

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

**Correctional Program Officer A/B
Entry-Level**

Candidate Preparation Guide

Prepared By:



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TERMS AND CONDITIONS

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NOTE: In this guide, an effort has been made to provide information about the intended format, content, logistics, and evaluation of the CPO A/B examination. However, it is possible that minor alterations may be made in the testing procedures between the time this guide is distributed and the administration of the test. We will work with the Human Resources Division to provide you with any updates that may be required.

INTRODUCTION

This Candidate Preparation Guide is designed to help you prepare for the entry-level Correctional Program Officer (CPO A/B) examination. The CPO A/B examination consists of the following three test components: the Ability Test, the Work Styles Questionnaire, and the Situational Judgment Test (SJT).

The **Ability Test** is designed to assess a series of abilities, including Memory (Visual and Factual), Reading Comprehension, Decision Making, Forms Checking, and Reasoning. These abilities have been determined to be important to the effective performance of CPO A/Bs in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The **Work Styles Questionnaire** is designed to assess work style related preferences and approaches to situations determined to be important to the effective performance of CPO A/Bs in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The **Situational Judgment Test** is designed to assess a series of competencies found to be important to effective performance in a variety of job-related situations for CPO A/Bs in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

All three CPO A/B test components will be scored and your scores from all three components will be combined to determine your continued eligibility in the selection process.

Please note that the order in which the three test components are administered is the same as the order in which they are listed above (i.e., Ability Test, Work Styles Questionnaire, and Situational Judgment Test). This guide provides an overview of the testing procedures, the types of questions you will encounter on each test component, and the systematic methods of study and preparation that you should use in preparing for each test component.

You should review this guide as many times as necessary to become comfortable with the information and test-taking strategies presented.

This Candidate Preparation Guide is organized into the following sections:

Section 1: General Information: This section provides you with general information regarding the schedule and logistics for the CPO A/B examination.

Section 2: Ability Test Overview: This section describes the characteristics or ability components measured in the Ability Test section of the exam and provides example questions and test preparation / test-taking strategies.

Section 3: Work Styles Questionnaire Overview: This section describes the characteristics measured in the Work Styles Questionnaire section of the exam and provides example questions and test-taking strategies.

Section 4: Situational Judgment Test Overview: This section describes the characteristics measured in the Situational Judgment Test section of the exam and provides example questions and test-taking strategies.

SECTION 1: GENERAL INFORMATION

I. Date, Time, and Location:

The computerized online written exam which contains the three examination components listed above will be administered to CPO A/B candidates in August 2025. Testing will take place at multiple testing locations and candidates will be assigned to either a morning or an afternoon testing session. Two weeks prior to the exam date, you will receive a Notice to Appear that indicates the date and site where you will test and the arrival and testing times for your session. Please make note of your testing time to ensure you show up on time. Late arriving candidates may be disqualified from testing.

II. General Guidelines:

When participating in the CPO A/B examination, follow these general guidelines:

1. **Read all of the instructions carefully and pay careful attention to any additional instructions provided by administrators.** Instructions will be provided for each test component. It is very important that you read these instructions carefully before starting each test component to ensure that you understand the procedures that need to be followed.
2. **Know how much time you have to take the exam and how much time you should spend on each of the three components of the exam.** You will have 2 hours and 30 minutes (150 minutes) to read the test instructions and take the three components of the CPO A/B exam. The three components of the exam will NOT be timed separately. The amount of time that you should allot to each component will be recommended in the CPO A/B instructions you receive at the test site. As a general guideline, it should take approximately 15 minutes to read all of the instructions throughout the entire exam. You should plan on spending about 80 minutes on the Ability Test, about 25 minutes on the Work Styles Questionnaire, and about 30 minutes on the Situational Judgment Test. Please note that these are just suggested times to ensure that you are able to finish all three components of the exam in the allotted time. You can divide the total available time among the three components as you wish. A countdown timer will be visible on screen so you can keep track of time during the exam administration.
3. **Test administrators will be available to help you.** If you have any questions about the testing procedures, ask for assistance or clarification. However, keep in mind that administrators will not explain the meaning of any question, define words, or give, in any manner, guidance on answering questions.
4. **Take a mental break if and when needed.** If you are having difficulty concentrating at any point during the exam, take a brief mental break. Take a minute to clear your mind and relax. Of course, you must keep in mind the time limit for the exam, but a brief mental break may be worth the time it takes.
5. **Answer every question on each of the three test components.** Do not leave any questions blank.
 - a. When completing the Ability Test and the Situational Judgment Test, the result is the same whether you respond incorrectly to a question or do not respond at all. You are not penalized for incorrect answers; you simply receive zero credit for those answers, just as you would if you did not respond at all. By entering a response you have the opportunity, even if by chance, to answer the question correctly. Therefore, you should respond to all questions even if you are not sure

of the correct answer.

