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Test Preparation Strategies

What to expect and how to prepare for the
Classified selection process at LAUSD

This is not "Magic 101"...

- There are no magic tricks on how to succeed
- LAUSD employment tests are always job related
- If you have the job skills, you are likely to be successful on the employment test
- If you prepare, you will do even better!



This is Test Preparation Strategy!

You can score significantly higher if you have prepared yourself adequately by knowing...

- What to look for...
- What questions to research...
- What material to prepare...
- Where to look for answers...



Let's go through the process...

- Where to find the job?
- What to look for in the bulletin?
- What is competency based testing?
- What test parts are commonly used at LAUSD?
- What are the characteristics of the different test parts?
- How can you prepare yourself for different test parts?



Before anything else...




- Make sure your email works
- Be comfortable using email. **ALL** correspondence is done via email
- Check our website daily. **ALL** our jobs are listed on the website
- Upcoming & Current examinations
- Pay attention to special messages related to the job (e.g., recruitment dates)
- You can register for jobs you are interested in (emails will be sent out when exam opens)





READ the Job Bulletin

- The LAUSD job bulletin is an excellent way to gain valuable insight into the examination you will be taking.
- This is your only insight into the test process.
- It is your guide to success – use it!



Pay special attention to:

- **Minimum qualifications**
 - Do you meet them?
 - How?
- **Competencies**
 - Do you have them?
 - How can you show that you have them?
- **Test process**
 - What test parts are included?
 - Are you prepared for this type of test?
- **Test dates**
 - Mark your calendar and clear your schedule!



Competency based testing...

- **What is a competency?**
 - A competency is a cluster of work behaviors that share a common theme (e.g., oral communication, leadership, teamwork, listening, negotiating, handling stress etc.)
- **What is a competency based exam?**
 - A test that is designed to assess core competencies needed for the job

HINT: Core competencies are listed in the bulletin!!

How is a competency measured?

- Written tests
- Computer tests
- Interviews
- Technical projects/
Work samples
- Performance tests
- Training & Experience
Evaluations (T&E)
- Reference checks
- Background checks



Written Tests

- Usually first part of the process
- Computerized
- Multiple choice (50-150 questions is common)
- Measures specific knowledge needed for a specific professional field (e.g., tools, materials, applicable laws, common methods, safety regulations)

Sample Test Item

General Accounting Principles

Which of the following is a balance sheet item?

- A) Accounts payable
- B) Cost of goods sold
- C) Gross profit
- D) Sales

(Correct answer is A)

Preparing for a written test

- Refer to the job bulletin for job requirements, knowledge, skill, competencies needed.
- You are likely to be tested on these areas. **Study!!!**
 - Books (practices, laws, rules, technology...)
 - Trade journals (current trends, latest methods...)
 - Internet (LinkedIn, professional organizations...)
 - Other professionals (ask professionals in the field for information about the job, common challenges, solutions to typical problems, recommended work methods etc.)
- Gathering knowledge and storing facts in your memory is the best preparation for a written tests!

On the day of the test....

- ✓ Arrive early
- ✓ Read the instructions in the invitation letter carefully
- ✓ Watch for details that will tell you exactly how to proceed

- ✓ You must show a valid ID
AND
- ✓ Your Social Security Card OR District ID



At the beginning of the test...

- Plan how you will use your time during the test
- Estimate how many minutes you have for each question so that you can finish within the time allotted
- Bring your own watch (clock on cell phone or other electronic device is not permitted)



While taking the test...

- Answer every question
- If you absolutely do not know the question, make a strategic guess and move on.
- Do not linger over difficult problems – you will lose time
- When you begin a new section, focus on that section


- Use scrap paper or write on the booklet (if allowed)
- Do not hesitate if you need to draw out a problem, create lists, or use symbols
- Writing or drawing can help you focus your mind and answer the question correctly

At the end of the test...

- Use remainder time effectively
- ✓ all questions are answered
- Review difficult questions
- Cover your answers, work the problem again, and compare with your first response
- Change answers **ONLY** if you are certain

NOTE!!
The answer that comes to mind first is often the correct one...

Training & Experience Evaluation (T&E)




- A T&E is a scored evaluation of application material submitted by the candidate
- Examples: *resume, application, work samples, cover letter, transcripts, responses to job-related questions, letters of recommendations...*

T&E


- It is a test part. However, you do not have to be present.
- It is usually the first test part and it can sometimes be the **ONLY** test part.
- It is not a determination of whether or not you meet the minimum qualifications.
- It is often based on responses to technical questions (READ bulletin).
- **A T&E can be very competitive. Preparing for the T&E is critical for success!**

Application material will be evaluated & scored based on:



- ☑ Recency
- ☑ Level
- ☑ Complexity
- ☑ Scope
- ☑ Quality/quantity
- ☑ Depth/breadth

How is a T&E scored?




- Two qualified raters with no prior knowledge of the candidate will assess the application material

OR

- You score yourself by filling out an online questionnaire

Raters are NOT expected to...



- Read between the lines
- Make sense of disorganized, unfocused, or rambling information
- Know or research the curriculum and course content of your degrees, certificates etc.

Raters are NOT expected to...



