



**Department of
Civil Service**

A Guide to the Written Test

for the

Entry-Level Clerical Series

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INTRODUCTION

The New York State Department of Civil Service has developed this test guide to familiarize you with the written tests for the Entry-Level Clerical Series. This test guide provides a general description of the subject areas which will be tested and the different types of questions you may see on the tests in this series. The Examination Announcement will specify the exact subject areas to be included on the particular examination you will be taking.

The Entry-Level Clerical Series has an overall test time allowance of 3 hours. The test questions will cover the following five subject areas:

1. **SPELLING:** These questions test for the ability to spell words that are used in written business communications.
2. **ALPHABETIZING:** These questions test for the ability to file material in alphabetical order.
3. **RECORD KEEPING:** These questions test for the ability to perform common record-keeping tasks. The test consists of two or more “sets” of questions, each set concerning a different problem. Typical record-keeping problems might involve organizing or collating data from several sources; scheduling; maintaining a record system using running balances; or completing a table summarizing data using totals, subtotals, averages, and percents.
4. **OPERATIONS WITH LETTERS AND NUMBERS:** These questions test for skills and abilities in operations with letters and numbers. You will be given questions which involve a variety of operations with letters and numbers. You must determine the specific answer to each question. The operations may involve alphabetizing, comparing, checking, and counting given groups of letters and/or numbers.
5. **USING A DIRECTORY:** These questions test for the ability to keep directory records and to supply accurate information to callers over the phone. You must incorporate name and/or room changes into a current telephone directory, and answer questions, such as those that would be asked by callers, about the information contained in the directory listing.

Information about which of the above subject areas will be covered on the particular examination you will be taking will appear on the announcement for that examination. All examinations in this series will include OPERATIONS WITH LETTERS AND NUMBERS.

The remainder of this test guide explains how you will be tested in each of the subject areas listed above. A **TEST TASK** is provided for each subject area. This is an explanation of how a question will be presented and how to correctly answer it. Read each explanation carefully. This test guide also provides at least one **SAMPLE QUESTION** for each subject area. The sample question is similar to the type of questions that will be presented on the actual test. This test guide provides the **SOLUTION** and correct answer to each sample question. You should study each sample question and solution in order to understand how the correct answer was determined.

SUBJECT AREA 1

SPELLING: These questions test for the ability to spell words that are used in written business communications.

TEST TASK: For each question, you will be given three choices (A, B, and C). One of the three choices may contain a misspelled word. The misspelled words are words that are commonly found in business correspondence. You should focus on words that are commonly misspelled. For this test task, you must determine whether any of the three choices contains a misspelled word. If one does, you should choose the letter of the choice (A, B, or C) which contains the misspelled word. If none of the three choices contains a misspelled word, you should choose D, "None of the above is misspelled."

SAMPLE QUESTION:

Which one, if any, of the following words is misspelled?

- A. manageable
- B. circumstants
- C. legality
- D. None of the above is misspelled

The correct answer to this sample question is B.

SOLUTION:

- A. "Manageable" in choice A is spelled correctly, so A is not the correct answer to this sample question.
- B. "Circumstants" in choice B is a misspelling of the word "circumstance." **Since choice B contains a misspelled word, B is the correct answer to this sample question.**
- C. "Legality" in choice C is spelled correctly, so C is not the correct answer to this sample question.
- D. Since choice B is misspelled, choice D is not the correct answer to this sample question.

SUBJECT AREA 2

ALPHABETIZING: These questions test for the ability to file material in alphabetical order.

TEST TASK: You will be provided with a list of names which you must alphabetize in order to answer the question.

SAMPLE QUESTION:

Of the following names, which one would be THIRD in an alphabetic file?

- A. Docker, John
- B. Decker, Jane
- C. Dinckman, June
- D. Dockman, James

The correct answer to this sample question is A.

SOLUTION:

To answer this question correctly, you must first put the names into alphabetical order: "Decker, Jane" would be first. "Dinckman, June" would be second. "Docker, John" would be third. "Dockman, James" would be fourth. Therefore, "Docker, John" (choice A) would be THIRD in an alphabetic file.

SUBJECT AREA 3

RECORD KEEPING: These questions test for the ability to perform common record-keeping tasks.

TEST TASK: You will be presented with two or more “sets” of questions, each set concerning a different problem. Typical record-keeping problems might involve organizing or collating data from several sources; scheduling; maintaining a record system using running balances; or completing a table summarizing data using totals, subtotals, averages, and percents.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS:

The following two questions are based on the table below:

NUMBER OF AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENTS, BY LOCATION AND CAUSE, FOR THE YEAR.				
	LOCATION 1		LOCATION 2	
CAUSE	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Road Conditions	10	20	25	42
Drunk Drivers	20	40	5	8
Speeding	15	30	15	25
Unknown	5	10	15	25
TOTALS	50	100	60	100

SAMPLE QUESTION 1:

Which one of the following is the second highest cause of accidents for both locations combined?

- A. Road Conditions
- B. Drunk Drivers
- C. Speeding
- D. Unknown

The correct answer to sample question 1 is C.

SOLUTION:

To answer this question correctly, you must first add the number from location 1 to the number from location 2 for each accident cause. Then, you must rank the causes from highest to lowest based on the totals you obtain. You can then determine the second highest cause of accidents for both locations combined. In this example, “Road Conditions” (choice A) is the highest cause of accidents, with 35. “Speeding” (choice C) is second highest, with 30. Therefore, “Speeding” (choice C), is the correct answer to sample question 1.

