Palmdale School District
Launching a lifetime of learning

Tips to Increase Test-Taking Skills

Office of the Personnel Commission

THE PALMDALE PROMISE
La PROMESA de Palmdale

The best way to learn about employment opportunities is to ask questions. Talk to the Human Resource Department. Review job descriptions and ads to see what the minimum qualifications are for each position. Do you need a certificate, course work, and/or a minimum number of years' experience?

Look for training programs in your area or classes to take. Many are offered through Adult Education or community colleges at low costs. Talk to current employees in positions that interest you. Ask how they gained their skills. Go on the Internet and search for training programs/manuals, etc., that will help you reach the competency areas needed to perform the job. There is information available on occupations that will tell you what skills and education are required for each position. There are also sample tests related to many positions. Student workbooks are also available that contain practice tests in basic skills such as reading comprehension, spelling, math, and English usage. Although some of the tests will not be exactly like the ones you may take at a public agency, practicing taking multiple choice tests of any kind helps.

Finally, there is YouTube. Although much of it is for entertainment purposes, there are videos by manufacturers about using their tools, equipment and software. There are also videos that depict a "day in the life" of employees in public sector positions.

APPLICATION PROCESS:

To pass the application screening process you must submit a quality application.

- Be thorough. Do not leave spaces blank or questions unanswered. Don't write, "See Resume".
- Do not assume that the screening or human resource staff will know information about you. Always explain in detail, even if you are a current employee or a substitute employee.
- If relevant, include any non-paid volunteer experience, all training, education and paid work experience.
- Promptly submit any name, address, and telephone number changes that may occur during the hiring process. Indicate the exact title of the job for which you have an application on file.
- Make sure you carefully proof all information including spelling, and check for all required signatures. Make sure you correct any errors.
- Make sure you are aware of application deadlines.
- If there is a supplemental application complete it thoroughly and honestly.

TEST PREPARATION:

- Before the test: If you have not been to the test center before, check the directions and visit the location before the day of the test.
- Get a good night's sleep. Eat a high energy breakfast and plan to get to the test site at least 15 minutes early.
- Bring a picture ID.
- If required bring along your invitation to take the test.
- Bring along a watch and monitor your own time to stay on pace.
- Wear layered clothing so you can adjust to the temperature in the room.

TEN TIPS TO IMPROVE MULTIPLE-CHOICE TEST PERFORMANCE

1. Read directions carefully and follow them.
2. Budget your time wisely.
3. Read each question and choice completely.
4. Look for key words.
5. When in doubt, GUESS, don’t leave questions blank.
6. Eliminate obvious wrong answers.
7. Check other questions for clues.
8. Answer easy questions first.
9. Don’t read too much into a question.
10. Mark your answer sheet properly.

LANGUAGE ARTS

Proofreading/Spelling

These questions test spelling skills in a proofreading format. You are presented with a passage. Each line of the passage is considered one test question. You are to read the passage and indicate how many spelling errors are contained in each line. In some cases, a spelling error will consist of the use of the wrong form of a word that has several correct spellings. The different correct spellings of such words have different meanings, for example "no" and "know". Be sure to look for these kinds of errors.

SAMPLE:

Directions: This section consists of a passage of written material. The lines are numbered in the left margin. You are to read the passage and indicate how many spelling errors are contained in each line by using the following key:

a = The line contains no spelling errors.
b = There is one (1) spelling error in the line.
c = There are two (2) spelling errors in the line.
d = There are three (3) or more spelling errors in the line.

1. The main reason for training is to inprove the work being done by
2. employees in there present jobs and to meet the system and program goals of the
3. agency. It is the responsability of managers to suport and encourage teh use of
4. skills learned in training classes. Training will be done during normal work
5. hours and will be paied for by the employer.

Key:

1. The correct answer is **b**. There is one spelling error. The word "improve" is misspelled as "inprove".

2. The correct answer is **b**. The word "there" is not spelled correctly for the use of the word in this sentence. In this case, we need the plural, possessive pronoun "their", so one spelling error is found in this line.

3. The correct answer is **d**. There are three misspelled words in this line: "responsibility", "support" and "the".

4. The correct answer is **a**. The line contains no spelling errors.

5. The correct answer is **b**. This line contains one spelling error. The word "paied" is misspelled and should be "paid".

