Civil Service Commission
EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION GUIDE

The purpose of this guide is to provide important information about applying for City of Columbus jobs and taking Columbus Civil Service exams.

Website: **columbus.gov/civilservice**

Jobline:	(614) 645-7667
Office:	(614) 645-8301
Website Technical Assistance:	(855) 524-5627 (NEOGOV)

Address: Civil Service Commission
                                     77 North Front Street, 3rd Floor
                                     Columbus, Ohio 43215

THE CITY OF
COLUMBUS

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

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INTRODUCTION TO CIVIL SERVICE

The City of Columbus employs over 7,000 people in over 600 job titles. City employees perform a variety of necessary jobs that help to maintain the quality of life for city residents, such as collecting the trash, repairing streets, providing clean water, keeping the traffic lights working, and providing police, fire, and EMS services. The work can be interesting, with good pay, great benefits, and opportunities for advancement.

Questions about working for the City may be submitted online by clicking on the *Contact Us* link on the right side of our webpage (at columbus.gov/civilservice) or by calling the Commission's Applicant and Employee Services unit at (614) 645-8369. You may also visit our office at 77 North Front Street, 3rd Floor, Monday through Friday, 9:00AM to 4:00PM.

How to find a job with the City of Columbus:

It is very easy to get information about jobs with the City of Columbus. In fact, you can be notified at home, by email, or U.S. mail every time the City is accepting applications for a relevant job.

You may complete the entire City of Columbus application process from the comfort of your home or convenience of your local library using our online Employment Center; you can:
- sign up for job alerts to be notified when applications will be accepted for those jobs
- view all City jobs currently accepting applications
- apply online
- view descriptions and Minimum Qualifications of City jobs
- view test announcements that describe the testing process for Competitive jobs

From columbus.gov/civilservice you may sign up to receive job alerts one of two ways.

→ Select the *Job Alerts* link. From here, select all the general categories for which you would like to receive job opening notifications. All category descriptions (see *Interest Category Definitions*) and the specific Job Classes that occur under each of those categories (via *Job Classifications Linked To Interest Categories, and Interest Category Assignments By Job Class*) can be found by either clicking the *Job Class Info* link, or by selecting the *Public Forms* link.

→ Select the actual job class you're interested in (as well as review the full job specification) by clicking the *Job Class Info* link. Once your desired job is selected, follow the "*Email me when jobs like this become available*" link to sign up for job opening alerts.

Your Job Alerts will remain active for a period of one year. If, within that one-year time frame, the City is accepting applications for a job you specified, you will receive an email notice indicating the application filing dates.

If you would like to see what jobs are currently open for application filing, click on the *Current Job Openings* link, where you can either view open job posting information and/or apply for any listed open jobs. Job announcements are also posted at the Civil Service Commission office.

How to register to apply online for City jobs:

**STEP ONE:** **SET-UP AN EMAIL ACCOUNT** (if you don't already have one)

In order to sign up for Job Alerts or submit an online application you must have a valid, active email address. If you do not currently have an email address, you can set-up a free email account at Yahoo!, Outlook, Aol, Gmail, or any other free web mail service.

STEP TWO: **REGISTER**

- Make sure cookies are enabled in your browser's preference settings in order to fully access our site.
- From columbus.gov/civilservice, click the *Login* link under the "Jobs Center" tab within the page, then click *create an account*.
- Complete the required fields (email, username of your choosing, password creation, etc.) then click the dark gray *Create* button.

NOTE: *Passwords are case sensitive* and the inclusion of at least one capital letter, one number, and one special symbol (e.g. ".", or " * ", etc.) is required in its creation.

STEP THREE: **COMPLETE YOUR PROFILE or APPLY FOR A CURRENT JOB**
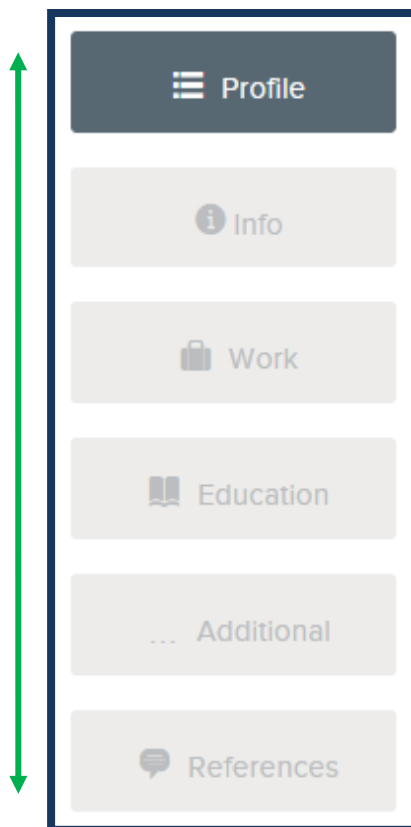
Upon successful registration, you'll be able to establish or update your *Profile*, adjust your *Account Settings* (including your password), and manage "submitted" as well as any "incomplete" job *Applications* you have on file. New users will be able to merge your new City account with a LinkedIn account if you have one, or you may skip to the next screen to begin entering your *Profile* information. Add all your personal Info, Work history, Education, and Additional information under each designated profile screen (scroll to the bottom of the page and hit "Next" to advance to the next section). The information you enter under your *Profile Settings* will be stored and will automatically be included in any application you file online with us in the future. Please see our "Tips For Completing Online Applications" for more information.

From our Employment Center you may immediately begin applying for jobs by clicking the *Current Job Openings* link. If you are not interested in any of the currently open jobs listed at that time, but would like to be notified when jobs you would like to apply for open, please click on the *Job Alerts* link and make your preferred selection(s). You will be directly notified the next time the jobs of your choice open for application filing.

Please be sure to update your *Account Settings* anytime your personal information changes.

If you have any technical, website-specific questions, please contact our website host, NEOGOV, at (855) 524-5627, Monday through Friday, 11:00AM - 8:00PM EST. If you have any questions regarding any step of the application process with the City of Columbus, please call (614) 645-8369 to connect with a Civil Service staff member.

Tips for completing online applications:

Your online application is the only source of information our staff has to determine whether or not you qualify to take an examination for a competitive class or to be considered for a position in a noncompetitive class. Missing or incomplete information in your profile may result in your application being rejected or delayed because more information is needed. To make the application process run smoothly for you, we have put together some suggestions for ensuring your applications are complete.

Putting your profile together:

When it applies, check the boxes in the upper left corner of the form indicating a high school diploma (HSD) or GED, and check the appropriate box according to the type of driver's license you hold. **If you have a college degree, it is best to attach an electronic copy of your transcript and/or diploma to your profile**.

Training/Education:

Indicate any and all post-high school education you have, including the start and end dates, credit hours completed, type of degree, and the date you received your degree. If you attended college but did not graduate, fill in all the above information, but leave the degree date blank.

Indicate any training you received, such as computer certifications, automotive repair certifications, etc., but remember to include all the relevant information listed above.

If you complete additional education, or receive additional training, you should update your profile with that information.

Work experience:

The number of jobs that you may include in your profile is not limited. However, be sure to include all the information requested.