- b. You should also respond to all questions on the Work Styles Questionnaire. If you are unsure how to respond to Work Styles Questionnaire questions, choose the alternative that most accurately describes your typical behavior or how you feel. Candidates who do not respond to all questions on the Work Styles Questionnaire may not provide enough information to produce a score and may be disqualified from the selection process.

6. Use extra time wisely.

- a. If you complete the Ability Test before the suggested time period has expired, you may review your responses to the Ability Test (particularly questions to which you were unsure of the correct answer) before moving on to the other two test components. However, once the suggested time period is up, or soon thereafter, you should move on to the remaining test components to ensure that you have enough time to complete them. Keep in mind, however, that once you exit the Ability Test component of the exam you will NOT be permitted to return to this component.
- b. Similarly, if you complete the Work Styles Questionnaire before the suggested time period has expired, you may wish to review your responses to the Work Styles Questionnaire items simply to make sure you have answered every item. You are encouraged, however, NOT to overthink your responses to these items. Responding honestly based on your first reaction to the question is the best approach for this section. Keep in mind that once you exit the Work Styles Questionnaire component of the exam you will NOT be permitted to return to this component.

7. Review what you need to bring with you to the test site prior to your exam date.

Before you appear for testing you should follow the direction on your Notice to Appear and bring only a photo ID to the test site. Failure to bring the required documentation or information may result in you being ineligible to take the exam.

- 8. **Do NOT bring any electronic communication devices (i.e., cell phones, laptops, smartwatches, tablets) into the test site.** Communication devices should be left at home or in your car. Candidates found with any kind of communication device on them during testing will be disqualified from the testing process.

SECTION 2: ABILITY TEST OVERVIEW

The Ability Test is designed to assess a series of abilities determined to be important to the effective performance of CPO A/Bs in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The Ability Test contains 76 questions. Each question will be followed by two, three, or four response alternatives (A through B, A through C, or A through D). For each question, you should identify the single best answer and record the response chosen.

You should use approximately 80 minutes of the total assessment time to complete the Ability Test. You should respond to every question. Questions that are left unanswered will be scored as incorrect. Therefore, even if you are not sure of the correct answer to a question, you should record a response rather than leave the question blank.

I. **Characteristics Measured:**

The Ability Test component of the exam measures the following five (5) abilities:

- 1) **Memory (Visual and Factual):** The ability to memorize and recall factual information (e.g., descriptions, locations, laws) and visual information (e.g., details, visual characteristics of a person or a scene).
- 2) **Reading Comprehension:** The ability to read a passage and answer literal and inferential questions based on its content.
- 3) **Decision Making:** The ability to read a set of rules or procedures, follow them, and apply them to new situations.
- 4) **Forms Checking:** The ability to verify the accuracy of completed forms by comparing them to written information.
- 5) **Reasoning:** The ability to analyze facts and make valid judgments or draw accurate conclusions based on the logical implications of those facts.

II. **Ability Component Descriptions and Sample Questions:**

The sections below present more information regarding how each of the above characteristics will be measured on the exam, along with general test preparation strategies and sample questions relating to each ability area. The correct answers for each sample item are listed and explained on pages 21-24 of this guide. Try to answer the sample questions yourself before looking at the answer key.

1) **Memory (Visual and Factual):**

There are two types of Memory questions you may encounter on the exam.

The first type requires you to study a visual scene or image for a specified period of time (e.g., 45 seconds), attempt to memorize as much information from that scene or image as possible, and then answer questions to demonstrate what you can recall from the scene. For these questions, it is important to study and memorize as many details as you can from the scene. Pay attention to things like the types, numbers, locations, and colors of various objects or individuals in the scene, as well as patterns, shapes, or other details.

For purposes of the example questions below, you will set a timer yourself and study the image provided only for the allotted time period. *Note that on the actual exam, the image will be shown on screen only for the specified time period (e.g., 45 seconds) and will not be available after that time period for further reference or viewing.* For the best practice experience, we therefore encourage you to adhere strictly to the study time limit when working through the example.