Reading Comprehension:

To answer these types of questions you must indicate the most appropriate statement relating to the selection on the basis of whether it: 1) accurately paraphrases portions of the selection; 2) adequately summarizes the selection; or 3) presents an inference that can reasonably be drawn from the selection.

SAMPLE:

Directions: For the following item, read the paragraph and select the choice which best reflects the content of the passage.

"The major causes of injuries are slips and falls. Tools, parts, and other objects should not be left lying around. Grease droppings, oils, sludge, and especially polymers should be cleaned up as soon as possible. Warning signs, railings and covers can protect against low piping, open tanks and open manholes or hatches. The simple knowledge of proper lifting techniques, such as bending the knees and lifting using the legs, can save many strained or injured backs."

According to the above paragraph, which one of the following is the primary cause of injury?

a. improper lifting techniques
b. grease or polymer burns
c. slips and falls
d. low piping

Solution: To answer this question, evaluate all the choices.

Answer **a** lists improper lifting technique as the primary cause of injury. The paragraph states only that the simple knowledge of lifting techniques, bending the knees and lifting using the legs, can save many strained or injured backs. Therefore, this choice is incorrect.

Answer **b** lists grease or polymer burns as the primary cause of injury. The paragraph states only that grease droppings, oils, sludge and especially polymers should be cleaned up as soon as possible. Therefore, this choice is incorrect.

Answer **c** lists slips and falls as the primary cause of injury. The paragraph states: "The major causes of injuries are slips and falls." This choice is correct.

Answer **d** lists low piping as the primary cause of injury. The paragraph states only that warning signs, railings, and covers can protect against low piping, open tanks and open manholes or hatches. Therefore, this choice is incorrect.

Key Words

In certain multiple-choice questions there will be key words that need to be considered when selecting answers. Examples of key words are best, worst, first, only, and never.

SAMPLE:

A child has fallen and is bleeding. The first thing you should do is to

a. call a doctor
b. apply a bandage to the wound
c. wash the wound
d. apply direct pressure to the wound

The key word is "first." Although the other steps may be taken, the **first** step is to control the bleeding by applying direct pressure. Answer **d** is therefore correct.

English Grammar

These types of questions measure your knowledge of grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure.

SAMPLE:

Directions: Choose the sentence that represents the best English usage.

a. Of the two runners, Bob is the worst.
b. Of the two runners, Bob is the better.
c. Bob is the worst of the two runners
d. Bob is the best of the two runners.

Answer **a** is incorrect. The correct way to write the sentence is: Of the two runners, Bob is worse.

Answer **b** is correct.

Answer **c** is incorrect. The correct way to write the sentence is: Bob is the worse of the two runners.

Answer **d** is incorrect. The correct way to write the sentence is: Bob is the better of the two runners.

LEARN BASIC WORD MEANINGS

Prefix	Meaning	Suffix	Meaning
pre-	before	-ette	small
post-	after	-ess	female
un-	not, opposite	-ize	make
in-	not	-ist	a person who
sub-	under	-ian	one who
inter-	between	-ish	having the quality of
mis-	not or bad	-less	without
dis-	not, opposite	-ous	having
trans-	across	-able	is, can be
anti-	against	-ness	having
pro-	in favor of	-or	one who
sub-	under	-ion	act of
super-	above	-en	made of

A **prefix** is added to the beginning of a word to give the word a new meaning.

A **suffix** is added to the end of a word to give the word a new meaning.

Synonyms are words that are the same in meaning.

Antonyms are words that are opposite in meaning.

Verbs are words that show action.

Adverbs are words that modify verbs.

Nouns are words that name a person, place, thing or idea.

Pronouns are words that take the place of one or more nouns.

Adjectives are words that modify or describe a noun or pronoun. It answers the questions: what, which one, how much, and how many?

Conjunctions are words that join together words, phrases, clauses, or sentences.

Prepositions are words that show a relationship between a noun or pronoun and another word in the sentence such as, from, to, between, through, etc.

MATH

Key words that indicate certain mathematical operations:

Addition: increased by; more than; combined together; total of; sum; added to.
The symbol + means add.