SAMPLE QUESTION 2:

The average number of automobile accidents per week that occurred in Location 2 for the year (52 weeks) was most nearly

- A. 0.8
- B. 1.2
- C. 2.1
- D. 5.2

The correct answer to sample question 2 is B.

SOLUTION:

To answer this question correctly, you must divide the total number of accidents in location 2 for the year (60), by 52 weeks. The answer, rounded to the nearest tenth, is 1.2 (choice B).

SUBJECT AREA 4

OPERATIONS WITH LETTERS AND NUMBERS: These questions test for skills and abilities in operations with letters and numbers.

TEST TASK: You will be given questions which involve a variety of operations with letters and numbers. You must determine the specific answer to each question. The operations may involve alphabetizing, comparing, checking, and counting given groups of letters and/or numbers.

SAMPLE QUESTION 1:

How many pairs of the following groups of letters are exactly alike?

BRFQ SX	BRFQ SX
ACDOBJ	ACDOBJ
RPTQVS	RPTQVS
ZUYRVB	ZUYRVB
SPQRAS	SQRPAS
HVCBWR	HVCRWB

- A. 2
- B. 3
- C. 4
- D. 5

The correct answer is B.

SOLUTION: To answer this question correctly, compare the groups of letters in the column on the left, with the groups of letters in the column on the right. Determine how many pairs are exactly alike. Since three pairs are exactly alike (BRFQ SX, RPTQVS, ZUYRVB), the correct answer to this question is 3 (choice B).

SAMPLE QUESTION 2:

In the following sentence, how many words contain letters that appear more than once in that word?

“Right around April Fool’s Day, the daffodils and crocuses start to emerge and cheer us up after a long winter.”

- A. 5
- B. 6
- C. 7
- D. 8

The correct answer is B.

SOLUTION: To answer this question correctly, look at each word to see how many contain the same letter more than once. Since six words (“Fool’s”, “daffodils”, “crocuses”, “start”, “emerge”, “cheer”) contain letters that appear more than once in that word, the correct answer to this question is 6 (choice B).

SAMPLE QUESTION 3:

Which choice below lists the letter that is as far after C as T is after O in the alphabet?

- A. G
- B. H
- C. I
- D. J

The correct answer is B.

SOLUTION: To answer this question correctly, count how many letters are between O and T in the alphabet. There are 4 letters between O and T in the alphabet (P, Q, R, S). Since there are also 4 letters between C and H in the alphabet (D, E, F, G), the correct answer to this question is H (choice B).

SAMPLE QUESTION 4:

In the following list of numbers, how many times does 8 come just after 6 when 6 comes just after an odd number?

6325687253494236844576842396868

- A. 2
- B. 3
- C. 4
- D. 5

The correct answer is C.

SOLUTION: To answer this question correctly, determine the number of times 8 follows 6 when 6 follows an odd number in the list of numbers above. Since there are 4 times where 8 follows 6 when 6 follows an odd number in the list above (568, 368, 768, 968), the correct answer to this question is 4 (choice C).

SUBJECT AREA 5

USING A DIRECTORY: These questions test your ability to keep directory records and to supply accurate information to callers over the phone.

TEST TASK: You must incorporate name and/or room changes into a current telephone directory, and answer questions, such as those that would be asked by callers, about the information contained in the directory listing.

SAMPLE QUESTION:

Use the **DIRECTORY** and the **LIST OF CHANGES**, shown below, to answer the following question:

DIRECTORY:

NAME	RM. NO.	EXT.	NAME	RM. NO.	EXT.
Adams, Dave	123	1234	Charles, Bob	126	9109
Brown, Bill	125	5678	Davis, Ann	128	1112
Brull, Betty	142	5768	Diaz, Angel	134	2212
Calvin, Ed	155	2314	Evans, Sue	127	9502
Cerra, Lisa	116	4312	Frank, Chris	151	3456

LIST OF CHANGES:

- All calls for persons not listed above should be referred to Ann Davis in Personnel.
- Bill Brown is on vacation; his calls should be referred to Dave Adams, whose extension has been changed to 8737.

To which one of the following extensions should a call for Marc Evans be directed?

- A. 1112
- B. 1234
- C. 5678
- D. 8737

The correct answer to this sample question is A.

SOLUTION:

To answer this question correctly, you must:

- Determine that Marc Evans is not listed in the **DIRECTORY** above.
- Determine, from the **LIST OF CHANGES**, that calls for persons not listed in the directory should be referred to Ann Davis in Personnel.
- Find the listing for Ann Davis in the **DIRECTORY** above.
- Determine that Ann Davis's extension is 1112.
- Determine that extension 1112 is choice A.

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 should 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.

Before the test ...

- Study and review this guide to become familiar with what the test will cover.
- 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.
- Bring your Admission Notice, two No. 2 pencils, a photo ID containing your signature, a quiet lunch or snack, and any other **allowed** materials.
- Do **NOT** bring this test guide to the test site.

At the test site ...

- Do **NOT** bring cell phones, beepers, headphones, or any electronic or other communication devices to the test site.
- The use of such devices anywhere on the grounds of the test site (this includes the test room, hallways, restrooms, building, grounds, and parking lots) could result in your disqualification.

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

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