

PREPARING FOR YOUR WRITTEN
**EMPLOYMENT
TEST**



COUNTY OF
LOS ANGELES



Los Angeles
County

Human Resources
YOUR CAREER STARTS HERE.



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Introduction

The County of Los Angeles Department of Human Resources (DHR) is pleased to offer this ***Guide to Preparing for Your Written Employment Test***. This Guide will help you

- understand the purpose of written tests;
- learn how to prepare for written tests; and
- become familiar with written test administration procedures.

Who Should Use this Guide?

We developed this Guide for anyone who will take a County of Los Angeles written employment test. It might be especially useful for people who have never taken one or for people who have not taken one recently.

Disclaimer

This Guide provides *general information* about County of Los Angeles written tests. Each County department has its own specific procedures for administering written tests. These procedures may be different from what we describe in this Guide.

Also, reading and following the guidelines in this Guide will not guarantee that you will perform well on your written test. You may need to prepare in a different way than the way we describe in this Guide. By merely using this Guide, you acknowledge that you understand and agree with this disclaimer.

General Information About Written Tests

We administer written tests during what we call an *examination*. This is the process of evaluating applicants for a particular job. The *examination analyst* is the person in charge of this process. One of the first steps of the process is for the examination analyst to review your application. If your application shows that you meet certain minimum qualifications, you move on to the next step. Often, this next step is taking a written test.

Why do we conduct written tests?

County of Los Angeles residents expect public jobs to be filled by capable employees. As a job seeker, you expect a fair chance to compete with other job applicants. Written tests are cost-effective and objective ways for us to satisfy both of these expectations.

How do we develop written tests?

We study the job and meet with job experts to ensure that our written tests reflect the knowledge and abilities that employees need to successfully perform the duties of the job. We do not develop written test questions to be unnecessarily difficult or to “trick” you. Rather, the aim is to accurately and fairly assess your qualifications for the job.

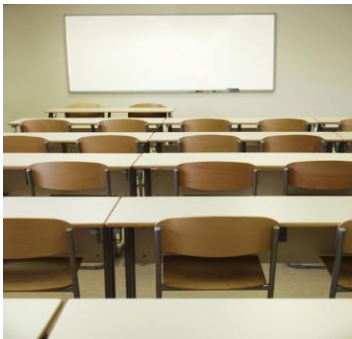
Although you will not know exactly what questions will be on the written test, you are in control of how prepared you will be! Proper preparation will help you increase your confidence and allow you to show your qualifications for the job.

How do we administer written tests*?

We administer most written tests in a group setting. This means there will probably be other test-takers in the testing room with you. We also time the written tests. All test-takers will have the same amount of time to complete the written test. Other helpful information is provided below.

Test Proctor

The test proctor helps the examination analyst administer the written test. At least one test proctor will be in the testing room to check you in, provide instructions for filling out the test forms, tell you about the time limit, and answer questions about testing procedures. The test proctor will also oversee the testing room to help keep distractions like noise to a minimum.

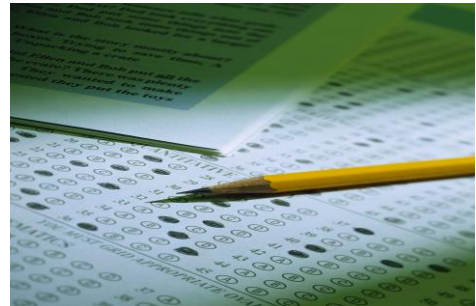


Testing Room

The testing rooms at most County facilities have a classroom setting like the one pictured on the left. Usually, you will not be able to choose your own seat. You will also have to leave any personal items at the front of the room or underneath your seat. This helps to promote the security of the test administration. Before you enter the testing room, you must turn off any devices with sound (for example, cell phones, pagers, watch alarms, etc.) that may distract others.

Test Materials

Most County of Los Angeles written tests have a “booklet” format. You will record your answers on a “fill-in-the-bubble-type” answer sheet similar to the one pictured on the right. You will be able to work through problems either on scratch paper provided by the test proctor or directly on the test booklet. The test proctor will let you know which of these choices is available.



Also, most test questions have a multiple-choice format. This means that you will have a set of possible answer choices for each question, and you will have to select the ONE that you decide is the best response to the question. Examples of this test question format can be found on the Test Preparation System (described on the next page).

Test Confidentiality

Because the County’s examination process is competitive, all examination content must remain confidential. You will leave any materials written on or used during the test with the test proctor. Also, you *must not* discuss any of the content of the test with anyone except the examination analyst or an approved representative of human resources. If we find that you have violated these requirements, you may be disqualified from participating in this and any future examination.

* Pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, persons with disabilities who believe they need reasonable accommodation should follow the directions on the *job bulletin* (described on the next page).

Written Test Preparation

Well Before the Test Day

You should begin to prepare for the written test as soon as possible! Studying and making plans for the test day should take place over a significant period of time (for example, a few weeks) rather than all at once the night before the test. We offer three resources to help you do this: the *job bulletin*, your *test notice letter*, and the *Test Preparation System*.

Job Bulletin

The job bulletin is an official document that provides important information about the examination for a particular job. If a written test is part of the examination process, the job bulletin will provide the particular weight (for example, 100%, 50%, 25%, etc.) the written test will have on your overall score for the examination. It will also list the subject areas that the written test will cover. You should use this information to efficiently direct your study efforts. Many written tests cover the subject areas listed below.