- Compensate for a rushed or carelessly prepared application packet
- Adjust for candidates' deviations from the required or expected structure of information
- Interpret illegible, ambiguous, or incompletely stated information

IMPORTANT!



- Only information that you have submitted will be evaluated
- Everything is submitted "as-is"
- You will not be able to change/add your information once submitted

Bottom Line!

It is up to you to communicate your qualifications by following instructions and submitting thorough information in a clear and organized way



With that in mind...

- Provide the **information** that is being **requested**
- Be **specific, clear, and accurate** on the recency, level, complexity, scope, and depth/breadth of your education and experience
- **Organize** your information so that it is easy to read and understand

Before you submit...

- Double check everything
 - Is it clear, organized, neat, complete...?
- Put yourself in the raters' position. What does your application say about you?
- Ask a colleague for feedback before you submit it.

Performance Tests



- A real work situation is replicated to test a candidate's skill in performing critical and frequently performed job duties.

Most common performance test...



Job Task

- Candidates are given instructions to perform a specific task that highly resembles “real work”
- While they are working, they may be asked to explain what they are doing and why
- Safety is very important!

Another type of performance test...

In-basket

- Candidate is asked to sort through a manager’s inbox (emails, memos, descriptions, scenarios etc.)
- Candidate is asked to prioritize and respond to the content of the in-basket
- Two raters evaluate the result



Preparing for a performance test

- This is an applied test where previous hands-on and “how-to” skills are invaluable
- There are no short cuts, no books to study, no manuals to read...
- If you have extensive experience performing the duties of the job, you are likely to be successful on the test!

The Job Interview



“It takes a well thought out strategy, proper mental preparation, and insight into the prospective employer to pull off a winning interview”

The typical LAUSD interview is...

- Usually the last test part
- Tape/video recorded
- Two rater panel
- 15-45 minutes long
- Structured and consistent in content (everyone is asked the same set of questions)
- ALWAYS job-related (no surprise questions)
- Evaluated against structured and consistent rating standards

Different types of interviews...



- General fitness
- Technical Interview
- Presentation
- Role-playing

Different types of questions...

- **General fitness**

- Asks about general preparation for a job
- "Tell us how your background has prepared you for this job?"

- **Behavioral**

- Ask about previous behavior that is similar to behaviors necessary to perform the job.
- Assumption: previous behavior is a predictor of future performance.
- "As a Job Supervisor, you will have to manage your own time, priorities, and resources to complete your assignments in an effective and efficient manner. Please give us a specific example from your current (or previous) job that demonstrates your ability to manage your own time and work load effectively."

Different types of questions...

- **Situational**

- Asks about hypothetical situations and your suggested actions.
- "Assume you are the project manager at a construction site. All of a sudden, the contractor starts arguing loudly with the inspector and you fear that it might become physical. What will you do?"

- **Technical**

- Asks about specific technical answers to specific technical questions.
- Common in Technical Interview
- "Discuss the legal and practical significance of the pesticide label in structural pest management."

A Three-Step Process to Answering Questions

1: Understand what is really being asked.

2: Answer the question effectively, yet briefly.

3: Answer the real question by presenting your related skills and back it up using

EXAMPLES FROM YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE!

Situation Task Action Results



- Give a brief overview of the **Situation**. Provide concise background information if necessary
- Describe the **Task** at hand
- Give a detailed account of what you did using **Action** words
- Give a short summary of the **Result** of your action. End on a positive note (even if the result was negative).

Are YOU prepared?



- Keep an on-going journal of your accomplishments
- Review them before each interview so that they are fresh in your mind
- Minimize "I wish I had thought of that-moments" after the interview is over and done

DO

- Answer the question
- Prepare by having a well rehearsed mental outline
- Ask to have the question repeated if you don't understand
- Site specific examples from your work experience whenever possible
- Use "I" statements

DON'T!!

- Ramble/go off on a tangent
- Repeat something you already talked about if you don't have a good answer
- Volunteer unrelated information (e.g., marital status, religion, country of origin etc.)
- Use "we" or "my team" statement


DO	DON'T!!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know your audience! (research the department, “who is who”) • Provide clear and concise answers. It is better to “spell it out” than to “leave it out” • Be tactful and professional 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make assumptions about what interviewers know or don't know • Use jargon when answering a questions unless it is commonly used in the field and you are CERTAIN the interviewers are familiar with it • Do not be rude or pushy

DO	DON'T!!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be positive ☺! • Make them smile • Convey confidence and show enthusiasm and passion for the job • Show that this is more than a job for you 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whine or complain about a past or current employer • Display a flat demeanor or non-caring attitude

The rule of 12-12-12...

You will be judged by:

- Your appearance 12 feet away
- Your appearance 12 inches away
- Your 12 first words



Never underestimate the impact of your first impression!

Be Professional

Your behavior is viewed as a demonstration of how you will act on the job...

- Dress professionally (you cannot over dress for an interview)
- The importance of the hand shake!
- Maintain eye contact with both raters throughout the interview
- Answer the questions honestly and positively (don't lie, guess, or use derogatory/negative statements)
- Turn off your cell phone
- Provide clean copies of work samples, resume (if applicable)
- Thank the raters when you leave





Good luck as you
prepare for your next test!