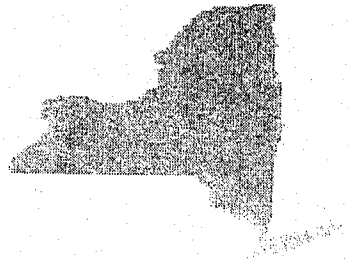

New York State
Department of Civil Service

Committed to Innovation, Quality and Excellence

A Guide to the Written Test

for the

Entry-Level Correction Officer Series

George E. Pataki
Governor

George C. Sinnott
Commissioner

INTRODUCTION

The New York State Department of Civil Service has developed this Guide to familiarize you with the Entry-Level Correction Officer Series written test. It provides a general description of the subject areas to be tested and the different types of questions you will see on the test. The Examination Announcement will specify the exact subject areas to be included on the test you will be taking.

The Entry-Level Correction Officer Series written test has an overall time allowance of 3 hours. The test is divided into four separate subject areas and the questions are designed to evaluate the following abilities:

1. **OBSERVING AND RECALLING FACTS AND INFORMATION:** These questions are designed to test how well the candidates can observe and recall information presented. The candidates will be presented with information describing or depicting prison scenes or other facts. They will have a short time to memorize the information before it is collected by the monitor. They will then be asked to recall specific details.

2. **APPLYING WRITTEN INFORMATION IN A CORRECTIONAL SERVICES SETTING:** These questions are designed to evaluate the candidates' ability to read, interpret and apply rules, regulations, directives, written narratives and other related material. The candidates are required to read a set of information, and to appropriately apply the information to situations similar to those typically experienced in a correctional services setting. All the information needed to answer the questions asked concerning the situations presented is contained in the rules, regulations, etc. which are cited.

3. **PREPARING WRITTEN MATERIAL:** These questions test for the ability to present information clearly and accurately and to organize paragraphs logically and comprehensibly. For some questions, you will be given information in two or three sentences followed by four restatements of the information. You must then choose the best version. For other questions, you will be given paragraphs with their sentences out of order and then asked to choose from four suggestions the best order for the sentences.

4. **UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETING WRITTEN MATERIAL:** These questions test how well you comprehend written material. You will be provided with brief reading selections and will be asked questions about the selections. All the information required to answer the questions will be presented in the selections; you will not be required to have any special knowledge relating to the subject areas of the selections.

These are the only subject areas that will be included on the written test.

The remainder of this guide explains how you are tested in each of these subject areas. A **TEST TASK** is provided for each subject. This is an explanation of how a question is presented and how to correctly answer it. Be sure to read each one carefully.

You will also be given at least one **SAMPLE QUESTION** for each subject area. It will be of the type that you will see on the actual test. The **SOLUTION** and correct answer are provided after each question. You should study the question and its solution until you understand how it works.

SUBJECT AREA 1

OBSERVING AND RECALLING FACTS AND INFORMATION

TEST TASK: You will be given a Memory Test Booklet containing several photographs. During a limited study period you must try to memorize as much as you can about the people, objects and events shown in each of the photographs. You will not be allowed to take notes during this study period. Look closely at the people in the scene: who they are (e.g., correction officer, inmate or instructor), what they are wearing, what they are doing, etc. Note the setting of the scene: what objects are present, how objects are positioned, what people are doing with objects, etc. After the study period, the photographs will be taken away and you will have to answer questions about them.

INMATES IN PRISON YARD

SAMPLE QUESTIONS:

(There are two types of questions you will have to answer for each photograph in the Memory Test Booklet. The first type is a four-option multiple choice question. The second is a two-option, "true or false" question. Below is an example of each.)

nswer the following question using the nformation contained in the photograph abeled "INMATES IN PRISON YARD."

hat was the focus of attention of the group?

A. a weightlifting bench
B. an inmate holding his fist out
C. a barbell on the ground
D. an inmate lifting weights on a bench

Answer is B.

SOLUTION: *To answer this question, you would need to recall from memory what the inmates in the photograph were doing and be able to recognize that they all appeared to be looking at an inmate holding his fist out. The correct answer is "an inmate holding his fist out" (choice B).*

Answer the following question using the information contained in the photograph labeled "INMATES IN PRISON YARD."

One of the inmates in the prison yard was holding a barbell.

A. True
B. False

Answer is B.