For **each** job, it is important to provide the following:

- ✓ The complete name of your employer, including the city and state (if outside the United States, include the country)
- ✓ Your official title, that is, the name of the position for which you were hired
- ✓ Both the month and year you started the job
- ✓ Both the month and year you ended the job – if you are still employed at the job leave the end date blank and answer "True" to the question "Still Employed?"
- ✓ The name and title of your supervisor, and if possible, the phone number
- ✓ The number of hours you worked per week (be as accurate as possible)
- ✓ A list of specific tasks performed at this job*

*It is very important to provide a detailed list of specific tasks performed, such as *collected payments for utility bills, updated client records using Excel software, completed weekly and monthly reports on utility shutoffs, answered phones*, etc. Do not use vague terms and generalized statements, such as *responsible for increasing company profits, received numerous awards for customer service, served as an expert resource for technology issues*. These types of statements do not give a clear picture of the type of work performed. The more specific information you provide to us, the better.

Provide all the above information for each of your jobs. However:

- If you had different positions within the same company, treat each position as a separate job providing the information listed above for each job

- If you worked a seasonal job for multiple years, treat each year as a separate job and include start and end dates for each year (Ex. summer intern, holiday help).

If you leave a job and obtain another job, you should update your profile with that information.

Make sure you indicate in your profile how you wish to receive notices from the Civil Service Commission – email or hard copy.

Signing up for job alerts:

Once you have completed your profile, you should review the types of jobs used by the City of Columbus. Read the job descriptions under *Job Class Info*, and sign up job alerts for any and all jobs for which you qualify. When an opening becomes available, you will receive notice that you should submit an application.

Submitting an application online:

Be sure to read the minimum qualifications that are listed in the Examination Announcement. If you feel that you meet the minimum qualifications, review your profile to make sure that it is up-to-date and contains information that shows you qualify. Submit your application before the deadline. **You will receive a confirmation email if your online application has been received.** We recommend that you save that notice.

Residency Requirement:

Per a recent court decision, the Commission cannot enforce the City's Charter-defined residency requirements at this time. However, because state law does prescribe specific parameters for establishing a legal residency requirement, the City may opt to re-establish its residency requirement in accordance with this law. Once in place, those City employees and applicants affected by the law will be notified of any impact on City employment.

Veteran's Preference:

Veterans Preference Credit is only applicable to open competitive examinations. A DD214, or other comparable document, showing branch of service, length of active service, and character of discharge must be submitted to the Commission no later than the final day of testing in order to receive consideration for this credit.

Special Accommodations:

Requests for testing accommodations based on permanent (ADA) disabilities are to be made by the last day of the filing period by completing forms *Testing Accommodation - ADA Step 1* and *Testing Accommodation - ADA Step 2*. For accommodations based on military commitment, temporary medical condition, or other special situation, candidates are to submit a *Testing Accommodation - Not ADA* form prior to the test date.

Pre-Employment Drug Screening:

As part of the City of Columbus' employment procedures and desire for a drug free work place, applicants will be required to undergo a pre-employment drug screening that is conducted by a vendor designated by the City. After a conditional offer of employment has been made, and prior to starting employment with the City, applicants will have 24 hours to complete the required drug test. Any offer of employment that an applicant receives from the City is contingent upon satisfactory completion of this screening. Positive results are considered public under law, and applicants testing positive will be removed from consideration for employment with the City for a period of at least 12 months. Additionally, the City of Columbus has a strong anti-drug use policy and this policy is a term and condition of any employment with the City. The City conducts random and for-cause drug testing based on a standard of reasonable suspicion, and a violation of the drug policy as contained in the City of Columbus Central Work Rules will be sufficient grounds for disciplinary action, as indicated, depending on the seriousness of the offense in the judgment of supervision representing the appointing authority.

Background Investigation:

A background investigation, which may include fingerprinting, will be conducted regarding an applicant's work history, police records, and educational background.

Employment Verification:

At time of hire, employees must submit original documentation to prove identity and employment eligibility in compliance with the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986.

Political Office:

Laws applicable to Civil Service prohibit classified employees from holding an office in any political organization (See Columbus City Charter Section 156 and Columbus City Codes Section 161.05).

Driver's License Waiver:

In accordance with CSC Rule VI(D)(1), a motor vehicle operator's license requirement may be waived by the Executive Director for qualified applicants who are disabled and have alternative transportation available for work-related use. Applicants interested in obtaining this accommodation should contact the CSC Applicant and Employee Services unit at (614) 645-8369 and request an ADA form or print the form from our website at columbus.gov/civilservice.

Medical Standards:

Police Officer and Firefighter candidates must pass a thorough vision and medical examination including a cardiovascular stress test prior to certification for appointment. In addition, the hiring process for some civilian positions includes a pre-employment physical.

Name or Address Change:

If you change your name or address at any point in the selection process or during the life of the eligible list, you must either **notify the Commission in writing of the change** or **update your online profile to reflect the change**. Failure to have a correct name and address on file with the Commission may result in disqualification from the selection process.

Commission Holidays:

Civil Service Commission offices will be closed on the following nationally recognized holidays: New Years Day; Martin Luther King, Jr. Day; Presidents' Day; Memorial Day; Independence Day; Labor Day; Columbus Day; Thanksgiving Day; and Christmas Day.

Starting pay:

Starting pay will be determined based upon a number of factors, including bargaining unit provisions, budget, previous work experience, prior City service, or other relevant criteria.

How to apply for a current job opening or exam:

To apply for an exam or current job opening, from columbus.gov/civilservice, click on *Current Job Openings*, scroll down to the bottom of the page and select the job for which you wish to apply. From the new job detail page click *Apply.* You will be prompted to log in. After logging in, you may choose to upload your resume, or immediately skip to completing/reviewing your application information. After you advance through each step of the application process – *Info*, *Work*, *Education*, *Additional*, *Attachments*, *Questions*, *Review*, and finally *Submit* – you will see an application confirmation page and be sent a confirmation email.

While you may obtain a paper application at the Civil Service Commission office, it is recommended that you apply online for both convenience and efficiency. Noncompetitive (no exam) applications vary and must be directed to a specific Human Resources person located at a specific City department. When applying online, those noncompetitive applications are instantly sent electronically to the designated HR representative. Hard copy applications must be hand delivered by applicants to each HR person.

In applying for openings, pay close attention to the "Minimum Qualifications" (MQs) for the job. Be sure to describe the area(s) of your particular work experience and/or education that show how you best meet the stated MQs.

Other pointers for applying

Applications for a uniformed (safety forces) job must be filed online. Applications for a non-uniformed (not safety forces) job may be filed either online, in-person, or by mail. Applications submitted via U.S. mail must be postmarked by the last day of the filing period (the closing date) **and** received by the Civil Service Commission within five (5) business days of the closing date. Applications submitted online must be submitted no later than midnight of the closing date. When submitting an application:

- Complete all sections of the application that apply to you. No credit can be given for information that is incomplete.

- If submitting a paper application, type, print, or write legibly. No credit can be given for information that cannot be read.

- Locate any required licenses or certificates (check the Minimum Qualifications section of the job for which you are applying). You will be notified of when you will need to submit copies of those documents.

- Locate your transcript (or request an official copy from the college) and/or diploma for jobs that require a degree or specific course work, or make sure you have attached your transcript and/or diploma to your profile. You will be notified of when you will need to submit copies of those documents. Please note that the transcript must be an **official** transcript – an online or unofficial version won't be accepted.

- If you are a veteran and want to be considered for veteran's preference, obtain a copy of your DD214 (Member 4, or other original documentation). In most cases this form must be submitted no later than the last day of testing.

- Be specific in describing your work history.

  - Include dates and hours worked. Only partial credit (and in some cases, zero credit) will be given if this information is missing.

