

READING COMPREHENSION  
**STUDY GUIDE**  
& SAMPLE TEST QUESTIONS

VERSION 1



COUNTY OF  
LOS ANGELES



Los Angeles  
County  
**Human Resources**  
YOUR CAREER STARTS HERE.



## **WELCOME**

Thank you for your interest in employment with the County of Los Angeles. This booklet is designed to familiarize and assist you with preparing for tests containing multiple-choice reading comprehension items. The sample questions provided in this study guide are intended to give you an idea of the kinds of reading comprehension items you may encounter in County tests. However, it is important to note that actual test questions will vary in format, content, and level of difficulty, depending on the job class being tested.

## **ABOUT THE COUNTY'S EXAMINATIONS**

As an Equal Opportunity Employer, the County of Los Angeles takes steps to ensure that our exam content is job-related. We conduct studies to determine the knowledge, skills, abilities and personal characteristics that are essential to satisfactorily perform the duties of the job. These studies assist us in developing the content of our examinations. Testing applicants for jobs provides us with an objective and cost-effective means to assess the qualifications of our applicants.

## **HOW SHOULD I PREPARE FOR THE WRITTEN TEST?**

To prepare for the written test, you should study the concepts assessed in each section. It is likely that there will be several sections to the written test in addition to reading comprehension; thus, it is to your benefit to carefully read the job bulletin to determine the knowledge, skill, and ability areas the written test will cover. In addition, it is important that you read the entire written test notice for the location and time of the written test as well as for parking instructions and other important information. Pay special attention to whether testing aids/materials such as hand-held calculators are allowed in the written test. If the test notice indicates that testing aids/materials are allowed, then you are strongly advised to bring these with you, as they will not be provided. On test day, it is recommended that you arrive 15 minutes prior to the test's starting time, wear comfortable clothes, bring an accurate watch, and make sure you are well-rested. Also, remember to bring your test notice and a picture I.D. such as a driver license, or you may not be admitted into the test!

NOTE: Applicants who require special testing arrangements such as readers or interpreters must provide seven (7) days advance notice of their disability and requested accommodation. Check the front side of the job bulletin for telephone numbers to call to make disability accommodation requests. The County will attempt to meet reasonable accommodation requests whenever possible.

## **TEST-TAKING TIPS**

Most County tests have a set time limit, so it is important that you work quickly, but not so fast as to become careless. Always read all the possible choices before marking your answer. If you don't know the answer to a problem, it is usually best to skip it and move on to the others. Note that on most County tests, your score is based on the number of correct responses. If you are not sure of the answer to a problem, eliminate the answers you believe are wrong and mark the choice that is your best response. Above all, budget your time, pace yourself, and avoid getting bogged down on any single question.

## **SAMPLE READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS**

Reading comprehension questions test your ability to read and interpret written material; however, actual questions will vary from one test to another. For instance, the test may require that you read an example of a letter similar to one you may encounter in the position for which you are testing and answer a series of questions based on the letter. The following are examples of the types of passage interpretation reading comprehension questions most common to County employment tests. Answers and explanations for the questions are provided on pages 11-12 of this study guide. NOTE: Actual test questions will vary in format, content, and level of difficulty.

**INSTRUCTIONS:** For each question, read the information provided and answer the question that follows.

1. The Los Angeles County Department of Animal Care and Control (ACC) is one of the largest and most progressive animal control agencies in the United States. The ACC operates six animal shelters serving all unincorporated County areas and 50 contract cities. The ACC covers more than 3,200 square miles of cities, deserts, beaches, and mountains; from the Antelope Valley in the north to the Palos Verdes Peninsula in the south; as far east as the border of San Bernardino County and west all the way to Thousand Oaks. The ACC provides animal control and rescue services 24 hours a day, seven days a week in our service area.

According to the passage,

- A. the ACC handles only domestic animals.
  - B. the ACC provides control and rescue services for some cities.
  - C. Animal Care and Control operates within and outside of Los Angeles County.
  - D. services are provided to any city or unincorporated area within the 3,200 miles covered by the Agency.
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2. The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors has appointed a newly-established Workforce Investment Board (WIB), which will implement the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. WIB's mandate is to provide key policy decisions affecting the local workforce development system, and to identify and certify the areas within Los Angeles County where WorkSource California Centers are located to be designated as Workforce Investment Areas.

