

**New York State
Department of Civil Service**

Committed to Innovation, Quality, and Excellence

A Guide to the Written Test

for

Secretary 1 and 2/Keyboard Specialist 2

Including examinations for:

Secretary 1

Secretary 2

Keyboard Specialist 2

Opportunities at **work.**



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Governor

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Commissioner

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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 tests used for the Secretary 1 and 2/Keyboard Specialist 2. This test guide provides a general description of the subject areas to be tested and an explanation of the different types of questions that will be presented.

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.” It is recommended that you focus your preparation on the subject areas that are in the examination(s) you will be taking.

If you are taking more than one of the examinations this test guide has been prepared for and you compare the Examination Announcements for them, you may see that some subject areas are included in more than one of your examinations. There will be only one set of questions used for each subject area. So, for example, if you are taking three examinations, and all three include the subject areas “Office Record Keeping” and “Grammar, Usage, Punctuation, and Sentence Structure” you will have to answer the questions in these subject areas only once in order to get credit for them on all three examinations.

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 blocks of questions you need to answer for the examinations you are taking. Any block of questions that is part of more than one of your examinations only needs to be answered once. You will get credit for those questions on all of your examinations in which they appear.

Time allowance: The overall time allowance for the examinations covered by this test guide is **5 hours**. You will have 5 hours to answer all the test questions that make up the examination(s) you will be taking.

Test questions: All of the test questions used in these examinations 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 presented on page 4 of this test guide, 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.

Sample questions: This test guide provides at least one sample question for each subject area listed on page 4. 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.

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

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.

LIST OF SUBJECT AREAS

1. **OFFICE RECORD KEEPING:** These questions test your ability to perform common office record keeping tasks. The test consists of two or more "sets" of questions, each set concerning a different problem. Typical record keeping problems might involve the organization or collation of data from several sources; scheduling; maintaining a record system using running balances; or completion of a table summarizing data using totals, subtotals, averages and percents.
2. **GRAMMAR, USAGE, PUNCTUATION, AND SENTENCE STRUCTURE:** The grammar and usage questions test for the ability to apply the basic rules of grammar and usage. The punctuation questions test for knowledge of the correct placement of punctuation marks in sentences. Each question contains four sentences. You must choose the one sentence that contains a grammatical, usage, or punctuation error (the sentence which is INCORRECT). The sentence structure questions test for the ability to recognize sentences that are CORRECTLY constructed.
3. **KEYBOARDING PRACTICES:** These questions test for a knowledge of preferred practices in such areas as letter format, capitalization, hyphenation, plurals, possessives, word division, word and figure style for numbers, and common proofreading marks. In addition, there will be a passage to proofread followed by questions on how to correct the errors in the passage.
4. **OFFICE PRACTICES:** These questions test for a knowledge of generally agreed-upon practices governing the handling of situations which typists, stenographers, secretaries, and office assistants encounter in their work, as well as a knowledge of efficient and effective methods used to accomplish office tasks. The questions cover such topics as planning work flow; setting priorities; dealing effectively with staff, visitors, and callers; filing and retrieving information; safeguarding confidentiality; using office equipment; and making procedural decisions and recommendations which contribute to a well-managed office.
5. **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.
6. **SUPERVISION:** These questions test for knowledge of the principles and practices employed in planning, organizing, and controlling the activities of a work unit toward predetermined objectives. The concepts covered, usually in a situational question format, include such topics as assigning and reviewing work; evaluating performance; maintaining work standards; motivating and developing subordinates; implementing procedural change; increasing efficiency; and dealing with problems of absenteeism, morale, and discipline.

SUBJECT AREA 1

OFFICE RECORD KEEPING: These questions test your ability to perform common office record keeping tasks. The test consists of two or more "sets" of questions, each set concerning a different problem. Typical record keeping problems might involve the organization or collation of data from several sources; scheduling; maintaining a record system using running balances; or completion of a table summarizing data using totals, subtotals, averages and percents.