  - Do not assume that the title you held is sufficient to describe the duties you performed. You must provide accurate, detailed information about the duties you performed. If details are not given, it might be assumed that your experience did not include what is required by the Minimum Qualifications.

  - Describe each title separately. Do not combine experience for more than one title held at one employer. Use a separate work history block on the application form for each separate title you have held. Also make sure the dates accurately reflect the actual time period each separate title was held.

  - If submitting a paper application and you need more space, use the continuation sheets provided by Civil Service, or a plain sheet of paper (type or print your name and Candidate ID number, if you know it, on all attachments).

  - Make sure the description of your work experience is clear. If you describe your experience by saying "performed administrative functions," we cannot tell the nature of the work. A better description might be, "developed and coordinated policies and procedures; made arrangements and prepared materials for meetings and conferences."

  - Do not assume a resume will replace the information required for an application. All information on the application must be completed in order to determine whether you meet the necessary Minimum Qualifications. A resume may be submitted in addition to the application, but a resume will not be accepted in place of clear and accurate descriptions within the work experience section of your profile/application.

- If submitting a paper application, do not forget to sign and date your application.

- Do not falsify any information on your application. All information provided is subject to verification. Providing false information may lead to disqualification or removal from an eligible list.

- File your application during the filing period. Do not miss the deadline.

Minimum Qualifications:

In order to take a test or be considered for a job, you must meet the Minimum Qualifications indicated on the job class specification (all specifications are located under the *Job Class Info* link). If the application reviewer determines that the combination of education and experience you described on your application doesn't meet those Minimum Qualifications or needs to be verified, you will get a rejection notice from the Civil Service Commission that indicates what you lack (education, experience, or both). In some cases, you may be given a chance to clarify what is on your application and/or verify education or licensure information. If you did not clearly state all your relevant experience or education the first time, this is your opportunity. The Commission will only accept information that clarifies what you stated on your application. The notice of rejection is not an opportunity to add new jobs to your application.

Applying for multiple jobs or exams:

If you are submitting a paper application, you must complete a separate application form for every job opening or exam for which you want to be considered. Remember that every job will require different qualifications. Include information about your educational background, work experience, and relevant licenses you hold that show that you meet the Minimum Qualifications stated on the announcement. If you submit your application online, the applicant profile information you created and saved will automatically be included in your application. Therefore, you should keep your profile information up to date.

Applications submitted after the deadline:

Paper applications submitted after the closing dates are not accepted. In order to be fair to everyone who sees the announcement, we must reject any application that is submitted after the closing date.

Admission letters:

The admission letter/examination notice is sent to approved applicants shortly after the application review has been completed, generally within one week after the filing period closes. Candidates who apply on-line will receive notices via email. Individuals who opt to do so when registering will also be sent a printed copy of each notice via U.S. mail. Except for the sworn police officer and firefighter classifications, examinations are generally administered within one month of the close of the filing period. The sworn classification tests generally take longer. If you have not received a notice within two weeks of the end of the filing period you should call the Civil Service Commission Test Center at (614) 645-7439.

Selecting applicants to hire:

Obtaining a job with the City is much like obtaining a job with a private company, except the City, like most government agencies, relies more upon testing as a way to assess the qualifications of applicants. One way to be considered for a Competitive job with the City is to apply and then take the required Civil Service exam. Through testing, the Commission assesses the knowledge, skills, and/or abilities of the applicants and places the names of those who pass on an eligible list. To be considered for a Competitive job, you must be on the eligible list. Each list is usually divided into three bands - 70, 80, and 90 - based on candidate test scores. Hiring departments must start with highest band when considering who to hire. This means that not all applicants on the list will be contacted for an interview.

For Noncompetitive City jobs, instead of taking a test, applicants must meet special job requirements. These jobs generally are either unskilled, require special licensing, or require specialized education. To be considered, applicants can apply online or directly with the department doing the hiring. The department initially screens the applications and considers those whose qualifications best meet the needs of the agency. Once the final candidates have been determined, a final review is made by the Civil Service Commission to ensure that the applicants meet the established Minimum Qualifications for the job.

CIVIL SERVICE EXAMS

Competitive testing ensures the public access to City jobs. The Civil Service Commission staff develops and administers valid exams that are designed to measure important knowledge, skills and abilities that are needed for successful job performance. Competitive testing helps to determine the most qualified persons for the job based on their performance on the exam and their ability to demonstrate those knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Not all City jobs require an exam, but over 250 of the more than 600 job classes in the City are tested, which accounts for about 80% of all City employees.
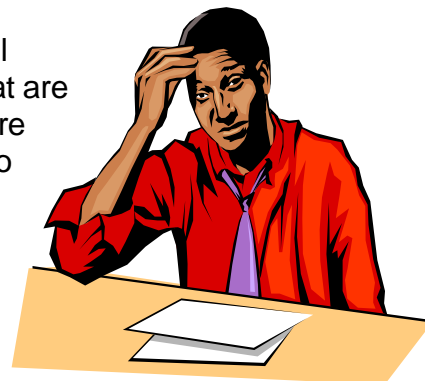
Provisional job openings:

On very rare occasions, a job may be filled on a "provisional," meaning a temporary, basis. This happens when there is an immediate vacancy for a job that should be tested but the Commission has not given the test. In such a case, the department may choose anyone who meets the Minimum Qualifications for the job. However, the test will be given eventually for that job. The person who took the job on a provisional basis will have to take the test and could lose the job if he or she does not perform well on the test.

Preparing for the exam - what to study:

The City of Columbus' exams are all related to the requirements of the specific job. In many cases, the exams test general cognitive abilities, such as reading comprehension, logic and reasoning, but may also test specific knowledge areas, such as biology, chemistry, safety, etc. The first way to prepare for the exam is to get an exam announcement and read it carefully. It will provide information about the form of the exam (written, oral, computer, training and experience), the weight given to each part, and the subjects to be tested. Once you know the general content of the exam, there are a couple of approaches to getting ready. One is to use a review or textbook in the area to be tested. For example, if writing skills will be tested, a good grammar textbook may be the place to start.

Another possibility is to look at the civil service review books (e.g., Arco series) in the library for sample questions and answers. Even if there isn't a review book for exactly the test you're taking, there may be others that include the same topics. In addition, many of those books contain general strategies for test taking such as how to stay calm, how to study, etc., and they can provide useful information to help in your preparation.

A third possibility is to practice your skills in the topic areas listed on the job announcement under Testing Information. This can be especially helpful for job simulation exams such as performance tests, written work sample tests, or computer skills exams.

Promotional, Open Competitive, and Qualifying Noncompetitive exams:

For "Promotional" exams, applications are accepted only from current City employees who meet certain criteria. When an exam is announced as "Open Competitive" or "Qualifying Noncompetitive," applications are accepted from anyone, either members of the public or City employees. For open Competitive exams, candidates are placed on a list based upon their performance. For qualifying non-Competitive exams, the test is pass/fail and candidates are listed alphabetically.

Types of exams:

The City tests for a wide range of knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA's) needed to do specific jobs, and the type of test is chosen to match the KSA's to be tested. These are some of the terms that appear on announcements to describe different types of exams:

Audio Simulation:

In an audio simulation, you respond on paper to a series of job related situations, which are presented through an audiotape or orally.

Computer Skills:

Require a candidate to operate a computer, performing tasks within various software programs such as Excel, Outlook, Power Point, and Word.

