

**County of Hawai'i**  
**Department of Human Resources**

**Tips on Taking Civil Service Written Tests**

Listed below are general test-taking tips to help you do your best when you must take a written examination for a civil service position with the County of Hawai'i.

**WHY TESTS ARE GIVEN?**

Tests are given to help us measure the essential knowledge, skills, and abilities required to successfully do the job. Persons must pass a civil service test to be placed onto our eligible list. When we refer names from the eligible list to a hiring department in the County, test scores are not disclosed. This is based on the premise that applicants referred have the basic knowledge for the job and are competing equally for it. Selection for the job is made by the hiring department on a totality of factors, including an interview, employment reference checks, and other assessments conducted by the hiring department. The main goal is to pass the test.

**WHAT TYPES OF TESTS ARE USED?**

The types of tests used to select County employees will depend upon the sort of job recruited for. For example, applicants for Clerk positions take a written test of clerical ability. Applicants for Police Officer positions take written tests of writing skills and the ability to understand written material in addition to taking a physical performance test.

Before any test is given, the Department of Human Resources analyzes the requirements of the job to determine what areas should be tested, then decides upon the best method of testing for that particular job. Understandably, for many jobs, a written test is required.

**HOW SHOULD YOU PREPARE FOR A WRITTEN TEST?**

First, review the recruitment announcement for the position you are interested in. It is the best source of information on what the test will cover. Compare your knowledge and skills with those needed to do the job. How do you measure up? If you feel you need refresher study or practice, start at once. Go to the library or bookstores for current materials and books on the subject. There are also study guides at the library and bookstores published by various testing companies focusing on preparation for civil service tests.

The night before the test - Do not study for the test. Plan some other light recreation or activity. Then, get a good night's sleep.

The day of the test - Get up early enough so you won't have to rush to the test. By allowing yourself a lot of time, unexpected delays won't cause you to be late. Get to the test early, so you won't miss any important instructions. Be sure to bring your admission letter with you. If you have a watch, be sure to bring that to the test. Your admission letter asks you to bring your own pencils. Bring two #2 lead pencils and carry

some means of positive identification (such as a driver's license) with you. And if you wear glasses for reading, make sure you have them with you.

## WHAT SHOULD YOU DO AT A WRITTEN TEST?

Know the rules - The person in charge of the testing is called the Test Monitor. Listen very carefully when he/she reads the test instructions to the group. If you have any questions, ask the monitor before the test starts so you will not lose valuable time. Do not be afraid or embarrassed to ask questions. If you have any special problems, tell the monitor.

Budget your time - Here's where your watch will come in handy. Look over the entire test, and decide how much time you can spend on each section, and on each question. Don't waste too much time wrestling with a hard question, but move on to the questions you are sure of, and come back to the tough ones later. Budget your time so you won't have to omit or fail to answer a lot of questions.

Read the questions carefully - Read all questions carefully. Don't assume you know what the question asks after reading just the first few words. Read the entire question—always. Then go on to read all the possible answer choices. Your task is to pick out the best answer—and you can not pick out the best answer until you know all the choices—so read them all.

Look for the key words - Be certain you read every word in each question. There are often key words which can help you find the correct answer. Some common key words are listed below:

ALL	FIRST	NEVER	NO	SOME
ALWAYS	GENERALLY	LEAST	NONE	SOMETIMES
BEST	GREAT	LESS	NOT	USUALLY
DISADVANTAGE	GREATEST	MORE	ONLY	
EXCEPT	LAST	MOST	SMALL	

Be sure you don't overlook these words because they may change the entire meaning of the question.

Eliminating wrong choices - If you are not sure which answer is correct, eliminate the choices you know are wrong. By narrowing down the number of choices in this manner, you increase your chances of answering the question correctly.

Check your answer sheet often - Before you start, check your answer sheet so you will know how the numbering system works. Ask the monitor for instructions if you don't know how to mark the answer sheet. Check your answer sheet every few questions to be sure you are using the proper line and space to mark your answer. Be particularly careful to do this if you skip any questions.

Do your own work - Rely on your own knowledge and ability. Test takers caught cheating are disqualified. Besides, the person next to you may not know as much as you do!

Check your work - If you have time left after answering all the questions, go back and check your work. Have you answered all the questions you were supposed to answer? Is your answer sheet properly marked?

## WHAT DO TEST QUESTIONS LOOK LIKE?

Multiple-choice questions are used for civil service tests. The following are samples of several types of test questions. Some of them may be easier than questions on an actual test, and some of them may be more difficult. The purpose of this section is not to show you what to study, but to give you some practice in recognizing and answering different types of questions. Answer these questions on your own, without looking at the answers printed at the bottom of each section. Then, check your answers. If you have any wrong answers, go back to the questions, and try to find out where you made your mistake.

A. General Knowledge – This type of question measures a person’s ability to learn and to solve problems. The three sample questions are vocabulary, mathematical reasoning and understanding written material.

1. CONCISE means most nearly
  - (a) detailed
  - (b) rambling
  - (c) brief
  - (d) incomplete
  
2. If it takes 7 workers two days to do a job, how many workers will be required to do the same job in half a day?
  - (a) 17
  - (b) 20
  - (c) 28
  - (d) 32

ANSWERS: 1. (c), 2. (c)

B. Aptitude – This type of question measures a person’s ability to learn specific skills. Sample question for clerical aptitude:

Compare the names and numbers on Sheets I and II and indicate those that are different on Sheet II by underlining the name or number.

(Sheet I)		(Sheet II)	
<u>Name</u>	<u>Code #</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Code #</u>
1. Benjamin Longley	893945	1. Benjamin Longly	893495
2. Katsumi Kaneshiro	452834	2. Kazumi Kaneshiro	452834
3. Margaret Macfarlane	243281	3. Margarret Mcfarlane	234281

ANSWERS: 1. Longly, 893495, Kazumi, Margarret, Mcfarlane, 234281

C. Achievement – This type of question measures how much a person already knows about a subject. It normally covers knowledge of principles and practices which are essential to job success.

1. A test for a job requiring mechanical knowledge include questions similar to the one below.

The main reason for oiling machines is to

- (a) keep the dirt off the moving parts
  - (b) cut down on the noise
  - (c) cut down on the wear of moving parts
  - (d) keep the parts waterproof
2. A test for a job requiring knowledge of mechanical drawing (drafting) may include questions similar to the one below.

A protractor is used to

- (a) draw curved lines
- (b) lay off angles on a map
- (c) determine the scale of a map
- (d) reduce a drawing in size

ANSWERS: 1. (c), 2. (b)