TEST TASKS: The test consists of two or more "sets" of questions. Each set involves a different type of problem. Some examples of typical record keeping problems are:

- the organization or collation of data from several sources
- scheduling
- maintaining a record system using running balances
- completion of a table summarizing data using totals, subtotals, averages and percents.

NOTE: Only one type of problem set is presented in this test guide for this subject area. The actual test may or may not have a set of this type. It will certainly have at least one set involving a different type of problem.

On the following pages are two tables, three sample questions based on the tables, and the solutions to the questions. Please look at the tables, and read both the questions and the solutions carefully.

- After each of the sample questions are four choices: for most questions, three choices are numbers and one choice is the statement, "none of the above." For these questions, once you have completed your computations, select either the choice which is the same as your answer, or, if no choice matches your answer, select "none of the above."
- Some questions have numbers for all four choices. If none of the choices matches your calculation, you have made an error, and you should recheck your work.

There will be a total of 15 questions in this subject area on the test.

DIRECTIONS FOR SAMPLE QUESTIONS: Base your answers to the next three sample questions on the table, "Summary Report of Business Expenses for 2009." Complete as much of the report as you need to answer the sample questions. Use the information given in the summary report itself and in the table, "Report of Business Expenses, 3rd and 4th Quarters." Both tables are shown on the following page.

SUBJECT AREA 1 (CONTINUED)

REPORT OF BUSINESS EXPENSES 3rd AND 4th QUARTERS (26 weeks)				
	3rd Quarter		4th Quarter	
	2009	2008	2009	2008
Payroll Expenses	\$55,900	\$47,800	\$72,700	\$65,100
Rental Expenses	22,500	18,900	22,500	18,900
Equipment Expenses				
New Equipment	705	375	5,575	675
Maintenance/Repair	2,860	3,000	3,140	3,400
Utility Expenses				
Electricity	4,850	4,630	4,590	4,450
Heat	130	270	440	410
Employee Benefit Expenses	18,450	15,850	24,100	21,550
Employee contributions*	*2,500	*2,200	*3,350	*3,040
Total Net Business Expenses*		\$88,625		\$111,445
*NOTE: Employee Contributions are subtracted from business expenses to obtain Total Net Business Expenses				

SUMMARY REPORT OF BUSINESS EXPENSES FOR 2009							
	1st Quarter	2nd Quarter	1st Half	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter	2nd Half	Total for Year
Payroll Expenses	\$81,800	\$69,300	\$151,100			R	
Rental Expenses	22,500	22,500	45,000				
Equipment Expenses	5,235	3,545	8,780				S
Utility Expenses	6,675	5,125	11,800				
Employee Benefit Expenses	26,900	22,900	49,800				
Employee contributions*	*3,750	*3,200	*6,950				
Total Net Business Expenses* for 2009	139,360	120,170	259,530				
Total Net Business Expenses* for 2008			\$231,780			\$200,070	
% Change **			V				
*NOTE: Employee Contributions are subtracted from business expenses to obtain Total Net Business Expenses							
**NOTE: % Change is the % of increase in Total Net Business Expenses from 2008 to 2009.							

SUBJECT AREA 1 (CONTINUED)

SAMPLE QUESTION 1:

What is the value of **R**?

- A. \$112,900
- B. \$128,600
- C. \$137,800
- D. none of the above

SOLUTION: *To answer this question correctly you must calculate the value of **R** (the Payroll Expenses for the 2nd half of 2009).*

- *The Payroll Expenses for the 3rd and 4th Quarters are shown in the table, "Report of Business Expenses 3rd and 4th Quarters." (Be careful to use the amounts for 2009, and not the amounts for 2008).*
- *You must add the Payroll Expenses for the 3rd Quarter of 2009 (\$55,900) to the Payroll Expenses for the 4th Quarter of 2009 (\$72,700).*
- *The result is \$128,600.*

The correct answer to this sample question is Choice B, which is \$128,600.