Performance Exams:

Performance tests require the candidate to perform sample work behaviors or simulations of the job that are structured and standardized. The performance test is most nearly a replication or sample of the actual work situation, where the candidate must demonstrate that he or she has the ability to perform a job related activity. Depending on the classification, the performance exam could be a typing test, computerized exam, equipment operation (vehicle or other), or a physical skills test.

Structured Oral Exams:

An oral exam requires you to respond orally to a yet job-related situation. You may interact with a role player, describe how you would respond to a situation, or make a presentation after studying written materials. You may be asked a set of follow-up questions, which have been developed to measure important knowledge and abilities identified by a job analysis. Oral exams are used to test for interpersonal and communication skills, and for content knowledge. The questions are often asked and the answers rated by a panel, usually comprised of several experts in the field for which you are being tested.

Training and Experience (T&E) Evaluation:
A T&E is used when specific education or experience is a good predictor of success at a job. Often, you are sent a special questionnaire that asks about your education and work or volunteer experience in areas related to the demands of the job. A T&E scoring system typically awards points based on the tasks that have been performed in a certain job or the classroom courses that were taken and passed.

Writing Sample/Short Answer:
On a writing sample test, candidates respond to a question or questions that could be about factual knowledge or a hypothetical situation. These tests are used as a method for assessing written communication skills, analytical skills, problem solving abilities, and job knowledge.

Work Sample/Work Simulation:
This is a written simulation where candidates are presented with a situation similar to that which might be faced on the job. Another type of simulation involves the use of video or audiotapes as stimulus materials to which candidates must respond using a written or multiple-choice format, or completing a document that simulates that used on the job.

Multiple-Choice Exams:
The multiple-choice test is a written test used to measure general abilities and/or specific job knowledge of one or more subjects. Candidates are required to choose the correct or best answer from a list of three (3) to five (5) possible responses.

Most common subtests:
Subtests can commonly be found within our multiple-choice exams. These are some examples of our most common subtests.

Oral Comprehension-
The ability to listen and understand spoken words and sentences. This ability is tested using oral instructions played on an audio tape. You must listen carefully and answer multiple-choice questions based on the information given.

Written Comprehension / Reading Comprehension-
The ability to read and understand written materials. This ability is tested using multiple-choice questions based on a provided reading passage.

Oral Communication-
The ability to use words and sentences in speaking so others will understand. This ability is tested using an oral board examination. This type of examination requires a candidate to speak in front of a group (or board) through a presentation, role play, or question and answer format.

Written Expression-
The ability to use words and sentences in writing so others will understand. This ability is typically tested though topics such as grammar, punctuation, spelling, and report writing.

Problem Sensitivity-
The ability to tell when something is wrong or likely to go wrong. This ability is tested using multiple-choice questions that ask about best solutions in a given scenario.

Logic and Reasoning-
The ability to use logic and analysis to solve problems. These items require a candidate to use the information provided to figure out the best answer.

Information Ordering-
The ability to correctly follow a rule or set of rules in order to arrange things in a certain order. Multiple-choice questions must be answered by following a set of rules or steps provided.

Mathematics-
The ability to use mathematics to solve problems, including the ability to add, subtract, multiply or divide whole numbers, fractions, or decimals. Word problems are often used.

Memorization-
The ability to remember information such as words, numbers, pictures, or procedures. After studying a sheet of paper containing a chart or scenario for a set amount of time (usually five minutes), a candidate must answer multiple-choice questions based on the information.

Name/Number Comparison-
The ability to compare names, numbers, objects, pictures, or patterns quickly and accurately. For this ability, two columns of information are provided side by side. A candidate must indicate whether the sets match or do not match. This subtest is generally timed separately from other portions of an examination.

Reading Maps or Plans-
The ability to read a map, plan, atlas or blueprint. Multiple-choice questions are asked about a provided map or plan.

Knowledge-
Tests areas specific to a classification. Some examples of knowledge areas are tool identification and usage, plumbing, automotive repair, or painting.

The types of exams just described are the most frequently used, although other types of tests may also be incorporated into the testing process. Keep in mind that the exam content will be described on the exam announcement. If you read the Testing Information section of the announcement, you will have a good idea of what you will be facing when you take the test.

EXAMINATION RESULTS

Time frame to get exam results:

The amount of time between taking a test and getting results varies. In general, you should count on at least two weeks. Some exams could take as long as one or two months for exam results, depending on the number and complexity of the exam phases to be graded. Why does it take so long? The reasons vary: some exams have components that require hand scoring (e.g. Training and Experience Evaluations and writing samples). When there are many candidates, the grading process may take longer. Most exams that are scored using a computerized method have a shorter waiting period, but administrative processing usually still takes a week to ten days. So if you don't hear from us right away, sit tight. Every exam candidate always receives a written report of results.

How exams are scored:

After all phases of the exam are completed, final scores are calculated for those candidates who participated in all phases of the examination process. Multiple-choice exam responses are read by an optical scanner. All other written exams and most performance exams are hand scored based on an established grading criteria.

1. Each candidate receives a raw score for each test component. *For example:* If a 100-question test is given and a candidate answers 78 of the 100 questions correctly, then that candidate's raw score is 78.

2. Multiple-choice items are analyzed (item analysis) to determine their appropriateness and accuracy based on candidate responses.

3. Problem items may be deleted from the exam after careful review of the item analysis.

4. Each raw score is transformed to a standard score by a process known as z-scoring.

5. Each standard score is weighted (e.g. multiple choice 50%, performance 50%), and then the weighted components are combined for a total weighted composite score.

6. The passpoint is set and pass/fail scores are determined.

7. Passing scores receive preference points (e.g., veterans, seniority).

8. Final scores are calculated and score banded or ranked by score order.

Score Banding:

Score banding is a method of grouping scores within a band. It can apply to all exams except Police and Fire promotional exams. Currently, the most commonly used method of banding is the 10-point fixed band method, where:

    A score of 90 or greater = 90 band
    A score of 80 through 89   = 80 band
    A score of 70 through 79   = 70 band

After the grading of an examination has been completed, all candidates tested will be notified in writing of their exam results. If you pass the exam, you will be notified of which score band you are in on the eligible list. The eligible list will be used to provide hiring departments with names of candidates so that they can fill vacancies.

ELIGIBLE LISTS

Every candidate who passes a civil service exam is placed on a list with other people eligible to be hired for positions in that job - it is called a "list of eligibles" or "eligible list." Candidates are listed in the order of their score band on the list, which is determined by their final score. Final scores reflect scores on the exam, plus any points added for veteran's credits (or for "seniority points" on promotional exams). Candidates are listed in alphabetical order (by last name) on Noncompetitive lists.

Eligible lists created by Competitive Examination:

After completion of an open Competitive examination, two types of lists may be prepared:

1. Preferred eligible list - includes the names of all provisional employees currently in the tested class who received a final passing grade.

2. Open eligible list - includes the names of all other applicants who received a final passing grade.

The names of eligibles on the preferred or open eligible list will be arranged in the order of the final banding or ranking based on test grades earned. The preferred eligible list is used before the open eligible list.

On promotional exams (not on open Competitive exams), seniority points are added to the passing scores. In the non-uniformed classifications, candidates may earn up to ten seniority points for continuous service, accrued as of the last date of the filing period, in the eligible class or classes identified on the job announcement. Seniority points for non-uniformed promotional exams are computed as follows:

a. One-half point for each six months of full-time service.

b. One-half point for each twelve months of part-time service.