SOLUTION: *To answer this question, you would need to recall from memory that none of the inmates in the photograph were holding a barbell. The correct answer is "False" (choice B).*

SUBJECT AREA 2

APPLYING WRITTEN INFORMATION IN A CORRECTIONAL SERVICES SETTING

TEST TASK: You will be given a set of rules, regulations or other written information which you must read. Next, you will be provided with a situation that is similar to those typically experienced in a correctional services setting. Finally, you must answer the question based upon your application of the rule to the situation.

SAMPLE QUESTION:

RULE: Personal Grooming Standards - Employees shall be well groomed, appropriately dressed and present a neat, clean appearance while on duty. Moderate amounts of cologne or perfume may be used.

I. **Hair** - The hair must be kept clean and within Department Standards. Uniformed staff may not wear hair styles that feature spikes, shaved patterns, lines, tails, symbols or names cut into the hair. Unnatural color dyes, or any other styles which distract from their professional appearance should be avoided.

   Males - The hair shall be neatly groomed so as not to fall over the ears or eyebrows or extend more than 1/2" below the top of the uniform collar.

   Females - While in uniform, the hair shall be neatly groomed and arranged/styled so that it does not extend more than 1/2" below the top of the uniform collar. Pins, combs, or barrettes similar to the color of the hair are permitted, provided they are tasteful, not ostentatious, and concealed as much as possible. Hair ornaments or ribbons shall not be worn.

II. **Facial Hair** - Recruits reporting to the Academy shall keep existing facial hair trimmed as set forth below. Recruits shall not be permitted to grow new facial hair while at the Academy.

   Beards - Security staff appointed after 1990 are not permitted to wear beards. Security staff appointed prior to 1990 may wear beards provided they are kept trimmed within one inch.

   Sideburns - Shall be neatly trimmed, the base shall be clean shaven on a horizontal line and shall not extend below the lowest part of the exterior ear openings. Muttonchop or flared sideburns are prohibited.

   Mustaches - Must be neatly trimmed and not extend beyond the corners of the mouth or fall below the center line of the lips.

SITUATION: While inspecting the appearance of Correction Officers at pre-shift briefing, a Sergeant observes the following four officers: **Officer A** - a male officer wearing his hair 1/4" over his ears and 1/4" below the top of his uniform collar; **Officer B** - a female officer wearing shoulder length hair arranged in a single braid; **Officer C** – a female officer who is wearing a yellow ribbon in her hair in recognition of her husband who is overseas with the military; **Officer D** - a male officer who did not have a mustache when graduating from the Academy, but who has grown a neatly trimmed mustache since reporting to the facility.

QUESTION: Based upon the preceding rule, which one of the officers is in compliance with the Personal Grooming Standards?

A. Officer A
B. Officer B
C. Officer C
D. Officer D

Answer is D.

SOLUTION: *To answer this question, you must compare the descriptions of the four officers provided in the* ***SITUATION*** *to the relevant sections of the stated* ***RULE****.*

When doing so you would need to recognize that ***Officer A's*** *hair extends ¼" over his ears is in violation of the section of the Rule which states that, for males, hair, "...shall be neatly groomed so as not to fall over the ears... " You would need to recognize that* ***Officer B's*** *shoulder length braid is in violation of the section of the Rule which states that, for females, hair must, "... not extend more than ½" below the top of the uniform collar." In addition, you would need to recognize that* ***Officer C's*** *yellow ribbon is in violation of the section of the Rule that states, "...Hair ornaments or ribbons shall not be worn."*

You would also need to confirm that no portion of the Rule prevents ***Officer D*** *from having a neatly trimmed mustache even though he did not have one when graduating from the Academy.*

The correct answer is "Officer D" (choice D).

SUBJECT AREA 3

PREPARING WRITTEN MATERIAL

TEST TASK: There are two separate test tasks in this subject area. In the first task, **Information Presentation**, you will be presented with information and will be required to identify the best method of clearly and accurately presenting the information. In the second task, **Paragraph Organization**, you will be presented with several statements and must select the presentation order which is most logical and comprehensible.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS:

Information Presentation

Correction Officer Gilson failed to take proper precautions. His failure to take proper precautions caused a personal injury accident.

QUESTION: Which one of the following best presents the information above?

A. Correction Officer Gilson failed to take proper precautions that caused a personal injury accident.

B. Proper precautions, which Correction Officer Gilson failed to take, caused a personal injury accident.

C. Correction Officer Gilson's failure to take proper precautions caused a personal injury accident.

D. Correction Officer Gilson, who failed to take proper precautions, was in a personal injury accident.

Answer is C.

