

# WRITTEN EXPRESSION 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 written expression items. The sample questions provided in this study guide are intended to give you an idea of the kinds of written expression 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. Pre-employment testing 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 test in addition to written expression; 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 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 WRITTEN EXPRESSION QUESTIONS**

Written expression questions test your knowledge of, and ability to recognize errors in, structural and grammatical elements of standard written English; however, questions will vary from one test to another. For example, the test may require you to "edit" a document similar to one you may encounter in the position for which you are testing by asking you to respond to a series of questions based on the document. The following are examples of the types of written expression questions most common to County employment tests. Answers and explanations for the questions are provided on page 6 of this study guide.

### **Identifying Common Spelling Errors**

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Choose the answer with the correct words to complete the sentence. NOTE: actual test questions will vary in format, content, and level of difficulty.

1. For a while it seemed that even a \_\_\_\_\_ of fire fighters could not \_\_\_\_\_ control of the blaze.  
A. batallion; sieze  
B. batallion; seize  
C. battalion; seize  
D. battalion; sieze
  
2. There seemed to be \_\_\_\_\_ in the group to move forward on \_\_\_\_\_ the proposed changes.  
A. concensus; implimenting  
B. consensus; implementing  
C. concensus; implementing  
D. consensus; implimenting
  
3. She was very \_\_\_\_\_ that someone be appointed to act as \_\_\_\_\_ between the agency and the university.  
A. insistent; liasion  
B. insistant; liason  
C. insistant; liaison  
D. insistent; liaison

### **Identifying Common Written Errors**

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Each of the questions below consists of a sentence that has been divided into three sections, labeled A, B, and C, as well as a fourth section, NONE, labeled D. Each sentence may contain an error in either capitalization, grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, or word usage. Circle the letter that corresponds to the section containing the error. If the sentence has no error, circle D for NONE. No sentence contains more than one error. NOTE: actual test questions will vary in format, content, and level of difficulty.

4. The pathologist / examine the organ tissue / for evidence of disease. / NONE  
A B C D
  
5. We on the neighborhood committee / was opposed to the building / of the new supermarket. / NONE  
A B C D
  
6. To who / should this letter / be addressed? / NONE  
A B C D

### **Choose the Correct Verb Tense**

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Choose the word or phrase that best fits the sentence. NOTE: actual test questions will vary in format, content, and level of difficulty.

7. She took an evening class in micro economics.

If the sentence is changed to indicate an incident in the future, "TOOK" would be changed to:

- A. will be taking
- B. would be taking
- C. has taken
- D. is taking

8. The Personnel Analyst is sending the eligible list to the Civil Service Commission.

If the sentence is changed to indicate an incident in the past, "IS SENDING" would be changed to:

- A. would send
- B. has sent
- C. have sent
- D. can send

9. If she takes one more sick day, she will have used up her time for the rest of the year.

If "takes" is changed to "had taken", "WILL HAVE USED" would be changed to:

- A. would have used
- B. could have used
- C. will be using
- D. could be using

### **Correcting Sentences**

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Complete the following sentences with the correct words. NOTE: actual test questions will vary in format, content, and level of difficulty.

10. Neither one of them \_\_\_\_\_ a map, so it was easy for them to \_\_\_\_\_ their way.

- A. has; loose
- B. had; lose
- C. has; lose
- D. had; loose

11. \_\_\_\_\_ going to approve the project when they \_\_\_\_\_ obtain the funding.

- A. There; could
- B. They're; can
- C. They're; could
- D. There; can

12. The next group training session \_\_\_\_\_ begin until next month, and this time \_\_\_\_\_ planning to carpool to the location.
- A. don't; were
  - B. doesn't; were
  - C. don't; we're
  - D. doesn't; we're

**Select the Best Sentence**

**INSTRUCTIONS:** For each question read the sentences and select the one that best expresses the common thought. **NOTE:** actual test questions will vary in format, content, and level of difficulty.

13.     A.     Sent in the regular mail and not by e-mail attachment will be Mrs. Shipley's records, like she asked for.
- B.     As requested, the records will be sent to Mrs. Shipley by regular mail and not by e-mail attachment.
- C.     Mrs. Shipley has asked that the records be sent by regular mail and not by e-mail attachment.
- D.     We will not be using e-mail attachment to send the records to Mrs. Shipley because she
- E.     has asked for it to be sent in the regular mail.
14.     A.     When writing for business, it is standard practice to capitalize all nouns in the salutation.
- B.     All nouns, as standard practice dictates, should be capitalized in the salutation when writing for business.
- C.     Capitalize all nouns, in the salutation, when writing for business, as standard practice.
- D.     All nouns in the salutation should be capitalized as standard practice, when writing for business.
15.     A.     Please return my call regarding the new hire before noon as I will be in meetings for the rest of the day.
- B.     As I will be in meetings, for the remainder of the day, please return my call about the new hire before noon.
- C.     For the rest of the day I will be in meetings; therefore, please return my call regarding the new hire before noon.
- D.     I will be in meetings for the remainder of the day, so please return my call regarding the new hire before noon.

## Answers and Explanations to Written Expression Sample Questions

1. The correct answer is C. The sentence should read, "For a while it seemed as though even a battalion of fire fighters couldn't seize control of the blaze."
2. The correct answer is B. The sentence should read, "There seemed to be consensus in the group to move forward on implementing the proposed changes."
3. The correct answer is D. The sentence should read, "She was very insistent that someone be appointed to act as liaison between the agency and the university."
4. An error is found in part B of the sentence. The sentence should read, The pathologist examined the organ tissue for evidence of disease. In part B, "examine" is the incorrect verb tense.
5. An error is found in part B of the sentence. The sentence should read, We on the neighborhood committee were opposed to the building of the new supermarket. In part B, "was" is the incorrect verb form.
6. An error is found in part A of the sentence. The sentence should read, To whom should this letter be addressed? In part A, "who" is the incorrect introduction to the subject.
7. The correct answer is A. In the example, will be taking is the correct future tense of "took."
8. The correct answer is B. In the example, has sent is the correct past tense of "is sending."
9. The correct answer is A. In the example, you were to conclude that the sentence had been changed to the past tense. Therefore, would have used is the correct tense.
10. The correct answer is B. In the example, had is the correct verb tense, and lose is the correct spelling.
11. The correct answer is B. In the example, They're is the correct compound expression of they are, and can is the correct verb tense.
12. The correct answer is D. In the example, doesn't is the correct verb tense and the correct compound expression of does not, and we're is the correct compound expression of we are.
13. Sentence C best represents the common thought. Choice "A" is improperly structured; "B" contains an ambiguous reference (i.e., "As requested"); and "D" is overly wordy (i.e., verbose).
14. Sentence A best represents the common thought. Choice "B" is choppy; "C" has unnecessary commas (i.e., "...all nouns, in the salutation, when writing..."); and "D" is improperly structured.
15. Sentence D best represents the common thought. Choice "A" is a run-on sentence; "B" contains improper sentence structure and unnecessary punctuation; and "C" is overly verbose.