Eligible lists created by Noncompetitive Examination:

After the completion of each Noncompetitive examination, which has a qualifying test, an eligible list is prepared including the names of all applicants, placed in alphabetical order, who met the minimum requirements for the examination and passed all tests.

How long is an eligible list used for hiring?

Usually candidates will remain on an eligible list for two years. All eligible lists automatically terminate when they have been exhausted or when they've been replaced by a new list. An eligible list may also be extended for an additional year by Commission action.

Can the public see the eligible lists?

Yes. Eligible lists are public documents. A copy of any eligible list established by the City can be viewed during working hours (9:00AM - 4:00PM) at the Civil Service Commission, Suite 301. Contact the Applicant and Employee Services unit at (614) 645-8369 to see the eligible list for the title you're interested in. If you would like a copy of an eligible list, there is a $0.05 per page charge. Eligible lists can be emailed free of charge upon request.

Must I take a test again when the eligible list expires?

Civil Service eligible lists are valid for up to two years. When the list expires, candidates must re-apply and take the exam again in order to continue eligibility. A new list will be established as a result of the new test.

Can I take the exam again if I'm not pleased with my score?

No. If you have taken any part of a Competitive examination or Noncompetitive qualifying examination for any classification, you cannot take the same exam again for six months from the date of your notice of test results unless:

1.   A new test is being administered (the test has been revised).

2.   You failed a typing or data entry performance test for the classification.

3.   The test is for the classification of Police Officer. Police Officer candidates can retest twice in a twelve-month period.

Please note that the test must be offered in order for you to re-test. Re-testing in order to improve your score is not permitted.

How will taking the exam again affect my current score?

If you take an exam again for the same classification while your name is still on the eligible list, your score will be based on the second examination. You do not have the option of choosing the best examination score. If you fail the second exam while your name is on the current eligible list, your name will be removed from the eligible list.

What happens once my name is on the eligible list?

Candidates are considered according to their score band. Candidates within the highest score band are considered for a vacancy first.

If a vacancy becomes available and your name is listed in the highest band, you will receive a notice from the Civil Service Commission office stating that your name has been certified to the appointing authority. Since other candidates may be notified as well, you may want to send a cover letter and resume to the hiring agency that is listed on the notice to help them to know more about your experience, education and/or training. Being in the highest score band does not guarantee that you will be contacted by the hiring agency for an interview.

If you are selected for consideration for the position, you will be contacted by the city division having the opening and informed of the next steps in the hiring process.

DISQUALIFICATION OF APPLICANTS AND ELIGIBLES

Applicants may be rejected from consideration or refused admittance to an examination, and eligibles may be disqualified or removed from a Competitive eligible list, or a certification list, for reasons listed in the Civil Service rules. To view the complete text of the Civil Service Commission rules, visit our website at columbus.gov/civilservice and click on CSC Rules.

TEST-TAKING STRATEGIES FOR DIFFERENT TYPES OF EXAMINATIONS

Training and Experience (T&E) Evaluations

Your score for this type of test is determined only by the information you provide on the T&E evaluation form. The information you provide will be used to evaluate you for the job for which you have applied. You are not able to add or change any information once the evaluation form has been submitted to the Civil Service Commission Office. The following tips may help you get proper credit for your experience.
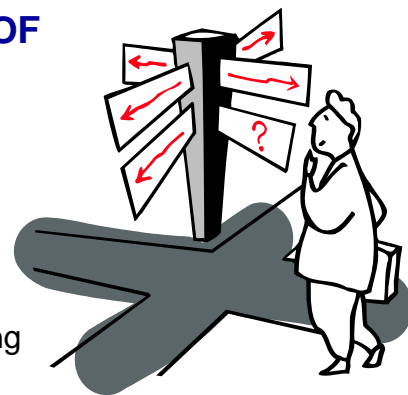
1. Type or print all information neatly. You will not receive credit for information that cannot be read. Be as clear, concise and legible as possible.

2. Provide all relevant periods of employment, including self-employment, part-time employment, military service and unpaid or volunteer service.

3. Be sure to provide complete and accurate employer information (job title, work dates, hours worked, phone number, etc.), even if the employer has gone out of business or is deceased. If any of this information is missing, you may not receive full credit.

4. For any experience claimed in which an employer has closed (gone out of business) attach a pay stub, W-2, or any other verifiable information of this employment in order to receive credit.

5. It is up to you to tell us about the related experience you have. If you have important experience and abilities and do not put them on the T&E evaluation form, you will not be given credit for them.

6. If asked, describe the specific duties and responsibilities that demonstrate your abilities in the categories identified in the T&E evaluation form. If you have experience in a specified T&E category in more than one job held, identify each job and explain the applicable duties and responsibilities.

7. Your experience may not be evaluated properly if you use words and phrases known only to your work specialty or location. Such special language includes abbreviations, initials or military jargon.

8. Some T&E's may be judged on the level of your experience and/or responsibility. Therefore, describe your experience, knowledge and/or abilities in terms of the **level** of responsibility, **complexity** or **importance** of accomplishments, and number of people you supervised.

9. If credit is being given for course work, be sure to provide complete information on any relevant course work you may have completed (course title, dates of course, where held, course credit).

10. Some T&E's are in multiple-choice format. Make sure you select the response that best describes your experience and/or education.

11. Sign and date your T&E evaluation form.

12. Failure to return your T&E evaluation form by the due date may result in your failing the entire exam process.

Structured Oral Exams

Oral examinations are designed to evaluate to what degree you exhibit the knowledge, skills, abilities and personal characteristics necessary for performance on the job. Oral exams are usually conducted by a board (or panel) of subject matter experts.

1. Board Preparation
   a. Board members are trained on the rating process,
   b. Board members are instructed to ask the same questions to all applicants and to take notes,
   c. Board members rate candidates only on the designated factors,
   d. Board members do not have access to your application, resume, etc.

2. During the exam
   a. Candidates will be introduced to the board members,
   b. Candidates may be required to orally present information as a part of a written scenario, role-play, and/or respond to a prepared set of questions,
   c. Candidates may be given an opportunity to summarize or make additional comments if time permits.

3. After the exam
   a. Board members will independently rate your performance against specific standards,
   b. Board members will rate you on one or more dimensions such as
      • oral communication
      • interpersonal relations
      • information analysis
      • problem solving
   c. The analyst will total and average the ratings of the board members

4. How you can prepare

   a. Study the job announcement and class specification and become familiar with the duties and requirements of the job for which you have applied.

   b. Be prepared to demonstrate to the panel members that you possess the knowledge, skills and abilities required to perform the job by giving complete answers to the questions.

   c. Be yourself. Answer questions honestly and directly. If you do not know the answer to a technical question, do not be afraid to admit that you do not know. However, do not avoid questions simply because they are difficult. The panel may be assessing your ability to deal with difficult or complex situations and your avoidance of difficult questions may convince them that you are unwilling or unable to deal with difficult situations.

   d. Do some serious thinking about the job. Ask yourself if it is really the type of job that you want and why. Try to determine what kinds of knowledge, skills and abilities would be required to perform the job and whether or not you have these.

## Tips on Oral Communication and Listening Skills

Do:
1. Use statements that completely express your thoughts.
2. Use appropriate grammar and vocabulary.
3. Maintain eye contact with the panel.
4. Ask for clarification on unclear points or points you are not sure of.
5. Take several seconds to organize your thoughts before you begin to speak.
6. Use encouraging facial expressions and gestures.
7. Speak at an appropriate volume and speed.
8. Practice your communication skills with friends, family, or co-workers and ask for their feedback.