SUBJECT AREA 1 (CONTINUED)

SAMPLE QUESTION 2:

What is the value of **S**?

- A. \$ 8,780
- B. \$15,060
- C. \$16,230
- D. none of the above

SOLUTION: To answer this question correctly you must calculate the value of **S** (the total Equipment Expenses for the year 2009).

- You need to understand that Equipment Expenses are expenses for both New Equipment and for Maintenance/Repair.
- The Equipment Expenses for the 3rd and 4th Quarters are shown in the table, "Report of Business Expenses 3rd and 4th Quarters." (Again, be careful to use the amounts for 2009, and not the amounts for 2008.)
- You must add Equipment Expenses for the 3rd Quarter of 2009 ($\$705 + \$2,860$) to Equipment Expenses for the 4th Quarter of 2009 ($\$5,575 + \$3,140$) in order to calculate Equipment Expenses for the 2nd half of 2009.
- $\$705 + \$2,860 + \$5,575 + \$3,140 = \$12,280$.
- You must then add Equipment Expenses for the 2nd half of 2009 to Equipment Expenses for the 1st half of 2009, in order to calculate Equipment Expenses for the whole year.
- Equipment Expenses for the 1st half of 2009 are shown in the table, "Summary Report of Business Expenses for 2009."
- $\$12,280 + 8,780 = \$21,060$. This is the value of **S**, the total Equipment Expenses for the year 2009.

Since none of the A, B, or C choices is \$21,060, the correct answer to this sample question is Choice D, "none of the above."

SUBJECT AREA 1 (CONTINUED)

SAMPLE QUESTION 3:

Which one of the following is closest to the value of **V**?

- A. 10%
- B. 11%
- C. 12%
- D. 28%

SOLUTION: To answer this question correctly you must calculate the value of **V** (the percent change in Total Net Business Expenses from the 1st half of 2008 to the 1st half of 2009).

- You must first calculate the amount of change in Total Net Business Expenses from the 1st half of 2008 to the 1st half of 2009.
- Subtract the Total Net Business Expenses for the 1st half of 2008 (\$231,780) from the Total Net Business Expenses for the 1st half of 2009 (\$259,530).
- The result is \$27,750.
- You must then calculate the percent change from the 1st half of 2008 to the 1st half of 2009. Since the percent change is from the 1st half of 2008, the basis of the comparison is the Total Net Business Expenses for the 1st half of 2008.
- Divide the amount of the change by the Total Net Business Expenses for the 1st half of 2008.
- $\$27,750$ divided by $\$231,780 = .119726$, or 11.9726%
- This is closest to 12%.

The correct answer to this sample question is Choice C, which is 12%.

SUBJECT AREA 2

GRAMMAR, USAGE, PUNCTUATION, and SENTENCE STRUCTURE: The grammar and usage questions test for the ability to apply the basic rules of grammar and usage. The punctuation questions test for knowledge of the correct placement of punctuation marks in sentences. Each question contains four sentences. You must choose the one sentence that contains a grammatical, usage, or punctuation error (the sentence which is INCORRECT). The sentence structure questions test for the ability to recognize sentences that are CORRECTLY constructed.

TEST TASK: This subject area will consist of 15 questions. For each of the grammar, usage, and punctuation questions, you will be given four sentences, one of which will contain a grammar, usage, or punctuation error. You must determine which sentence contains the error. For each of the sentence structure questions you will be given four sentences, only one of which is correctly constructed. You must determine which one of the four sentences is correctly constructed.

The majority of the 15 questions will be grammar questions. Some of the grammar errors you see in these questions may be errors in the agreement of subject and verb; or errors in the use of verbs, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, and prepositions.

Usage questions will include four sentences, one of which will contain an incorrectly used word. Some incorrectly used words are words that sound alike, but have different meanings: for example, the words "incidence" (*frequency*) and "incidents" (*occurrences*) sound alike but have different meanings, and may be used incorrectly; similarly, the words "anyway" and "any way" sound alike but have different meanings, and may be used incorrectly.

