinations, and then Test Guides and Resource Books.

The direct link is: <http://www.cs.ny.gov/pio/publications/howtotakeawrittentest.pdf>. It includes a considerable amount of information on Civil Service tests.

### **On the day of the test:**

- Arrive at the test site on time.
- Allow plenty of time to travel to the test site, park, and find the correct test room.
- Bring your **Admission Notice**, a **photo ID** with your signature, two sharpened No. 2 pencils, and any other **allowed** materials.

### **At the test site:**

- Do **not** bring cell phones, beepers, headphones, or any electronic or other communication devices to the test site.
- Do **not** bring any electronic device with a typewriter keyboard, such as a spell-checker, personal digital assistant (PDA), address book, language translator, or dictionary to the test site.
- Do **not** bring any books, notes, or other reference materials to the test site.
- Do **not** bring this or any test guide or any sample test materials to the test site.
- Do **not** smoke at test site. This includes class rooms, hallways, rest rooms, buildings, and grounds.
- Be aware that violations of these prohibitions could result in your disqualification.

## **TIPS FOR TAKING THE TEST (continued)**

### **During the test:**

- Read and follow all directions on your Admission Notice, test booklet, answer sheet, and Candidate Directions.
- Follow the Monitor's instructions.
- 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 with others.
- Continue to observe all test security prohibitions.

## **GENERAL TEST-TAKING GUIDELINES**

### **Read all test directions and instructions carefully:**

Make sure you carefully read and follow all directions and any special instructions for the test. Make sure you understand the directions and instructions before you start to answer the questions.

### **Make sure the number of the question you are answering in the test booklet matches the choice you are marking on your answer sheet:**

Most written test answer sheets are scanned and scored by machine. You will not get credit for choices you mark in the wrong place on the answer sheet. Check your work to make sure that the number of the question you are answering in the test booklet matches the choice you are marking on your answer sheet.

### **Make sure you record all your answers on the answer sheet:**

Only the answers you mark on your answer sheet will be counted toward your score.

### **Make sure you fill in the circles for your choices completely and carefully:**

Avoid making stray pencil marks on your answer sheet. They may be scored as your answers.

### **To receive full credit for your answers:**

- ✓ Fill in all the required information on the answer sheet.
- ✓ Use a No. 2 pencil to mark your answers on the answer sheet.
- ✓ As you mark your answers, make sure the number and letter of the answer you mark on your answer sheet matches the number and letter of the question you are answering in the test booklet.
- ✓ You will not get credit for answers you mark in the wrong place on your answer sheet.
- ✓ Mark only one answer for each question. If you mark more than one answer, you will not receive credit for your answers.

### **Budget your time wisely:**

Before starting the test, take note of the test time allowance and of the starting and stopping times. Look at the whole test first and then decide how much time to allow yourself for each part. You may want to answer the easy questions first. You get just as much credit for an easy question as for a hard one. Do not take too much time trying to answer the difficult questions. Jot down the number of the difficult questions and then come back to them later if you have time. *If you do skip a question in the test booklet, make sure you skip that answer on your answer sheet as well.* Keep track of the time as you go through the test.

## **GENERAL TEST-TAKING GUIDELINES (continued)**

### **Read each question carefully:**

Make sure you read what is actually printed in the test booklet. The questions are designed to test your knowledge, skills, or abilities in a subject area. They are not meant to trick you or to be deceptive.

- Follow the directions given.
- Read each question carefully.
- After you read the question carefully, read each choice carefully.
- Make sure that you understand each choice before you decide which one is best.
- Pick the one choice that best answers the question given.
- Answer each question based on the information given and on the actual question asked.
- Do not jump to conclusions.
- Be thorough and think about all the choices.
- If you do not read each choice carefully, you could easily miss the best one.

### **Be alert to key words:**

Key words establish a condition that only the *correct* answer meets. Words like *best*, *greatest*, *always*, or *most* are examples of key words. If a question asks you to identify the *best* choice among four given, it may be that each of the four choices is a *possible* answer, but only *one* of the four choices is the *best* answer. To answer this type of question correctly, you must carefully read and compare all the choices given.

Questions that use key words like *generally* and *usually* are looking for the rule, not the exception. Other key words of this type are *common*, *likely*, *more*, *often*, *primarily*, *probably*, *typically*, and *usually*. When you see these words in a question, look for the choice that would be correct most of the time. Do not select the choice that would be correct only some of the time or on rare occasion.

Be alert to questions that use words like *disadvantage*, *except*, *least*, and *not*. If the question asks about a *disadvantage*, be sure not to choose an advantage as your answer. Words that begin with *non-* or *un-* are ways of saying *not*.

### **Use a process of elimination:**

Most multiple-choice questions give you four possible choices. You may not be sure of the answer, but you may see right away that one or two of the choices are not correct. If this is the case, immediately eliminate the choices you know are not correct. Then, just think about the others. Pick the best of the choices that remain. Even if one choice seems only a little better than the others, pick that one. If you can eliminate one or more of the choices and make an educated guess about the choices that remain, your chances of success are better than if you make a completely wild guess.

### **Guess, if you do not know the answer to a question:**

If you do not answer a question, you will not get credit for it. If you guess correctly, you will get credit. Therefore, if you are not sure of an answer, you should still try to answer the question.

## **PRACTICE TEST**

---

1. Senator Martinez met with the county legislature. Then Senator Martinez announced that the highway subsidy program would start in June.

Which one of the following best presents the information given above?