Don't:
1. Interrupt the panel without an apology.
2. Intersperse speech continually with "ah's," "uh's," and "um's."
3. Repeat words or phrases like "you know," "right," "okay" or "you know what I mean."
4. Speak too softly, too loudly or too rapidly.
5. Look away from the panel when addressing them.
6. Mumble so that words cannot be understood.
7. Ramble on, making the same points over and over.
8. Use slang terms or abusive language.
9. Use jargon known only to those in your profession or agency.
10. Gesticulate (wave hands and/or head) in a distracting manner.
11. Tap your pen, pound on the table or jiggle your feet in a distracting tense manner.
12. Snap, pop or chew gum.
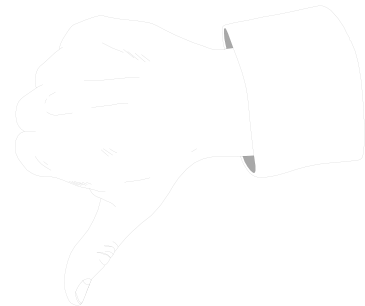
Multiple Choice Exams

The Answer Sheet

Each question on a multiple-choice test may contain up to five alternative answers (A, B, C, D or E). You are to pick the best or most accurate answer for each question and mark your answers on the separate answer sheet that you are given during the examination. The answer sheet will be scored by computer so it is important that you follow marking instructions carefully.
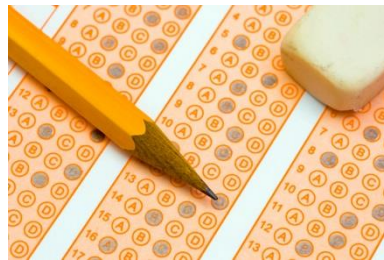
When you use the answer sheet during the examination, follow these instructions:

1. Make good dark marks that completely fill in the rectangle.

2. Completely erase any changed answers.

3. Make one, and only one, mark for each question.

4. Use only the No. 2 pencil that you are given during the examination. Do not use other pencils or pens.

5. Follow the test monitor's instructions carefully for marking your candidate ID number on the answer sheet.

6. Although you are usually permitted to mark in the test booklet, your score will be based only on the answers recorded on the answer sheet.

7. Frequently check that the question number in the test booklet matches the number of the answer you are marking on the answer sheet.
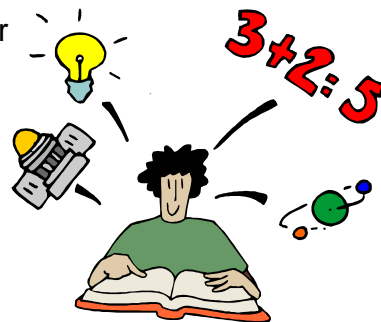
General Test Taking Strategies

To help you do better on the examination, here is a list of test taking strategies you should remember.

1. Get enough sleep the night before. This will help you maintain your concentration for the duration of the test. Wear comfortable clothes. The test facility may be hot or cold. You cannot change the room, but you can put on a sweater.

2. Read all directions carefully.

3. Keep track of how much time you have to complete the examination.

4. Do not be afraid to go with the first answer that comes to your mind. Often, first instincts are correct.

5. If you find a question difficult or confusing, skip over it and come back to it after you have finished the test. Do not spend too much time on any one item. If you skip a question, be sure to make a corresponding "skip" on your answer sheet.

6. Try to think of the answer to the question before looking at the alternatives. If you do not know the answer, try to eliminate those choices that are clearly wrong. This makes the chance of picking the correct answer easier. After eliminating the obviously wrong answers, pick the best alternative from those that are left.

7. Be careful not to be misled by alternatives that are only partially true. Always select the best answer.

8. For most exams, there is no penalty for guessing, so even if you must guess, try to eliminate alternatives that are clearly not the best answer and answer every question.

9. If you have time, go back and look at every question and answer. Make any changes that are necessary.

10. Remember, the test monitors are there to assist you with procedures. If you have any questions, ask for assistance before the examination begins, or as soon as the question arises. Do not be afraid to ask questions, especially if something is very confusing or just doesn't seem right.

Analyzing Test Items

Item analysis is one technique that can help you perform better on a multiple-choice test. Item analysis helps to reduce mistakes and simplify difficult questions.

1. Read each question carefully. Try to answer the question before you look at the alternatives.

2. Identify clue words that harden or soften a sentence. Words such as **all**, **never**, **none**, and **every,** harden a statement by indicating that there are no exceptions. As a rule, alternatives with these words are <u>less</u> likely to be correct. Words such as **sometimes**, **may**, **generally** and **possibly** soften a statement. As a rule, alternatives with these words are <u>more</u> likely to be correct.

3. When reading test questions, do not be afraid to mark in the test booklet if this is permitted in the instructions. You must mark your answer on the answer sheet to get credit for the response, but you will <u>not</u> be penalized for putting marks in the test booklet. Mark the test questions in a way that helps you to remember important words or phases. Here are some suggestions.

    a. Use slash marks (/) to break up sentences into smaller segments. This will make you attentive to each piece of information.

    b. Circle key words that tell what the sentence is all about. This will help you get a "handle" on the sentence and will make it easier if you have to hunt for an answer later.

    c. <u>Underline</u> words that harden or soften the meaning.

    d. Put marks next to each alternative (e.g., "G" = "clearly a good answer," "X" = "clearly a bad answer"). If you have to reread the question or answers, this will save time.

Error Analysis

Each one of us has weak areas in our test taking behavior. There are several possible reasons for choosing an incorrect response. Once you've identified those potential problems, they can be avoided. The following are six possible reasons for incorrectly answering a question along with possible methods of avoiding those errors.
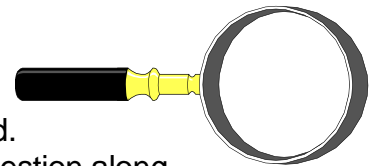
1. **Marking the wrong space on the answer sheet** – Possible solution: frequently check the number of the question you are marking on the answer sheet against the number of the question you are answering in order to be sure they match. Additionally, check each answer choice on the answer sheet to ensure you are marking the letter of the answer you have chosen. As an additional check, after you complete the exam, go back over every question and make sure the answers match. Since there are a limited number of questions on the exam, careless errors such as these are costly.

2. **Misreading a question or answer by overlooking a key word or phrase** –Possible solution: Underlining makes those key words and phrases stand out when choosing an answer. Once you have underlined the key words and phrases, check the details of the possible answers with the details you underlined, one by one. If every detail doesn't match, consider that answer suspect and try another. Always keep in mind you are looking for the best possible answer.

3. **Not knowing the meaning of one or more key terms** – Possible solution: reread the sentence to determine its meaning without worrying about the meaning of that particular word. Try to understand the general message of the sentence or paragraph. The meaning of the unfamiliar word should become clearer once you understand the general context within which it has been placed.

4. **Not understanding a question because it is complicated or too difficult** – Possible solution: skip the question until the end of the test. When you return to the question, use slash marks to break up the material into small segments. Concentrate on one segment at a time to determine what is important. Read the possible answers before reading the question. This tells you what to concentrate on while reading the question. Also, focus on the topic sentences that are usually the first and last sentences of a question. Read for the general meaning and do not get bogged down by individual words or phrases you do not understand.

5. **Missing a question because you are unaccustomed to comparing combinations of information** - this is a problem of rearranging information in the correct way so that it makes sense. Underline critical pieces of information and then compare the information with the possible answers point by point. Also, concentrate on eliminating the wrong answers first.

