

Information on Preparing for Superior Court of California, County of Orange Pre-Employment and Promotional Exams

We often get asked, “What can I do to prepare for an exam?” The answer is, “it depends.” It is important to note that each exam is different and is tailored to the key competencies or knowledge, skills and abilities required for a particular classification.

Some skills are easier to prepare for than others. Technical (“hard”) skills such as typing or data entry can be developed by practicing, while others such as interpersonal (“soft”) skills are not as easily developed as they are sometimes a behavior, characteristic or preference of work style. In addition, some of the soft-skills assessments are based on past experience and/or behavior for which are difficult to prepare.

Preparing for Hard-Skills Exams

These exams will frequently focus on some of the following:

- Filing
- Following Instructions
- Data Entry
- Reviewing Forms
- Speed and Accuracy
- Working with information

In order to prepare for hard skills exams, there are a number of things you can do:

- 1) Know the specific components included on the exam so that you can focus your efforts more specifically – e.g. filing, office/clerical skills, customer service, basic math, data entry/typing speed, etc.
- 2) **ARCO** books are test preparation books available at most libraries and provide information and assistance on practicing for a number of academic, government and state tests. (Example: Mastering the Clerical Exams & Court Officer – Court Clerk Civil Service Exam by ARCO)
- 3) *Google the following search terms:*
 - Practice Employment Testing
 - Pre-employment practice exams
 - Pre-employment tests tips and techniques.

Preparing for Soft-Skills Exams

These exams will frequently focus on the following:

- Achievement Orientation
- Customer Focus
- Dependability
- Conscientiousness
- Multi-Tasking Preferences
- Professional Potential

As stated above, in order to prepare for soft-skill assessments, there is less you can do to practice as many of these items focus on work style preferences and/or behaviors. However, you may want to consider taking a customer service or interpersonal communication class to refresh your knowledge and skills in these areas.

General Exam Preparation Suggestions

Before the Exam

- Eat well and get a good night's sleep before the exam. If you are tired or hungry, your concentration may be affected and so might your exam performance.
- Wear something comfortable since you will be sitting during the exam administration. Testing locations may be slightly hot or slightly cold, so dress for any temperature.
- Make sure you know the exact location and time of the exam. Allow yourself plenty of time to arrive, use the restroom, find your seat, and compose yourself.
- Leave behind cell phones, calculators, and any other electronic devices that might cause distraction.
- Go into the exam with a positive attitude, determined to do your best. Focus on what you know rather than worrying about what you do not know.
- Try not to discuss the exam with other people once you arrive. Generally, this only increases your anxiety.

During the Exam

- Listen carefully to all of the exam proctor's instructions and follow them step-by-step. If you work ahead of the instructions, you may miss important information. Do not read ahead.
- Ask questions if you are unsure about any directions or procedures.
- Keep in mind that some exams have time limits. If this is the case, work as quickly and accurately as you can, but do not become discouraged if you do not complete all the questions provided.
- Carefully read each exam item. Skimming over an item may cause you to miss important information- do not assume that you know what a question is going to ask.
- Pay attention to your own work, not to what is going on around you. If you are wondering how other people are doing, you are wasting valuable time.
- Budget your time during the exam and do not spend too much time on any one question.
- Read all possible answers before making a decision and pick the best of the choices given.
- Consider each question separately. The answer to any one question is not intended to help you answer another question.
- When answering questions, consider what is generally true about the question and not specifically what you do in your department or how you think the organization wants you to answer.
- Try to stay relaxed during the exam.

Strategies for Multiple-Choice Exams

Multiple-choice exam formats present questions with several response alternatives. You are to choose the one alternative that is the correct or best answer to the question. Keep the following tips in mind when you are taking a multiple-choice exam:

- Never choose an alternative based on the frequency or pattern of your previous responses. Do not assume that the correct answers follow any sequence or pattern, or that they are used in equal numbers.
- Be sure to read every alternative. Even if one of the first responses is the alternative you expected to be correct, one of the others may be better or more specifically correct.
- Eliminate alternatives you know are wrong. This will help you to focus on the remaining alternatives. If two or more alternatives seem correct, compare them to determine what makes them different. Evaluate these differences in relation to the question.
- If you are not sure about any of the alternatives, use logical reasoning to rule out as many alternatives as you can. Then, choose between the remaining alternatives.
- If you cannot rule out any alternatives, your first reactions often tend to be correct.
- Try to answer as many questions as you can during the time limit. Do not spend too much time on any one question.

Online Resources

You may take practice exams through the following online resources:

- **SHL Practice Tests:** <http://www.shldirect.com/>
- **LA County Online Test Preparation:** <http://dhrdcap.co.la.ca.us/olt/index.cfm?fuseaction=general.main>