- A. After meeting with the county legislature, Senator Martinez announced that the highway subsidy program would start in June.
- B. Senator Martinez met with the county legislature and announced that the highway subsidy program would start in June.
- C. Senator Martinez announced that the highway subsidy program would start in June after a meeting with the county legislature.
- D. Senator Martinez, who met with the county legislature, announced that the highway subsidy program would start in June.

2. Frank Colombo wrote the press release. He sent three copies to the Director. The Director then gave one of the copies to the Commissioner.

Which one of the following best presents the information given above?

- A. Frank Colombo sent to the Director three copies of the press release he had written, who then gave a copy to the Commissioner.
- B. Frank Colombo sent three copies of the press release he had written to the Director, who then gave one of the copies to the Commissioner.
- C. The Director gave the Commissioner one of the three copies of the press release Frank Colombo had written and had been sent to him.
- D. Of the three copies of the press release Frank Colombo had written and sent to the Director, one was then given to the Commissioner by him.

## **PRACTICE TEST (continued)**

**DIRECTIONS:** Each of the following two (2) questions is based upon a group of sentences. The sentences are shown 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 order in which to arrange them.

3.

1. The phosphates in detergents are carried into sewage systems, and from there into local rivers and streams, and eventually into large bodies of water.
2. The algae absorb much of the available oxygen that is necessary to sustain marine life.
3. There is no doubt that phosphates damage the environment through a complex chain of events.
4. Phosphates are nutrients, and, as such, they aid the growth of the algae living in the water.
5. This results not only in the death of fish and other aquatic life, but also in the too-thick growth of vegetation in the water.

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

- A. 1-3-4-2-5
- B. 1-4-2-5-3
- C. 3-1-4-2-5
- D. 3-4-2-1-5

4.

1. Never before has time been measured at a speed beyond the realm of experience.
2. Just how profound an effect it is having on society is as yet to be determined.
3. The computer has accelerated our sense of time beyond anything we have experienced before.
4. Though it is possible to conceive of an interval that brief and even to manipulate time at that speed, it is not possible to experience it.
5. It works in a time frame in which the nanosecond - a billionth of a second - is the primary measurement.

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

- A. 1-2-3-5-4
- B. 1-4-3-5-2
- C. 3-2-5-4-1
- D. 3-5-4-1-2

## **PRACTICE TEST (continued)**

5. "The increasing demands upon our highways from a growing population and the development of forms of transportation not anticipated when the highways were first built have brought about congestion, confusion, and conflict, until the yearly toll of traffic accidents is now at an appalling level. If the death and disaster that traffic accidents bring throughout the year were concentrated into one calamity, we would shudder at the tremendous catastrophe. The loss is no less catastrophic because it is spread out over time and space."

Which one of the following statements concerning the yearly toll of traffic accidents is best supported by the passage above?

- A. It has resulted mainly from the new forms of transportation.
- B. It is increasing the demands for safer means of transportation.
- C. It has resulted in increased congestion, confusion, and conflict on our highways.
- D. It does not shock us as much as it should because the accidents do not all occur together.

6. "Depression is one of the top public health problems in the United States, and its occurrence is on the rise. One in 20 Americans develops a case of depression serious enough to require professional treatment. The incidence of depression has been escalating among Baby Boomers (Americans born in the years 1946 through 1964). The reason for this increase is that the lifestyles of this generation have become increasingly demanding while offering little support. Also, stress and poor eating habits are now more the rule than the exception, and both can disrupt brain chemistry enough to bring on depression."

Which one of the following statements is best supported by the above selection?

- A. Depression can cause a disruption in the chemistry of the brain.
- B. Baby Boomers have the highest rate of depression in the United States.
- C. Lifestyle demands are the major cause of depression in the current generation.
- D. About 5% of the population will require treatment for depression at some time in their lives.

7. You are a new employee who has just been assigned to a busy project team. You have been given an assignment to work on with two experienced team members, Tyler and Gloria, who have been on the project since it began a year ago. The deadline for the assignment provides very little time to complete it. The assignment is complicated and you are not sure what is involved or how it will be done. You are concerned that it will be difficult to complete the assignment correctly and on time.

Which one of the following is the best approach for you to take at this time?

- A. Ask the other team members whether Tyler and Gloria are trustworthy and competent.
- B. Tell yourself that you are not responsible for the outcome of the assignment.
- C. Tell the project team leader that Tyler and Gloria have not explained things to you properly.
- D. Ask Tyler and Gloria if they can provide more information about the assignment.

**PRACTICE TEST (continued)**

---

8. You have been on the job for just under a year and have been performing satisfactorily thus far. Now, however, you find yourself struggling to learn some highly important technical aspects of the job. Other employees hired at the same time as you are not having difficulties. Your supervisor is not aware that you are having difficulties. You know that any errors you make could cause serious problems for the agency.

Which one of the following is the best action to take at this time?

- A. Get outside help, on your own, to improve your technical abilities in these areas.
- B. Do not let your coworkers know, but look for another job that better utilizes your strengths.
- C. Ask a more experienced coworker, in confidence, what you should do.
- D. Ask your supervisor for suggestions on how to improve your technical abilities in these areas.

**THIS IS THE END OF THE PRACTICE TEST**

***PRACTICE TEST  
KEY***

1. A
2. B
3. C
4. D
5. D
6. D
7. D
8. D



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.



**Department of  
Civil Service**

New York State  
Department of Civil Service  
Albany, NY 12239  
[www.cs.ny.gov](http://www.cs.ny.gov)

**Content Last Updated**

**2019**