SOLUTION: *Choices A and B both convey the idea that the proper precautions caused the accident. Choice D states that Gilson was in a personal injury accident; the information presented states that Gilson caused a personal injury accident, but we don't know if Gilson was in the accident. Choice C is the only choice that accurately restates the information presented.*

Paragraph Organization

The question below is based upon the following group of scrambled sentences. You are to read the sentences and then indicate which order of presentation would represent their best arrangement.

1. Eventually, they piece all of this information together, and make a choice.
2. Before actually deciding upon a corrections 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 among occupations in the correctional services field is an important decision to make.

QUESTION: 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

Answer is D.

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

SUBJECT AREA 4

UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETING WRITTEN MATERIAL

TEST TASK: You will be provided with brief reading selections and will be asked questions relating to the selections. All of the information required to answer the questions will be provided in the selections; you will not be required to have any special knowledge relating to the content of the areas covered in the selections.

SAMPLE QUESTION:

"Transporting Inmates

Correction officers who are transporting inmates are responsible for the safety and security of such inmates from the time they leave the jail until the inmates are delivered to their destination or until the inmates are returned to the jail. The officers should not make any stops during the trip unless it is absolutely necessary. If stopping is absolutely necessary, the officers must take all possible precautions to maintain their own safety and the safety and security of the inmates. If an unavoidable delay is experienced (for example heavy traffic, car trouble, or bad weather) the officers must take the first opportunity to notify the jail of the delay. If a situation occurs which is not covered by specific instructions, the officers must contact their jail's watch commander if it is possible. If it is not possible to contact the watch commander, the officers must exercise their best judgement to fulfill their responsibility to maintain the safety and security of the inmates."

Which one of the following statements concerning the transportation of inmates is best supported by the passage above?

A. If it appears that the trip might be delayed, the officers transporting the inmates should notify the jail immediately.

B. If it is necessary to make a stop, the inmates should be secured with leg-irons and handcuffs.

C. The officers transporting the inmates are responsible for maintaining the safety and security of the inmates at all times during the trip.

D. If the vehicle transporting the officers and the inmates becomes involved in a traffic accident, the first thing the officers should do is notify their watch commander.

The answer is C.

SOLUTION: *To answer this question, evaluate all the choices.*

Choice A: The passage states that the jail should be notified if a delay is experienced, but it does not state that the jail should be notified if a delay might occur. In a situation where it appears that a delay might occur but it does not ever take place, it would not be necessary to notify the jail since a delay was not experienced. This choice is incorrect.

Choice B: The passage states that if stopping is absolutely necessary, the officers must take all possible precautions to maintain their own safety and the safety and security of the inmates. It does not state that inmates must be secured with leg-irons and handcuffs. The appropriate method will vary depending on the nature of the inmates, the purpose of the trip, and the circumstances of the stop. This choice is incorrect.

Choice C: This choice is another way of stating the information provided in the first sentence: "Correction officers who are transporting inmates are responsible for the safety and security of such inmates from the time they leave the jail until the inmates are delivered to their destination or until the inmates are returned to the jail." The first sentence describes the responsibility of the officers as "the safety and security of the inmates" and the duration of the responsibility as the complete trip – "from the time they leave the jail until the inmates are delivered to their destination or until the inmates are returned to the jail." This choice is the only correct choice.

Choice D: There is nothing in the passage that states that the first thing the officers should do is notify the watch commander if the vehicle they are using to transport the inmates becomes involved in a traffic accident. According to the passage, the officers must report delays to the jail at "first opportunity." It does not specify the watch commander. Moreover, the appropriate first response might vary: someone might need immediate first aid, an inmate might need to be secured, or the roadway might need to be cleared to avoid more accidents. This choice is incorrect.

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 need to 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. There are also practical things you should do.

Before the test ...

- Study and review this Guide to become familiar with the test contents.
- Study and review the subject areas that will be covered on the test.

On the day of the test ...

- Arrive at the test site on time.
- Come to the test prepared; bring your admission notice, two No. 2 pencils, your photo ID containing your signature, a quiet lunch or snack and any other necessary materials. Do **NOT** bring this test guide to the test site.

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 and do **NOT** paraphrase, reconstruct or reproduce the test material in any way.
- Do **NOT** discuss the test material with others.

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New York State
Department of Civil Service
The State Campus
Albany, NY 12239

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