Subtraction: decreased by; minus; less; difference between/of; less than; fewer than.
The symbol - means subtract.

Multiplication: of; times; multiplied by; product of (For example 4 + 4 + 4 equals 4 x 3). The symbols x and • both mean multiply.

Division: per; a; out of; ratio of; quotient of; percent (divide by 100).
The symbol ÷ means divide.

Equal: is; are; was; will be; gives; yields; sold for
The symbol = means equal.

Per: divided by

Percent: divide by 100
The symbol % means percent.

Examples of Words Converted to Equations:

What is the sum of 8 and y?	8 + y
4 less than y	y - 4
y multiplied by 13	13y
The quotient of y and 3	y/3
The difference of 5 and y	5-y
The ratio of 9 more than y to y	(y + 9)/y
Nine less than the total of a number (y) and two	(y + 2) - 9 or y - 7

FRACTIONS:

Numerator: top number
Denominator: bottom number

Adding or Subtracting Fractions:

Adding or subtracting fractions with the same denominator is straightforward.

Problem: $\frac{5}{13} + \frac{6}{13} = \frac{11}{13}$

The denominator remains unchanged, and you add or subtract the numerators.
If you do not have a common denominator (see simplifying fractions), make one by multiplying the first denominator and the second denominator together.

Problem: $\frac{3}{5} + \frac{2}{7}$

Find the common denominator: **5 x 7 = 35**

Then multiply the numerator by the same number as the denominator was multiplied by to get the new numerators.

3 x 7 = 21 **2 x 5 = 10**

Now insert the new numbers into the numerator and use the common denominator to add the fractions.

$\frac{21}{35} + \frac{10}{35} = \frac{31}{35}$

Multiplying Fractions:

Multiply the numerator times the numerator and the denominator by the denominator.

Problem: $\frac{1}{4} \times \frac{3}{5} = \frac{3}{20}$

Simplify (see simplifying fractions) the fraction before and after you multiply.

Problem: $\frac{12}{15} \times \frac{5}{6}$ = Simplify $\frac{12}{15}$ by dividing both numbers by 3.

$\frac{4\ (12 \div 3)}{5\ (15 \div 3)} \times \frac{5}{6} = \frac{20\ \text{(simplify by dividing by 10)}}{30\ \text{(simplify by dividing by 10)}} = \frac{2}{3}$

Dividing Fractions:

Since division is the opposite of multiplication, first invert (flip over) one fraction and multiply.

Problem: $\frac{\mathbf{1}}{\mathbf{5}} \div \frac{\mathbf{2}}{\mathbf{3}} = \frac{1}{5} \times \frac{3}{2} = \frac{3}{10}$

Simplifying Fractions:

Try dividing both the numerator and the denominator by each prime number

- Use the rules of divisibility.
- Start with 2: Even numbers (ones that end with 2, 4, 6, 8, or 0) can be divided by two without a remainder.
- Then go to 3: Find the sum of the digits (add the digits together). If the sum can be divided by three then the number is divisible by 3.
- Next try 5: Numbers that end with 5 or 0 are divisible by five.
- Go on to 7, 11, 13, 17, and so on: Unfortunately, there is no easy way to determine whether the number will be divisible by these--you just have to try dividing by each. But you can stop trying when the number is less than the divisor.

Problem: Simplify the fraction: $\frac{\mathbf{26}}{\mathbf{65}}$

Twenty-six can be divided by two (because it's even), but 65 can't. Sixty-five can be divided by five, but 26 can't, the digits do not add up to three so we must try 7, 11, and finally 13 works.

2 x 13 = 26
5 x 13 = 65

So, the answer would be: $\frac{\mathbf{2}}{\mathbf{5}}$

Writing a decimal as a fraction:

$.5 = \frac{5}{10}$ $.05 = \frac{5}{100}$ $.005 = \frac{5}{1{,}000}$

PRE-ALGEBRA AND ALGEBRA

Special Notation for Multiplication and Division with Variables:

- 2b means 2 x b
- bc means b x c
- 4bc means 4 x b x c
- d/5 means d ÷ 5

Name the like terms in 7s + 9y + y. Answer: 9y, y.