The punctuation questions will include errors in the use of commas, semicolons, colons, question marks, and quotation marks.

The sentence structure questions will include 4 sentences, 3 of which are incorrectly constructed, and one that is correctly constructed.

SAMPLE QUESTION:

Which one of the following is grammatically INCORRECT?

- A. Only one of the software packages suits our needs.
- B. Are their information correct?
- C. The number of applications has increased this year.
- D. Enclosed are copies for every committee member.

The correct answer to this sample question is B.

SOLUTION:

Sentence A is grammatically CORRECT as presented. The subject of this sentence is "one" and the verb used is "suits." It is grammatically correct to say "Only one... suits our needs." (A common error is to think that "packages" is the subject of this sentence, so "suit" should be the verb.) Since sentence A is grammatically CORRECT as presented, it is not the answer to the sample question.

Sentence B is grammatically INCORRECT as presented. The subject of this sentence is "information" and the verb used is "are." It is grammatically incorrect to say "information are." It is correct to say "information is." (A common error is to think that the use of "their" in this sentence means that "they" is

SUBJECT AREA 2 (CONTINUED)

the subject of this sentence, so "are" should be the verb.) **Since sentence B is grammatically INCORRECT as presented, B is the correct answer to the sample question.**

Sentence C is grammatically CORRECT as presented. The subject of this sentence is "number" and the verb used is "has increased" It is grammatically correct to say "The number... has increased." (A common error is to think that "applications" is the subject of this sentence, so "have increased" should be the verb.) Since sentence C is grammatically CORRECT as presented, it is not the answer to the sample question.

Sentence D is grammatically CORRECT as presented. The subject of the sentence is "copies" and the verb used is "are." It is grammatically correct to say "copies are." (A common error is to think that the verb should be "is" simply because "Enclosed is" is the more usual phrase since only one enclosure is the more usual circumstance.) Since sentence D is grammatically CORRECT as presented, it is not the answer to the sample question.

SUBJECT AREA 3

KEYBOARDING PRACTICES: These questions test for knowledge of preferred practices in such areas as letter format, capitalization, hyphenation, plurals, possessives, word division, word and figure style for numbers, and common proofreading marks. In addition, you will be given a passage to proofread and asked questions about how to correct the errors in the passage.

TEST TASK: This subject area will consist of 15 questions. The format of these questions will vary. For each of the first 10 questions, you will be given four sentences, or phrases, or words. For some of the questions, you must determine which one of the choices is CORRECT; for the others, which one is INCORRECT. For the last 5 questions, you will be asked to identify or asked how to correct errors in the proofreading passage provided. Each question will consist of four suggestions from which you must choose the best.

SAMPLE QUESTION 1:

In which one of the following sentences should the hyphen NOT be used?

- A. The results of the audit will be released in mid-July.
- B. We could not have produced the 200-page report with temporary help.
- C. They have been asked to provide self-addressed envelopes.
- D. From 2010-2012, the caseload increased 10 percent.

The correct answer to sample question 1 is D.

SOLUTION TO SAMPLE QUESTION 1:

- A. *When a prefix is added to a word that begins with a capital letter, a hyphen must be used. In choice A, the use of the hyphen is required, so A is not the answer to Sample Question 1.*
- B. *In choice B, “200” and “page” together, as one thought, describe “report.” Those two elements are kept together with the hyphen. In choice B, the use of the hyphen is required, so B is not the answer to Sample Question 1.*
- C. *In choice C, “self” and “addressed” together, as one thought, describe “envelope.” The hyphen is used to form the unit. In choice C, the use of the hyphen is required, so C is not the answer to Sample Question 1.*
- D. *One of the rules of hyphenation (look these up in a secretarial reference manual or handbook) says that a hyphen should NOT be used between the numbers in numerical expressions which begin with “from.” It should read: “From 2010 to 2012.” **Since a hyphen should NOT be used in choice D, D is the correct answer to Sample Question 1.***

SUBJECT AREA 3 (CONTINUED)

SAMPLE QUESTION 2:

Proofread the passage below for typographical, spelling, punctuation, or grammatical errors. (Typographical errors can include omissions, repetitions, double strikes, or transpositions.) Then, answer the question that follows the passage. (On the actual test, there will be five proofreading questions based on longer passages.)

