

**New York State
Department of Civil Service**

Committed to Innovation, Quality, and Excellence

A Guide to the Written Test
for entry-level positions in the
Probation and Parole Series

Including:

**Parole Officer, Parole Officer (Spanish Language),
Parole Officer Trainee 1, Parole Officer Trainee 1 (Spanish Language),
Probation Officer, Probation Officer Trainee, Probation Officer/Probation Officer
Trainee, Probation Officer/Probation Officer Trainee (Spanish Language)**

Opportunities at **work.**



Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor

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Commissioner

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INTRODUCTION

The New York State Department of Civil Service has developed this test guide to familiarize you with the written test for entry-level local probation and entry-level state parole titles. This test guide provides a general description of the subject areas which will be tested and an explanation of the different types of questions that will be presented. The Examination Announcement will list the subject areas that will be included on the test you will be taking.

The Probation and Parole Series has an overall time allowance of 6 hours and 30 minutes.

The written tests for the entry-level titles of the Probation and Parole Series will cover the following subject areas:

- 1. PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES OF OFFENDER COUNSELING AND SUPERVISION:** These questions test for the knowledge and application of principles and practices of offender counseling and supervision in a law enforcement setting. Questions present situations typically encountered while establishing and maintaining working relationships with offenders, such as obtaining information from offenders, exploring offenders' social, psychological, or legal problems, and supervising offender rehabilitation. Candidates will be required to choose the best analysis of, solution to, or approach for handling the problem described. Specific knowledge of laws, rules, regulations, or procedures regarding offender counseling and supervision is not required to answer these questions.

There will be 45 questions in this subject area.

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

There will be 30 questions in this subject area: 20 information presentation questions and 10 paragraph organization questions.

The remainder of this test guide explains how you will be tested in each of the subject areas listed above. A **TEST TASK** is provided for each subject area. This is an explanation of how a question is presented and how to correctly answer it. Read each explanation carefully. This test guide also provides **SAMPLE QUESTIONS** for each subject area. The sample questions are similar to the type of questions that will be presented on the actual test. This test guide provides a **SOLUTION** and correct answer to each sample question. You should study each sample question and solution to understand how the correct answer was determined.

SUBJECT AREA 1

PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES OF OFFENDER COUNSELING AND SUPERVISION:

These questions test for the knowledge and application of principles and practices of offender counseling and supervision in a law enforcement setting. Questions present situations typically encountered while establishing and maintaining working relationships with offenders, such as obtaining information from offenders, exploring offenders' social, psychological, or legal problems, and supervising offender rehabilitation. Candidates will be required to choose the best analysis of, solution to, or approach for handling the problem described. Specific knowledge of laws, rules, regulations, or procedures regarding offender counseling and supervision is not required to answer these questions.

TEST TASK: You will be presented with a situation and asked to use your best judgment in determining the most appropriate course of action to take in the given situation.

SAMPLE QUESTION 1:

You are talking with Mrs. Collins, the mother of an offender in your current caseload. During the conversation, Mrs. Collins tells you that her husband physically abuses her. Which one of the following is the most appropriate action for you to take in this situation?

- A. Call the police to have her husband arrested.
- B. Tell her that you will use your authority to "straighten out" her husband.
- C. Provide her with information on safety planning and services available to victims of abuse.
- D. Avoid becoming involved, since your primary responsibility is to supervise her son.

The correct answer to this sample question is C.

SOLUTION:

Choice A is not correct. *Calling the police is far too hasty an action. You do not know for a fact that Mrs. Collins' husband batters her; only that she says he does. If what she is telling you is true, she may be ashamed and it may have taken great effort for her to tell you about it. If you immediately call the police, you risk violating her confidence. She may also become subject to further battering if her husband finds out how the police came to be called.*

Choice B is not correct. *Saying you'll use your authority to "straighten out" her husband is wrong because it is an unseemly show of your "authority" that is not within your authority at all. You are, in effect, telling Mrs. Collins that you will threaten her husband in order to change his behavior. You do not have this kind of control over private citizens. Implying that you do would be unprofessional. You may also make the situation worse by leaving Mrs. Collins alone to face her husband after you have confronted him.*

Choice C is the correct answer to this question. *Providing Mrs. Collins with information on how to get help is the best choice. Very often, people in distress are unaware of the kinds of services that are available to them. You would be familiar with these services and could best provide information about various ways she could get help.*

Choice D is not correct. *Aside from being a callous response to what Mrs. Collins has said, you should be aware of the potential serious nature of her allegations and willing to provide information about various ways she could get help.*

SUBJECT AREA 1 - CONTINUED

SAMPLE QUESTION 2:

John, an offender, resides with two of his cousins. At one of his appointments with you, he informs you that his cousins and some of their friends have been using drugs in their apartment. Which one of the following actions is the most appropriate for you to take next in this situation?