Explain why 7a + 8z - 9x is in simplest form. Answer: It has no like terms and no parentheses.

Explain why 6 + 2(x - 4) is not in simplest form. Answer: It has parentheses.

Order of Operations:

1. **Parenthesis and Brackets** from the inside out.
2. **Exponents** of numbers or parenthesis.
3. **Multiplication and Division** in the order they appear.
4. **Addition and Subtraction** in the order they appear.

Sample

Use the Order of Operations to Simplify the following Expression:

$2 + (3 - 1) \bullet 3^2$

The first step in the Order of Operations is to simplify parenthesis and brackets from the inside out. You must remember to use the Order of Operations when simplifying the inside of the parenthesis, but you don't need to do that in this problem because there is only one operation inside the parenthesis: 3 - 1. In this case all that has to be done is subtract 1 from 3. The answer is shown below.

$2 + (2) \bullet 3^2$

The next step in the Order of Operations is to simplify exponents. 3^2 becomes 9. The result is shown below.

$2 + (2) \bullet 9$

The next step in the Order of Operations is to simplify multiplication and division in the order that they appear. Since there is no division, multiply (2) and 9:

2 + 18

The final step is to simplify addition and subtraction (combine like terms).

20

Simplify the following expressions:

a. **5x + 7x**

x is a factor of both 5x and 7x

5x + 7x = (5 + 7)x = **12x**

b. **14a + 7 + 21a** = 14a + 21a + 7

= (14 + 21)a + 7

= **35a + 7**

c. **-3y + 12y + (-14y)**

= -3y + (-14y) = -17y

= -17y + 12y

= **- 5y**

d. **r + 3(s + 7r)**

= r + 3s + 3 x 7r

= r + 3s + 21r

= r + 21r + 3s

= 1r + 21r + 3s

= (1 + 21)r + 3s

= **22r + 3s**

e. **8 + (-7)** =

8 - 7 = **1**

More Algebra Facts:

Adding a negative number is the same as subtracting that number.
The answer is positive because the integer with the greatest value, 8, is positive.

f. If 14 = j - (-20), what is the value of j?

14 + -20 = **- 6**

g. How is the product 3 x 3 x 3 expressed in exponential notation?

3^3

h. What is the value of $3t^5$ if t = 2?

Replace t with 2.

= $3(2^5)$

= $3(2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2)$

= $3(32)$

= **96**

i. 2(a + 5) means twice the sum of a number (a) and five

j. **$(-4a^5b)(8a^2)$ =**

Multiply like terms.

$-4 \times 8 = -32$

$a^5 \times a^2 = a^7$

$b = b$

= **$-32a^7b$**

k. $\frac{10}{y} = \frac{7}{y+3}$

Cross multiply.

$10(y + 3) = 7y$

Solve for y.