The Water Pollution Control Board, a newly created agency, is in need of business stationery. I am having difficulty choosing among the many varieties described in your brochure. It would be most helpful if a representative of your company could visit me to show me samples of your line. I am particularly interested in seeing samples of 16-, 20-, and 24-pound paper; various color of paper, envelopes, and ink; and letterhead styles.

What, if anything, should be done to improve the passage?

- A. Make no changes.
- B. Delete the hyphens after "16" and "20."
- C. Add an "s" to "color."
- D. Change the semicolons to commas.

The correct answer to sample question 2 is C.

SOLUTION TO SAMPLE QUESTION 2:

- A. *There is an error in the passage, so choice A, "Make no changes," is not the correct answer to Sample Question 2. For choice A to be correct, there would have to be no error in the passage.*
- B. *Choice B is not the correct answer to Sample Question 2. It would be incorrect to delete the hyphens after "16" and "20," because they are both linked to "pound," just as "24" is. It would be awkward to repeat "pound" three times, so the suspended hyphens connect "16" and "20" with the "pound" after "24."*
- C. **Choice C, "Add an "s" to "color," is the correct answer to Sample Question 2.** *The word "various" in the passage indicates that more than one color is involved, so the plural form of "color" should be used.*
- D. *Choice D is not the correct answer to Sample Question 2. It would not be correct to "change the semicolons to commas," because two of the phrases separated by the semicolons contain commas. The use of commas alone would not make the listing in the passage clear.*

SUBJECT AREA 4

OFFICE PRACTICES: These questions test for knowledge of generally accepted practices governing the handling of situations which stenographers, typists, and secretaries encounter in their work, as well as knowledge of efficient and effective methods used to accomplish office tasks. The questions will cover such topics as planning work flow; setting priorities; dealing effectively with staff, visitors, and callers; filing and retrieving information; safeguarding confidentiality; using office equipment; and making procedural decisions and recommendations which contribute to a well-managed office.

TEST TASK: This subject area will consist of 15 questions. For each question, you will be presented with a description of a situation and asked what the response should be. You will be given four suggestions, from which you must choose the best.

SAMPLE QUESTION:

As the most senior typist in your department, you have been asked to orient a new typist. Which one of the following should you do first?

- A. Give the newcomer some simple tasks to perform, to get him or her comfortable.
- B. Introduce the newcomer to the other staff in the office.
- C. Ask others if there are pointers they can give the newcomer.
- D. Inform the newcomer about any equipment that is not working properly.

The best answer to this sample question is B.

SOLUTION:

You must first ask yourself what an orientation is. It is providing an overview of the job and familiarizing the new employee with the office. It is also important to keep in mind that the question asks what you should do first.

- A. *Although giving the newcomer some simple tasks to perform will eventually be part of the orientation, it is not the first thing you should do. Choice A is incorrect.*
- B. *Introducing the newcomer to the other staff in the office is the first thing that should be done for anyone new to the workplace. **Choice B is the correct answer to the Sample Question.***
- C. *A new employee needs to be given the overall view before being given "pointers." Being given advice by several people can be overwhelming at any time and much more so to someone in a new situation. Since choice C is not be the first thing a newcomer should be subjected to, choice C is incorrect.*
- D. *Informing the newcomer about any equipment that is not working properly is certainly not the first thing you should do to orient the newcomer to the workplace. It is unlikely that the newcomer would need to use such equipment the first day on the job. Choice D is incorrect.*

SUBJECT AREA 5

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.

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.

The best answer to this sample question is C.