According to the passage,

- A. WIB is chiefly responsible for providing decisions related to policy.
- B. County Board of Supervisors passed the Workforce Investment Act.
- C. WorkSource California Centers are unique to areas within Los Angeles County.
- D. the Workforce Investment Act will put into practice the Workforce Investment Board.

3. The Scientific Services Bureau operates one of the largest full-service crime laboratories in the United States. A staff of 198 members provides forensic science support to all Los Angeles County law enforcement agencies, except the Los Angeles Police Department. Approximately one half of the nearly 70,000 cases submitted annually to the Crime Lab is from Sheriff's Department investigators, while the remainder is from local, state, and federal agencies. Since 1989 the Scientific Services Bureau has been an accredited laboratory through the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors/Laboratory Accreditation Board (ASCLD/LAB).

According to the passage,

- A. the Bureau initiated its operation in 1989.
  - B. the crime lab is the largest lab of its kind in the country.
  - C. the crime lab is capable of performing all required forensic lab analysis.
  - D. the number of cases the crime lab received increased after it received its accreditation.
4. The Agricultural Commissioner/Weights & Measures Department routinely conducts price verification inspections at retail locations to confirm that prices charged to consumers are the same as those posted or advertised. On a typical visit to a store, the inspector will select up to 15 items and then take them to the check stand for payment. When the items' bar codes are scanned at the register, the price showing at the register must match what is posted on the shelf or advertised. If the prices do not match, the store will receive a notice of violation and the case may be turned over to the District Attorney's Office or local city attorney for prosecution.

According to the passage,

- A. an inspector will usually find a pricing error when 15 items are being purchased.
- B. an item costing less than the announced price will not be considered a violation.
- C. a store receives a violation when the shelf or advertised price does not match the charged price.
- D. price violation cases are automatically turned over to the appropriate jurisdiction's attorney office.

5. Reserve Deputy Probation Officers are deputized volunteers who have received special training in order to assist Probation staff in a wide range of supervised responsibilities, that include direct involvement with juvenile and adult probationers. Reserve Deputies are highly motivated, skilled, and caring people who want to serve their community as a part of the Los Angeles County Probation Department. Reserve Deputies are not a replacement for or an alternative to paid staff, but are intended to be an enhancement to existing resources.

From the passage, it can be inferred that

- A. experienced Reserve Deputies supervise new volunteer Reserve Deputies.
  - B. direct interaction with probationers is the primary Duty of a Reserve deputy.
  - C. members of the community who become Reserve Deputies have a desire to give back to the community.
  - D. Reserve Deputies are able to act independently on the job once they have successfully passed all training requirements.
6. The Criminal Grand Jury of Los Angeles County attends hearings brought by the District Attorney's Office. The objective of this jury is to determine, on the basis of evidence presented by the District Attorney's Office, whether certain persons should be charged with crimes and required to stand trial in Superior Court. The Criminal Grand Jury is an accusatory body and not a trial jury; therefore, the burden of proof is much lower. Specifically, the Criminal Grand Jury must decide if there is a strong suspicion the individual committed the alleged crime.

According to the passage,

- A. the burden of proof is held to a stricter standard during the review of evidence.
- B. the District Attorney presents its case to the Criminal Grand Jury in Superior Court.
- C. when a strong suspicion is determined, the Grand Jury recommends the charged individuals punishment.
- D. the Criminal Grand Jury is responsible for deciding if the alleged perpetrator of a crime should stand trial.

7. The programs and resources developed by the Education Department of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art are designed to extend the museum experience in the fullest possible way to the widest possible audience, both present and future. These programs provide visitors of all ages with the opportunity to expand their experience with works of art in both the museum's permanent collection and its special exhibitions.