$10y + 30 = 7y$

$30 = 7y - 10y$

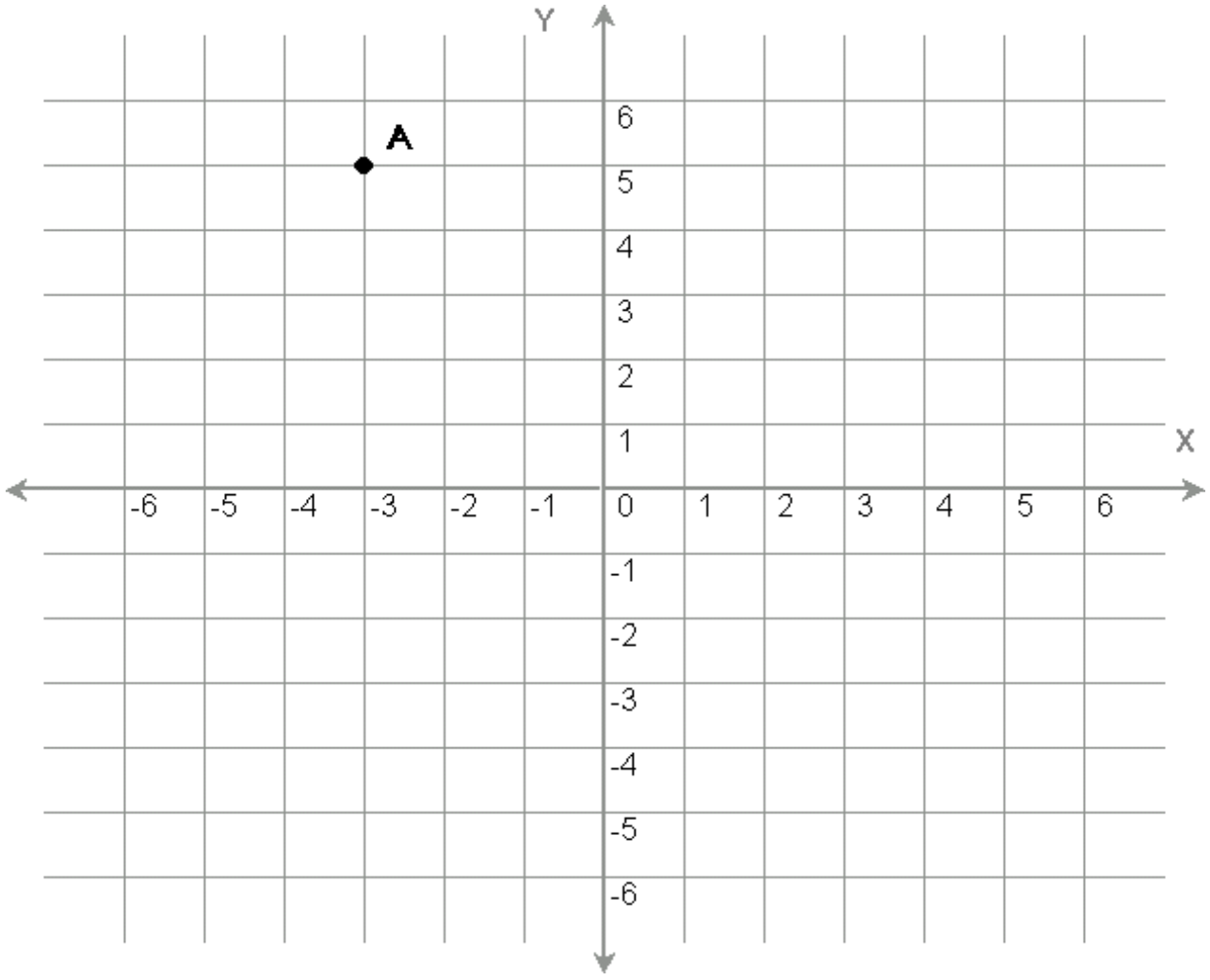
$30 = -3y$

$-10 = y$

THE COORDINATE SYSTEM

The location of any point on a grid can be indicated by an **ordered pair** of numbers (x,y) where x represents the number of horizontal units from 0 and y represents the number of vertical units from 0. The numbers in an ordered pair are called **coordinates**. The location on the x axis is always listed before the location on the y axis.

For example, if the x-coordinate is -3 and the y-coordinate is 5, the ordered pair for the point would be (-3,5).



GEOMETRY:

The angles of any four sided figure add up to 360°
Two lines are perpendicular when they meet at a 90° angle
Bisect means to cut in half

Squares:

All 4 sides are equal
All 4 angles are equal to 90°
Area = s^2 (s = measurement of one side)
Perimeter = 4s

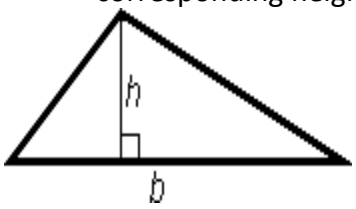
Rectangle:

Opposite sides are equal
All 4 angles are equal to 90°
Area = length times width
Perimeter = 2 times length plus 2 times width

Triangles:

Angles add up to 180°
Perimeter = the sum of the sides
On right triangles two sides intersect to form a 90° angle

The area (*A*) of any triangle is equal to one-half the product of any base (*b)* and corresponding height (*h)*. A = ½ bh



The Pythagorean Theorem is: $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$.

In the right triangle below, side a = 3, side b = 4 and the hypotenuse, side c, has a length of 5, and we see that $3^2 + 4^2 = 5^2$ according to the Pythagorean Theorem.