SUBJECT AREA 5 (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

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.

The best answer to this sample question is D.

SUBJECT AREA 6

SUPERVISION: These questions test for knowledge of the principles and practices employed in planning, organizing, and controlling the activities of a work unit toward predetermined objectives. The concepts covered, usually in a situational question format, include such topics as assigning and reviewing work; evaluating performance; maintaining work standards; motivating and developing subordinates; implementing procedural change; increasing efficiency; and dealing with problems of absenteeism, morale, and discipline.

TEST TASK: You will be presented with situations in which you must apply knowledge of supervisory principles and practices in order to answer the question correctly.

SAMPLE QUESTION:

Assume the unit you supervise is given a new work assignment and that you are unsure about the proper procedure to use in performing this assignment. Which one of the following actions should you take FIRST in this situation?

- A. Obtain input from your staff.
- B. Consult other unit supervisors who have had similar assignments.
- C. Use an appropriate procedure from a similar assignment that you are familiar with.
- D. Discuss the matter with your supervisor.

SOLUTION: This question asks for the action that you should take FIRST in this situation.

Choice A is not correct. *Since this assignment is new for your unit, your staff would not be expected to be more knowledgeable than you about the proper procedure.*

Choice B is not correct. *Although discussing this matter with other supervisors may increase your knowledge of the new assignment, similar assignments performed in other units may differ in some important way from your new assignment. Other units may also function differently from your unit, so the procedures used to perform similar assignments may differ accordingly.*

Choice C is not correct. *Since this assignment is new for your unit, you would have no way of knowing whether the procedure from a similar assignment is appropriate to use. You would need someone with the appropriate knowledge, usually your supervisor, to determine if the procedure from a similar assignment could be used before you actually employed this procedure in the performance of your new assignment.*

Choice D is the correct answer to this question. *Your supervisor is more likely to be informed about what procedure may be appropriate for work that he or she assigns to you than would other unit supervisors or your staff. Even if your supervisor does not know what procedure is appropriate, a decision regarding which procedure to use should be made with his or her participation, since he or she has the ultimate responsibility for your unit's work.*

The correct answer to this sample question is D.

GENERAL TEST-TAKING GUIDELINES

Read all test directions and instructions carefully. Make sure that you carefully read and follow all directions and any special instructions for the test. If sample questions are provided, do them for practice. *Make sure you understand the directions and instructions before you start to answer the questions.*

Make sure you are answering the correct test questions in the correct test booklets. The particular test you are taking may involve skipping some questions in the test booklet or may involve answering questions in more than one test booklet. You are responsible for making sure you get the right test booklets for your particular test and for determining which questions you are to answer. Refer to your test materials for information on which test booklets and questions you are to answer.

Make sure the choice you mark on your answer sheet matches the question you are answering in the test booklet. Most written multiple-choice tests 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. The scanning machine may interpret these marks to be your answers.

STRATEGIES THAT MAY IMPROVE YOUR TEST PERFORMANCE

Budget your time wisely

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. Know how much time you have and how many questions you have left to do. If some parts of your test are separately timed, work as rapidly as you can but stay calm and pay attention to the time limit.

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.

- Read each question carefully, follow the directions given, and answer each question based on the information given and on the actual question asked.
- 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.
- 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.

Here are some examples of questions that contain key words. These examples may be different than the types of questions used in the tests covered by this test guide. They are presented here only to illustrate the importance of key words.

1. Of the following foods, which one provides the **most** vitamin C in a one-cup serving?
 - A. grapefruit juice
 - B. sliced peaches
 - C. mashed potatoes
 - D. chopped broccoli

Answer: This question asks which of the foods listed provides the **most** vitamin C in a one-cup serving. The key word in this question is **most**. All of the foods mentioned in the choices contain some vitamin C. Many people know that citrus fruits, like oranges, lemons, and grapefruits, are good sources of vitamin C. That makes choice A look attractive. But one cup of broccoli actually contains more vitamin C than one cup of grapefruit juice. Choice D is the **best** answer. To answer this question correctly, you must read **all four** choices carefully before you can determine the **best** answer.