According to the passage,

- A. retired teachers serve as program designers and instructors at the museum.
  - B. educational opportunities are restricted to the museum's permanent collection.
  - C. the Education Department of the County Museum of Art targets its educational materials to children.
  - D. the learning experience provided by the museum can be enhanced through programs developed by the Education Department.
8. Since 1944, the County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation has been meeting the diverse needs of not only residents, but also visitors from around the world. With over 63,000 acres of parks, gardens, lakes, trails, natural areas, and the world's largest public golf course system, the Department of Parks and Recreation is committed to providing the public with social, cultural, and recreational activities to enjoy the whole year round!

According to the passage,

- A. the County has boasted the largest public golf course system since 1944.
- B. the natural areas of Los Angeles County are one of the biggest attractions for visitors.
- C. the department offers a variety of activities that represent the needs of the community.
- D. the Department of Parks and Recreation focuses its efforts entirely on recreational activities.

9. The main function of the Civil Grand Jury is to investigate county, city, and joint-power agencies. This is a significant civil function. The Grand Jury acts in a "watch-dog" capacity by examining carefully and completely the operations of various government agencies within Los Angeles County. The Civil Grand Jury cannot investigate state or federal agencies, which lie outside their jurisdiction. Part of the investigation of governmental agencies includes the ability to audit operations, accounts, and records of officers and departments within the agency under investigation. The Civil Grand Jury is further charged with investigating individual complaints from citizens. By statute the Grand Jury is required to inquire regarding the conditions and management of all public prisons within the County of Los Angeles.

According to the passage,

- A. complaints filed by prisoners are not investigated by the Grand Jury.
  - B. auditing is the only method the Grand Jury uses during an investigation of a department.
  - C. the Civil Grand Jury is able to investigate any public sector agency within the County of Los Angeles.
  - D. the Grand Jury monitors and investigates the operations of local government agencies in Los Angeles County.
10. Los Angeles County Immunization Program efforts are targeted primarily toward pediatric and adolescent immunizations, with some adult immunization activities. Although this Program serves the entire County population, many activities are specifically directed toward communities with children at high risk of under-immunization. The Immunization Program partners with other organizations to provide outreach and immunization services in pockets of need areas, which are defined as those areas with large numbers of unimmunized and underimmunized children.

According to the passage,

- A. children considered high risk are a special concern for the County Immunization Program.
- B. specialized outreach services to populations in rural parts of the County are a valued service.
- C. the need to be immunized is less important for unimmunized adults than it is for unimmunized children.
- D. the County Immunization Program operates as an independent agency providing immunization services.

11. The Los Angeles County Tobacco Control Program (TCP) is part of the Division of Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion in the Department of Health Services. It was established as a result of the tobacco tax initiative of 1988, Proposition 99/AB75, in December of 1989. The goal of TCP is to establish policies, health services, public education, and media conditions that support the reduction of tobacco use in Los Angeles County and the associated disease, disability, and mortality.

From the passage, it can be inferred that

- A. the regulation of the production of tobacco products is covered by the TCP.
  - B. Proposition 99/AB75 added more regulations to the tobacco tax initiative.
  - C. the tobacco tax initiative was a measure to reduce taxes on tobacco products.
  - D. television advertisements discussing health concerns related to smoking could be an example of a TCP initiative.
12. Water Awareness, Training, Education, and Recreation (W.A.T.E.R.) offers a wide variety of year-around, ocean-related recreational activities for young people, ages 7-17 on Los Angeles County beaches from Zuma to Cabrillo. Nationally recognized for unique and creative children's programs, W.A.T.E.R. strives to be on the cutting edge of serving the public with a comprehensive, quality aquatic program. Experienced County Ocean Lifeguards instruct the youth activities, supervising the students and sharing their knowledge of the marine environment.

According to the passage,

- A. older children help to train the younger children in aquatic program activities.
- B. Ocean Lifeguards train W.A.T.E.R. participants along any southern California beach.
- C. Lifeguards provide instruction to participating youth during the summer months only.
- D. W.A.T.E.R. is a broad-based program designed to provide the public with meaningful services.

13. From time to time the County of Los Angeles makes surplus property available for sale to the public. This property consists of County property; unclaimed or abandoned personal property and valuables, except those confiscated in conjunction with drug enforcement activities; and unclaimed stolen property. The surplus property is disposed of through sale bids, auctions, and donations.