For example $3^2 + b^2 = 5^2$
To determine the length of side b:

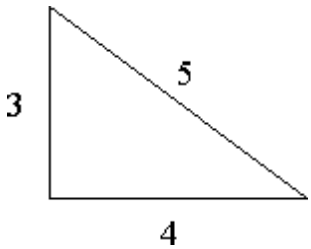
$5^2 - 3^2 = b^2$

$25 - 9 = b^2$

$16 = b^2$

$4^2 = b^2$

4 = b



Circles:

There are 360^{o} in a circle

Pi = 3.14 (B) **Area** = Br^2

Radius = distance from the center to any point on the edge of the circle (*r*)

Diameter = straight line distance from one point on the circle to another, passing through the center point (*d*)

Circumference = distance around the outside of the circle = 2B*r*

PERFORMANCE EXAMS

Performance tests are typically rated on the following factors:

Custodial/grounds/maintenance/trades:

Quality Standards

- Accuracy of the process
- Error rate during the process
- Choice of tools and equipment
- Efficiency of steps taken
- Products conformance to specifications
- Products general appearance
- Products suitability for use

Quantity

- Time to complete
- Quantity of output

Cost

- Amount of material used
- Number of rejects

Safety

- Safe procedures
- Safe use of tools and equipment

Software/computer-based tests:

Quality Standards

- Accuracy of the process
- Error rate during the process
- Products/program/output conformance to instructions

Quantity

- Time to complete
- Quantity of output

INTERVIEW TIPS

Before the Interview

- Know exactly where the interview will be conducted.
- Know the full name(s), if possible, and correct pronunciation, of those who may be involved in the interview process.
- Double check the scheduled interview appointment time.
- Obtain information about the position and the department before the interview.
- Research the knowledge, skills, abilities and competencies required for the position.
- Review your own strengths and see how they match the minimum requirements for the position.
- Research the organization and the tasks associated with the job: Ask questions and use the internet.
- Prepare some questions to ask the interview panel if you are unclear on the requirements of the position.

Day of the Interview

- Shower, smell nice but do not use heavy perfumes or after shave.
- Dress in professional business attire or business casual depending on the job.
- Arrive for the interview 10-15 minutes ahead of time.

During the Interview (Personal Characteristics)

- Greet the interviewers with a firm handshake, a smile, and look into their eyes.
- Project a positive attitude and enthusiasm.
- Wait until invited to take a seat.
- Do not be in a hurry; take time to think before you speak.
- Sit comfortably, but not so relaxed you look like you don't care.
- Respond concisely, truthfully, and in a friendly manner.
- Try to relax and use deep breathing techniques if necessary.
- Look at the interviewer and smile when speaking.

During the Interview (Objectives)

- Display a genuine interest in the position.
- Always have something positive to say about former places of employment.
- Provide examples when responding to questions.
- Demonstrate good listening skills by rephrasing questions.
- Explain your answers, if necessary, and speak in complete sentences.
- Try to convey your skills and experiences in relation to the requirements of the position.
- Ask for question clarification, if needed.
- Show how your education, experience, and accomplishments have prepared you for the position.
- Tell the interviewers how hiring you will help the organization/department.

Conclusion of the Interview

- Ask if there is any other information they need.
- Thank the interviewer(s) for spending time with you.
- Tell them that you are genuinely interested in the position.
- Be positive, and assume you are a viable candidate for the position.

INTERVIEW QUESTION EXAMPLES YOU SHOULD REHEARSE

- What qualifications do you have that relate to the position?

- Give us an example from your past jobs where you have used skills/knowledge that relate to this position.

- How would you handle a situation such as (think about what may happen on the job)?
  How have you handled a difficult situation in previous jobs with supervisors, coworkers, the public, students/children, etc.?
  - Understand what actions are allowed when working with students/children.

- Why do you want to work for the public service?

- What would you do if a customer did_____(think of job-related situations)
  - Remember the customer is always treated with respect.

- What would you do if your boss was gone and _____?
  - Understand the chain of command in the job you are applying for and the limits of the position to take action or make decisions.

- How would you complete this_____task? (think of job-related situations)
  - Safe procedures are always required and looked for in responses.