6. **Selecting an answer that "looked good"** - there are a number of factors that can cause you to fall for incorrect answers that look good.

   a. An incorrect answer may contain an exact phrase from the question.

   b. An incorrect answer may contain a phrase or sentence that is used out of context.

   c. An incorrect answer may overstate what the question has stated. For example, if the question says, "Some officers...," the incorrect answer may say, "All officers..."

Listed below are some specific strategies for avoiding the tendency to fall for incorrect answers that look good.

1. Have an answer in mind before you look over the alternatives. This will make you less susceptible to choosing an answer that looks good.

2. Do not forget to use the method of marking each alternative to indicate what you think about it (e.g., bad, good or possible) before choosing one.

3. Stick strictly to the facts or rules of a question. Do not fall for answers that stretch or exaggerate the facts or rules described in the test question itself. This is the time to watch out for words that harden or soften a phrase such as only, never, always, whenever, all, etc.

Writing Sample/Work Sample Exams

Writing samples and work samples are typically designed to assess your ability to analyze, interpret, and/or extract certain information and respond in a given format. The requested response can range from something as simple as drafting a letter or memo, to writing a report, indicating how you would handle the situation, or analyzing a situation and indicating all the problems associated with it; or some combination of any or all of these. Examples include situational exercises, form completion, task completion (e.g., preparing a budget), or planning and organizing exercises. For a writing or work sample test, you may be rated on the following dimensions.

1. Completeness/Accuracy - graders will look at how much relevant information from the scenario is in your response and how much of the information is correct.

2. Spelling/Word Choice - graders will review your response to make sure words are spelled and used correctly.

3. Organization - graders will determine how well you have organized the information in your response.

4. Sentence Structure - graders will review your response to make sure you use complete sentences with correct grammar.

Written work samples can take several different forms. In all cases, candidates are to respond in writing (or typed on a computer) to written, oral, or video stimulus material. One type of written work sample is an in-basket exam, where candidates are presented with multiple documents similar to what an employee on the job might find in his or her in-basket, and are asked to respond to each item and resolve any issues presented.

Here are some tips for taking a written work sample test:

1. Preparation

    a. Study the job announcement and class specification and become familiar with the duties and requirements of the job for which you have applied.

    b. Do some serious thinking about the job. Ask yourself if it is really the type of job that you want and why. Try to determine what kinds of knowledge, skills and abilities would be required to perform the job and whether or not you have these.

    c. Then think about the types of situation an employee might face and think about how you would respond. Better yet, create your own scenarios and practice writing or typing your responses, either a description of how you would respond to a situation or draft samples of memos, letters, or reports that you would write.

2. Taking the Test

    a. Listen carefully to any oral instructions and read carefully and follow all written instructions. The instructions will indicate how to respond and what is expected in your responses.

    b. Organize your thoughts before putting them in the exam answer booklet. You may want to use a separate sheet of paper to jot down ideas or outline your response.

c. Print your response legibly. You will not receive credit for any information the graders are unable to read.

d. Be sure your response is complete, clear, concise, and detailed. Do not assume that the graders will know what you mean. Make sure that your answers provide all of the information requested in the instructions.

e. If a dictionary is allowed for the exam you are taking, use it to double-check your spelling and word usage.

f. If the scenario is presented to you by way of videotape, take notes while viewing the tape and begin organizing your thoughts.

g. Make sure that you have provided your candidate ID as requested.

Performance Exams

For job classes such as clerical, labor and maintenance, craft and trades, and recreation, a performance exam is one of the most valid methods for determining a candidate's ability and/or skill to perform certain job tasks. For example, candidates applying for a job as a Parks Maintenance Worker will be expected to demonstrate their ability to operate a tractor mower. Some clerical exams may require you to demonstrate your ability to use word processing software or to type and enter data using a computer.

Performance Test Taking Tips

1. Practice on or use similar equipment if possible. Call the Civil Service Commission Office to find out what type or brand of testing equipment is being used.

2. Wear comfortable clothing and clothing appropriate to the type of test being given (e.g., do not wear dress clothing to a tractor mower test).

3. Do not be overly anxious to get started. Listen to and follow the instructions you are given at the exam. It is important that you understand the examination process completely before beginning in order to assure yourself the opportunity to perform your best and to avoid possible injury in potentially hazardous testing situations.

Do not attempt to take performance tests that could be potentially hazardous if you do not have the proper experience in that area. You could risk injuring yourself and those around you at the test site. Always follow safety rules when operating equipment.

Study Methods

Concentration Techniques

1. **Make the material more interesting or meaningful**. One way to do that is to apply it to yourself by relating it to your own personal experiences. For example, when studying a manual or reference materials for a test, try to relate the concepts to something you have done or something you have seen someone else do.

2. **Eliminate distractions from your environment**. These distractions compete for your attention, interfere with your concentration, and "turn off" your memory of the material. It is difficult for people to pay attention to several things at the same time. Instead, they usually switch back and forth, paying attention first to one thing and then another. Unfortunately, any material that did not receive attention will not be remembered. This means that listening to the radio while you are studying, or studying in a noisy area will leave gaps in your memory of the material you are trying to learn.

3. **Eliminate internal distractions**. Avoid trying to learn or memorize material when you are tired or hungry. Fatigue reduces the amount of material that you can remember. Both fatigue and hunger make concentration difficult. One way to avoid internal distractions is to schedule study times and to set realistic goals.

4. **Use the check-mark technique**. This technique involves keeping a separate sheet of paper beside you and marking a check on it each time your mind wanders. This makes you aware of how often you are not concentrating and forces you to keep focused. Too many checks could indicate that a different study time could allow you to concentrate better and use your time more effectively.

Reading Comprehension Techniques

1. **Page-at-a-Time Method.** This method involves stopping at the bottom of each page and summarizing the content in a few sentences. Ask yourself, "What did the author say on this page?" The page-at-a-time method makes you concentrate by forcing your mind to focus on the material while it is still fresh.

2. **Organizational Pattern Method.** This method involves determining how the author is presenting the material. Once you have identified an author's organizational pattern, you are able to better organize both your note taking and your thinking. There are several types of organizational patterns:

   a. Process Pattern - In this pattern, steps are presented in sequence. An office procedure, for example, would be described step by step.

   b. Increasing Importance Pattern - This pattern presents information from the least important to most important.

   c. Decreasing Important Pattern - Using this pattern, the author organizes information from most important to least important.

    d. Cause and Effect Pattern - With this pattern, when you identify a cause or a problem, you are prompted to look for the effect or the solution.

    e. Compare or Contrast Pattern - This pattern involves presenting similarities or differences among theories, ideas, procedures, etc.

3. **Paragraph Method.** This method involves stopping at the end of each paragraph and summarizing it into one sentence. Simply ask yourself, "What was this paragraph meant to convey?" This helps to ensure that you understand what you are reading. It will also be helpful to identify the types of sentences and paragraphs you are reading. This approach allows you to identify where the important information is in the material.

    a. Identify types of sentences by function
      - Topic sentences are controlling ideas
      - Supporting sentences explain and prove the main idea
      - Concluding sentences sum up the discussion

    b. Identify types of paragraphs
      - Introductory paragraphs give the main idea
      - Expository paragraphs present new information
      - Transitional paragraphs tie information together
      - Summarizing paragraphs restate main ideas and draw conclusions

4. **S Q 3 R.** The symbols **SQ3R** stand for **SURVEY**, **QUESTION**, **READ**, **RECITE**, and **REVIEW**. These five elements make up a set of study habits that almost always guarantee success.

    a. **SURVEY** - To survey is to find the limits or borders of an area. Surveying the material to be studied is the first step in the SQ3R method. This step allows you to distinguish between important information and trivial detail.