- A. Speak to your supervisor about how to best proceed with John's problem.
- B. Assist John in finding another residence immediately.
- C. Make a home visit to confront John's cousins about their drug use.
- D. Contact John's landlord to demand that John's cousins be evicted from the apartment.

The correct answer to this sample question is B.

SOLUTION:

Choice A is not correct. Although speaking to your supervisor about John's problem may be an action you take in the near future, it is not the most appropriate action for you to take next in this situation. John should be removed from the problematic situation immediately and, as an officer, it is your responsibility to assist him with this transition.

Choice B is the correct answer to this question. Assisting John in finding another residence immediately is the most appropriate action for you to take next in this situation. Since John is an offender and has confided in you about the drug use occurring at his residence, you have a responsibility to act on this information and to assist in removing John from the situation.

Choice C is not correct. Making a home visit to confront John's cousins about their drug use is not the most appropriate action for you to take next in this situation. Confronting John's cousins about their drug use is secondary to removing John from the situation.

Choice D is not correct. Contacting John's landlord to demand that John's cousins be evicted from the apartment is not the most appropriate action for you to take next in this situation. In addition to being too hasty, contacting John's landlord to demand that John's cousins be evicted from the apartment does not immediately solve the problem because John will still be residing at the residence with his cousins while an eviction is proceeding.

SUBJECT AREA 2

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

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

Information Presentation - You will be given information in two sentences and asked to identify the sentence that presents the information most clearly and accurately.

Paragraph Organization - You will be given paragraphs with their sentences out of order and asked to choose which of four choices presents the best order for the sentences.

SAMPLE QUESTION 1 (Information Presentation):

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

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

The correct answer to this sample question is B.

SOLUTION:

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

Choice B is the correct answer to this question. This is the better answer to the question because it states that the defendant was having mechanical difficulties.

SAMPLE QUESTION 2 (Information Presentation):

Which one of the following sentences more clearly presents the information given?

- A. Ted was a high school dropout but obtained his G.E.D. certificate and is now employed at two jobs.
- B. Ted was a high school dropout but is now employed at two jobs and has obtained his G.E.D. certificate.

The correct answer to this sample question is A.

SOLUTION:

Choice A is the correct answer to this question. This is the better answer to the question because it makes it clear that Ted first obtained his G.E.D. certificate, and is now employed at two jobs.

Choice B is not correct. This sentence does not make it clear when Ted obtained his G.E.D. certificate.

SUBJECT AREA 2 - CONTINUED

SAMPLE QUESTION (Paragraph Organization):

The sentences below are out of sequence; but, when they are correctly arranged, they form a connected, well organized paragraph. Read the sentences, and then answer the question about the best arrangement of these sentences.

1. Eventually, they piece all of this information together, and make a choice.
2. Before actually deciding upon a job, people usually think about several possibilities.
3. They imagine themselves in different situations, and in so doing, they probably think about their interests, goals, and abilities.
4. Choosing an occupation is an important decision to make.

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

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

The correct answer to this sample question is D.

SOLUTION:

Choice D is the correct answer to this question. The best arrangement of these sentences is 4-2-3-1. Sentence 4 introduces the main idea of the paragraph: "choosing an occupation." Sentences 2-3-1 then follow up on this idea by describing, in order, the steps involved in making such a choice.

TEST SECURITY

The test you will be taking is the property of the New York State Department of Civil Service. Candidates may not remove test material from the test site and may not reproduce, reconstruct, or discuss the test content with others. Unauthorized possession or disclosure of the test material is prohibited by law and punishable by imprisonment and/or a fine. Additionally, candidates may be disqualified from appointment to the positions for which the examination is being held and from being a candidate for any civil service examination for five years. After you take the test, other individuals may want to talk with you about the test. You should not discuss the questions and answers, even in general terms. You should be careful that you do not inadvertently violate test security and put yourself at risk.

CONCLUSION

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

Before the test ...

- Study and review this guide to familiarize yourself with some of the material which the test will cover.
- Study and review the subject areas to be covered on the test.

On the day of the test ...

- Arrive at the test site on time.
- Bring your Admission Notice, two No. 2 pencils, a photo ID containing your signature, a quiet lunch or snack, and any other materials as instructed on the admission notice or the announcement.
- Do **NOT** bring this test guide to the test site.

At the test site ...

- Do **NOT** bring cell phones, beepers, headphones, or any electronic or other communication devices to the test site.
- The use of such devices anywhere on the grounds of the test site (this includes the test room, hallways, restrooms, building, grounds, and parking lots) could result in your disqualification.

During the test ...

- Read and follow all directions on your Admission Notice, test booklets, answer sheets, and Candidate Directions.
- Follow the Monitor's instructions.
- Keep track of the time.

After the test ...

- Do **NOT** remove any test materials from the test room.
- Do **NOT** paraphrase, reconstruct, or reproduce the test material in any way.
- Do **NOT** discuss the test material with others.

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

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