2. Of the following, which one is **generally** the **best** way to repair a Compton machine that will not start?

- A. Replace the entire engine.
- B. Replace the ignitions wires.
- C. Clean the carburetor.
- D. Clean the valves.

Answer: This question asks which one of the choices listed is generally the best way to repair a Compton machine that will not start. The key words in this question are **generally** and **best**. Assume that in 99 out of 100 cases, the best way to repair a Compton machine that will not start is to replace the ignition wires. Then choice B, replace the ignition wires, is **generally** the **best** way to do the repair. Choice B is the correct answer to this question.

Questions that use 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*.

3. If grease in a pan catches fire, it is **unwise** to do which one of the following?

- A. Cover the pan with a lid.
- B. Pour water on the fire.

Answer: This question asks you to identify which action is unwise to do if grease in a pan catches fire. The key word in this question is **unwise**. This word should alert you that the question is looking for what you should **not** do, rather than what you should do if grease in a pan catches fire. Choice A, covering the pan with a lid, would smother the fire by cutting off the oxygen it needs to burn. Choice A is what you *should* do if grease in a pan catches fire. However, since this question asks what is unwise to do, choice A is the *wrong* answer to this question. Choice B, pouring water on the fire, would cause the grease and fire in the pan to spatter because water and grease do not mix. This could cause injury or make the fire spread. So, it is *unwise* to pour water on the fire. Therefore, Choice B is the *correct* answer to this question.

4. If an alarm goes off in a mechanical room and the situation appears to be a threat to health or safety, what should you do **first**?
- A. Turn off the power.
 - B. Call your supervisor.
 - C. Call the security staff.
 - D. Have people leave the area.

Answer: This question asks what you should do first if an alarm goes off in a mechanical room. The key word in this question is **first**. When a question uses the word *first*, consider the choices in the order in which they should be done. For the question above, all four choices list actions that should be taken. The important thing to know is which to do first in the situation. Since the situation could be life-threatening or could result in injury, the first thing to do is to have people leave the area. This allows people to remain safe while the reason for the alarm is determined and the situation is fixed. Choice D is the first thing to do. If the situation were **not** life-threatening, choice A, turning off the power, might be the first thing to do.

When you see a question like this, make sure you understand the question and the situation thoroughly. When you think you have decided the right order for the actions, mark down the choice that you think is the first action to take in the situation. That way, you think about the whole series of possible actions to take, not just one action by itself, and you are more likely to choose the correct answer.

Break large problems into smaller parts

A very large or complex problem may make more sense if you break it down and look at it one part at a time. Make diagrams or notes on your scrap paper to help you understand each of the separate parts, and how those parts collectively make up the whole problem. Sometimes you can work backwards from the answer to see which answer best fits the problem. Try each answer, in turn, to find the one that works best.

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.

HELPFUL TIPS

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 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 Job Seekers, Employment Opportunities with NYS Government, State Examinations, 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, including a section titled, General Test-Taking Guidelines." This includes advice such as: **Read each test question carefully and completely. Read all of the choices before selecting your answer.**

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 (in addition to the test room, this includes hallways, restrooms, building, grounds, and parking lots) could result in your disqualification.
- Do **NOT** use the calculator function on your cell phone.

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 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.

TEST SECURITY

The test you will be taking is the property of the New York State Department of Civil Service.

1. Candidates may not remove test material from the test site and may not reproduce, reconstruct, or discuss the test content with others.
2. Unauthorized possession or disclosure of the test material is prohibited by law and punishable by imprisonment and/or a fine.
3. Candidates violating test security may be disqualified from appointment to positions for which the examination is being held and from being a candidate for any civil service examination for five years.
4. You should not discuss the questions and answers, even in general terms, after you take the test.
5. You should be careful that you do not inadvertently violate test security and put yourself at risk.

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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