According to the passage,

- A. the County's personal property brings in the largest sales.
- B. items that are not claimed by their owner will be sold to the public.
- C. the County holds regularly scheduled sales of property to the public.
- D. property obtained by drug enforcement activities is sold through the bid process.

### **Critical Reading**

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Read the passage below and answer questions 14-15. NOTE: Actual test questions will vary in format, content, and level of difficulty.

The term "Civil Service" is generally applied to paid nonmilitary service in a nonelective office in the executive branch of government. In 1883, in response to public outcry over the Spoils System, Congress passed the Civil Service Act, which created the foundations of the American Civil Service system. Among the components of the act are provisions for the selection of Civil Service personnel by open competitive examinations; guarantees for Civil Service employees from forms of coercion for political reasons; and the creation of a Civil Service Commission, an appointive board charged with administering the act. At the time of passage, the Civil Service Act covered ten percent of all classes of positions in the competitive service. By the early 1980s however, that number had grown to almost 85 percent of all federal civilian jobs in the United States. In 1978 Congress passed the Civil Service Reform Act, which replaced the Civil Service Commission with the Office of Personnel Management.

14. The primary purpose of the passage is to
- A. explain the origins of the U.S. Civil Service system.
  - B. describe the functions of the Civil Service Commission.
  - C. contrast the Spoils System with selection-by-examination.
  - D. illustrate the breadth and scope of public-sector employment.
15. From the passage, it can be inferred that the
- A. Spoils System of employee selection was highly corrupted.
  - B. Office of Personnel Management will eventually be abolished.
  - C. Civil Service Commission failed to properly administer the Civil Service Act.
  - D. number of jobs covered under the Civil Service Act will continue to increase.

## Answers and Explanations to Reading Comprehension Questions

1. The correct answer is **B**. The passage states that the ACC serves 50 contract cities.
2. The correct answer is **A**. The passage states that the WIB is mandated to “provide key policy decisions.”
3. The correct answer is **C**. The passage states that the Bureau operates a “full-service” crime lab.
4. The correct answer is **C**. The passage states that a store will receive a violation if the price showing at the register does not “match what is posted on the shelf or advertised.”
5. The correct answer is **C**. The passage states that Reserve deputies are “people who want to serve their community.”
6. The correct answer is **D**. The passage states that the Criminal Grand Jury weighs evidence to determine whether certain persons should be required to stand trial in the Superior Court.
7. The correct answer is **D**. The passage states that the Education Department’s programs and resources are “designed to extend the museum experience.”
8. The correct answer is **C**. The passage states that Department meets the diverse needs of both residents and visitors.
9. The correct answer is **D**. The passage states that the Grand Jury examines the operations of various government agencies within Los Angeles County.
10. The correct answer is **A**. The passage states that many Program activities are “specifically directed toward communities with children at high risk of under-immunization.”
11. The correct answer is **D**. The passage states that the goal of TCP is to establish media conditions that support the reduction of tobacco use and associated disease, disability, and mortality.
12. The correct answer is **D**. The passage provides two clues that it is a broad-based public service program. First, it states that W.A.T.E.R. offers a wide variety of activities. Second, it states that W.A.T.E.R. strives to be on the cutting edge of public service.
13. The correct answer is **B**. The passage provides two clues to indicate that unclaimed items are sold to the public. First, it states that surplus property is “available for sale to the public.” Second, it states that the surplus property includes unclaimed property.

14. The correct answer is **A**. The primary purpose of the passage is to explain the origins of the U.S. Civil Service system by describing the provisions of the Civil Service Act of 1883 and the circumstances under which the U.S. Civil Service system was created.
15. The correct answer is **A**. The passage provides several clues that imply that the Spoils System of employee selection was highly corrupted. To begin, the passage states that Civil Service Act was passed by Congress “in response to public outcry over the Spoils System.” Further, the passage describes a component of the Act, (i.e., protections for employees from political coercion), which implies that political coercion occurred within the Spoils System.