    The most obvious way to survey a body of information is to scan it from start to finish. By skimming over the pages, you will get an idea of what is to come and how long it will take to cover the material. This will help you to break the assignment down into reasonable time blocks. In most textbooks, this type of survey is made much easier through chapter summaries. Chapter summaries can give a quick overview of the important parts or pieces of the chapter. If you look at the chapter itself, you will see that it is usually broken down into smaller parts or pieces through the use of headings. Bold headings introduce big or important elements; smaller headings introduce sub areas of these important elements. These headings can provide an important road map through the chapter.

    b. **QUESTION** - Most people need a reason to do things. The same is true for studying or reading a textbook. Try to formulate questions about the text you are about to read. Finding the answers to these questions will give the material that you are reading more meaning.

    There are several ways to develop these questions. One way, is to begin with the list of headings from the chapter outline. Write a question for each major and minor heading.

c. **READ** - For most people, reading means the same thing as studying. Reading is important, but it will be done more effectively when the survey and question steps have been completed.

Material should be read in small "chunks" that you identified in the survey stage. One section might be all of the material under a major heading. If several pages are included under a major heading, divide it up into smaller sections separated by minor headings. Try to determine how many sections will be read in a given study session. Once you are able to answer the questions you developed in the previous step, you can move on to the next section.

Be sure you understand the material in the section you are reading before you move on to the next section. A good time to take breaks is between these sections, not in the middle of them.

It is important that you understand the material you are reading. One way to do this is to keep a list of all unfamiliar terms and their meanings. The quicker you get to know the meaning of all the terms, the more effective your studying will be. You might want to keep a notebook of these terms as well as <u>all</u> important terms. You will find that this notebook of terms will be a big help in preparing for the examination.

To become a more active participant in the studying process, you might also want to mark or underline the text while you are reading. This will also help you to focus on the major ideas and keep you from getting bogged down with details. Reviewing the material will be easier since you have already given yourself some hints and associations that will aid in later recall.

Highlight or underline key words and concepts and make notes to yourself in the margins. If you choose to use the underlining and marking method, here are a few guidelines:

1) Read through the entire section once before doing any underlining or marking.

2) Don't mark or underline too much; the value of the technique lies in highlighting only the most important material.

3) Use ink if possible so that the underlining and notes do not disappear or become unclear in the course of studying.

4) Use symbols as much as possible. For example, use "?" as a symbol for questions you have; use "*" to stand for a particularly important idea.

The act of identifying and choosing the most important material to be highlighted will make recalling this information in the chapter easier at a later point in time.

d. **RECITE** - An important step in this method is the recite step. Recitation will help you to remember the information that you just read.

Recitation does <u>not</u> have to be out loud, but it should be formal. Don't just look over the information and say to yourself, "Now I know it." The point is that you should recite the information that you are trying to learn. This can be done in several ways. One popular method is to close the book and try to repeat what you have just read. Then check to see if you were correct. A second way is to answer questions about the material you have just read.

Reciting material with the assistance of another individual is also helpful. You can ask each other questions about portions of the material, which will make you recite the material in a very formal way. Choosing someone who is familiar with the material is not necessary. The person only has to be able to recognize that what you have said is what is written in the book or in your notes.

In order to be most effective, recitation should take place quite soon after you've first learned or read the material. This is important because the greatest amount of information is lost or forgotten right after it is first learned.

Don't try to recite too much information at once. Depending on the number of pages covered, this might be all of the information in one major heading or even one subheading. A whole chapter is certainly too large a unit for recitation purposes.

e. **REVIEW** - The last step of the SQ3R method is review. When you have finished studying a block of material such as a chapter, you should review what you have learned. This can be done through reciting or through answering specific questions. The point is that you should go back over the material once you think it has been learned. You must feel confident that you have learned the "old" material before you begin to learn "new material. " This will help you to determine whether more time must be devoted to previously studied material.

The second form of review is done just before you begin a new study session. In this form of review, you are actually preparing yourself for new learning by strengthening previous learning. This helps to ensure that any old learning that is needed as a basis for new learning is correct and available.

The final form of review is done before a test and is most effective in a group with other test takers. This cuts down on some of the drudgery of pre-test studying and can increase the meaningfulness of the information. It is sometimes easier to remember the information if you think back to who said what and how the review conversation went.

DEALING WITH TEST ANXIETY

Test anxiety is an inability to think clearly regarding or during a testing situation that prevents you from doing your best on the exam. It is usually characterized by feelings of nervousness, fear or dread, and specific symptoms can include insomnia, loss (or increase) of appetite, and an inability to concentrate. During an exam, symptoms include confusion, panic, mental blocks, or nausea. Do you ever experience any of these symptoms before or during a test? If so, you are not alone; many people suffer from test anxiety.

Following are some techniques for dealing with test anxiety. However, first you need to understand that test anxiety, just like most forms of anxiety, come about because of what you tell yourself and your innermost thoughts regarding the test and your abilities. Irrational beliefs regarding fear of failure, concerns regarding what others will think about you, and the need to be perfect come into play. Some test anxiety techniques to try are:

1. **THOUGHT SUBSTITUTION**
   Start substituting the negative thoughts and feelings that you have regarding the test with positive thoughts. For example, instead of telling yourself "I'm never going to do well on the test because I always get low scores," you can substitute that thought with a more positive one such as "I have control over whether or not I do well on the test. I have studied the material supplied to me to the best of my ability and I am pleased with the progress I have made." Making positive statements to yourself is one way to reduce the anxiety that you feel.

2. **BREATHING**
   If you find yourself going over the material for the test or actually in the exam and you start developing some of the symptoms of test anxiety, one technique you can use immediately is to focus your attention on your breathing. By doing this, you calm some of the physical symptoms and sensations you may be having. You can take several deep breaths, hold each for 3 - 5 seconds, and then slowly exhale. You should feel yourself getting more relaxed and your heart rate slowing down.

3. **MUSCLE RELAXATION**
   Another technique you can try before and during the testing situation is to tense and relax your muscles. If you are aware of a particularly tense part of your body, which is usually the shoulder area, you should first make the area even tenser. Pull your shoulders back, arch your back and tense your shoulder muscles even more tightly and hold the tenseness for 5 seconds. Then slowly release it. You should begin to feel the tension floating away as you release the tenseness. You can do this several times.

There are some other things that you should do before the exam to help reduce stress. If you already have an exercise routine, you should exercise the day before and the day of the exam. Studies have shown that regular exercise helps to control tension and stress. The day before the exam you should check again the time and location of the exam, take a complete break from studying and relax before you go to bed, and try to get a full nights sleep. These steps will help you be refreshed and alert throughout the exam.

You can also reduce the exam day stress by locating the test site, parking facilities and parking fees prior to the test day. Map out or plan how to get there as well as an alternative route. It may be helpful to actually travel the route to determine how long it will take to get there. Be sure to allow additional time for any unforeseen delays such as traffic or bad weather.

The day of the exam get up in plenty of time to avoid rushing. Eat a nutritious meal, but do not overstuff yourself and avoid heavy foods. Arrive at the exam site with time to spare, and RELAX! By this time, you should be thinking positively about the outcome.

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