- Customer Service
- Data Analysis and Interpretation
- Reading Comprehension
- Written Expression

Job bulletins are available on the DHR website (<http://hr.lacounty.gov>) or at our Employment Information Services Office (3333 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 100, Los Angeles, CA 90010).

*Test Notice Letter**

This letter informs you of the date, time, and location of your written test. We mail it 10 days before the test date to give you time to make plans for your transportation and schedule for that day.

- Transportation – If you will be driving, a test-drive to the facility before your actual test day can help you discover the best route and parking locations and costs, if necessary. If you will be taking public transportation, visit the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (www.metro.net) to help plan your trip.
- Schedule – *Most* tests last about two hours with added time (for example, one hour) for checking-in and providing instructions. You should plan your other activities for the test day accordingly.

The test notice letter will also describe any items (for example, calculators or acceptable forms of photo identification) that you must bring with you to the test.

Test Preparation System (TPS)

The TPS is a series of practice tests and review guides for subjects that many County of Los Angeles written employment tests cover. Research has shown that test takers who used the TPS as part of their study efforts were more confident about their test performance and earned higher scores than those who did not use it. The TPS is available on the DHR website (<http://hr.lacounty.gov>) by clicking on *Career Opportunities* and then *Employment Test Preparation*.

* Immediately notify the examination analyst of any changes to your mailing address. Contact information for the examination analyst is listed on the *job bulletin*.

The Night Before the Test Day

- Allow for enough sleep the night before the test date. Proper rest will help you maintain your focus while taking the test.
- Plan what you will wear to the test. Choose comfortable, layered clothing so you will be prepared for any room temperature. If your test notice letter indicated the *possibility* of interviews after the test, you should dress accordingly.
- Ensure that you have your transportation plan and test notice letter – with the materials it says to bring – ready for the next day.

On the Test Day

- Eat a light meal before the test. The written test administration will usually last for several hours, and hunger can be a distraction.
- Bring the required materials that you gathered the night before to the test facility.
- Leave at a time that will allow you to walk from the parking location/public transportation stop, use the rest room, and get a drink of water **before** your scheduled test time.

During the Test

Some mistakes are caused by nervousness rather than lack of preparation. The following suggestions may help you reduce the effect of nervousness on your test performance.

- Before you begin, look over the test and decide how you will approach it. Unless otherwise instructed, you can answer questions in whatever order you prefer (for example, you could start with the questions in the last section instead of the questions in the first section).
- Manage your time. Have a general idea of how much time you need to answer each question. If you find that you are spending too much time on a question, move on to the next question and return to it after you have completed the rest of the test.
- Read the directions carefully so you know how to answer the questions. There may be different directions for different sections of the test.
- Read each question slowly and carefully. Reading too fast may cause you to miss or add words that lead you to choose an incorrect answer.
- Read each question completely. Do not assume that you know what a question is asking after reading the first few words.
- Try to identify the answer before you read the answer choices; however, make sure to read *all* the answer choices before marking your answer on the answer sheet.

- Mark your answers on your answer sheet as you take the test. Though you may be able to write in the test booklet or on scratch paper, your score will *only* be based on what you mark on your answer sheet. Given the time constraints, you should avoid waiting until the last few minutes to transfer answers marked on the test booklet or scratch paper to your answer sheet.
- Periodically check to make sure that your answer sheet responses match to the question you are answering on the test. For example, if you are answering question 15 on the test, make sure that you are marking the space for number 15 on the answer sheet. This is especially important if you skip any questions to come back to later.
- If you change your answer to any question, be sure to erase it *completely* from your answer sheet.
- Do not let early finishers distract you. Everyone has a different test-taking pace and we do not award special points for completing the test first.
- Review your answers after you have completed the test, if time allows. Make sure that you have answered all the questions.

After the Test

After the test, the examination analyst will mail a letter to you with information about your test results and/or the next steps in the examination process*. The time to receive this letter will vary depending on the examination. Candidates who successfully advance through the entire examination process will be placed on an *eligibility list*. The County of Los Angeles can only hire people whose names are on this list. Placement on an eligibility list does *not guarantee* that you will be hired. Instead, County departments will contact individuals from this list when they have a job opening.

* Immediately notify the examination analyst of any changes to your mailing address. Contact information for the examination analyst is listed on the *job bulletin*.

Conclusion

This *Guide* provided you with general information that can help you prepare to take a written employment test at the County of Los Angeles. Proper preparation is the best way to show your qualifications, and we wish you the best in your efforts!

Other Resources

We do not specifically support or recommend any preparation resources beyond this and other guides found on the Test Preparation System. However, if you would like additional test preparation, the following may be helpful.

- California WorkSource centers (<http://www.worksourcecalifornia.com>), which receive partial funding from the County of Los Angeles, offer many resources to job seekers.
- Colleges and universities often offer career development resources to their students and alumni.
- Local public libraries offer many resources that may help you in your preparation.

Feedback

To help us improve this Guide, we would appreciate your feedback. Please email any suggestions to testprep@hr.lacounty.gov. In the subject line of your email, please write “General Written Test Preparation Guide.” Thank you in advance.

Authors

DHR’s Test Research Unit is pleased to offer this Guide as part of a series of preparation tools and resources available to individuals proceeding through the County’s employment process. Valuable input was provided by each member of our team, the following in particular:

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- Angela Hunt, Human Resources Analyst IV
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