Important Note: The images you will see are NOT examples of images that are likely to be encountered in the job of a CPO A/B. The information and questions presented on the exam (and in this preparation guide) are designed to assess candidates' general ability to remember and recall visual information.

Example Visual Memory Image:

For the example below, set a timer for 60 seconds. Begin studying the image below when the timer begins and stop when the 60-second timer ends. **DO NOT TAKE ANY NOTES** while you are studying the image. Do not look at the image again once the timer ends. Instead, immediately go to the next page and answer the questions based only on your memory of the details in the image. Do not look back at the image to help you answer the questions.

Begin timer now. Study the image for 60 seconds.



Example Visual Memory Questions:

Note that correct answers and explanations for these example questions are presented on page 21 of this booklet.

- 1) How many plates are shown drying in the dish rack on the counter?
 - A. 1
 - B. 2
 - C. 3
 - D. 4

- 2) What color is the light fixture depicted in front of the window?
 - A. yellow
 - B. green
 - C. brown
 - D. blue

- 3) Which one of the following items is sitting on the stove top in the picture?
 - A. orange skillet
 - B. green pot
 - C. blue tea kettle
 - D. yellow saucepan

- 4) Which one of the following patterns is depicted on the oven mitts in the picture?
 - A. polka dots
 - B. stripes
 - C. checkerboard
 - D. solid color (no pattern)

The second type of Memory question requires you to study a written passage for a specified period of time (e.g., 90 seconds), attempt to memorize as much information from the passage as possible, and then answer questions to demonstrate what you can recall from the passage. For these questions, it is important to study and memorize as many details as you can from the passage. It is recommended that you first read through the entire passage one time just as you normally would read any paragraph. Then, go back through the passage and pay attention to as many details as you can regarding people, objects, or actions mentioned in the passage.

For purposes of the example questions below, you will set a timer yourself and study the passage provided only for the allotted time period. *Note that on the actual exam, the passage will be shown on screen only for the specified time period (e.g., 90 seconds) and will not be available after that time period for further reference or viewing.* For the best practice experience, we therefore encourage you to adhere strictly to the study time limit when working through the example.

Important Note: The passages you will read are NOT examples of reading materials or passages that are likely to be encountered in the job of a CPO A/B. The information and questions presented on the exam (and in this preparation guide) are designed to assess candidates' general ability to remember and recall factual information.

Example Factual Memory Passage:

Set a timer for 2 minutes. Begin studying the passage below when the timer begins and stop when the 2-minute timer ends. **DO NOT TAKE ANY NOTES** while you are studying the passage. Do not look at the passage again once the timer ends. Instead, immediately go to the next page and answer the questions based only on your memory of the details in the passage. Do not look back at the passage to help you answer the questions.

Begin timer now. Study the passage for 2 minutes.

Passage

An Officer is called to a scene to interview witnesses who say they saw a suspicious looking man lurking around their campsite. A female witness named Jan reports to the Officer that she was talking on her cell phone to her daughter Denice when she noticed a man standing in the tree line about 20 yards from the campsite. Jan states that at first, she thought it was a bear, but after her eyes adjusted to the darkness, she realized it was a man who appeared to be staring in her direction. She tells the officer that the man stared for about 30 seconds and then paced back and forth 5 times before running off through the woods. Jan's friend, Anita, reports that she also saw the man, but only as he was running away. Anita states that about 2 minutes later, she saw a blue pickup truck drive by. The driver was a man with an orange hat and green jacket, but she could not be certain it was the same man they had seen in the woods.

Example Factual Memory Questions:

Note that correct answers and explanations for these questions are presented on page 21 of this booklet.

- 5) How many witnesses reported information to the Officer?
- A. 1
 - B. 2
 - C. 3
 - D. 4
- 6) What color was the hat on the man that was seen driving the truck?
- A. orange
 - B. green
 - C. grey
 - D. blue
- 7) It was reported that the man paced back and forth in the woods how many times?
- A. 5
 - B. 10
 - C. 20
 - D. 30
- 8) Which one of the following is the reason the Officer was called to the scene?
- A. A bear was seen in the woods near the camp site.
 - B. The campers saw a man behaving suspiciously near their camp site.
 - C. A man sped past the camp site in a stolen pickup truck.
 - D. A camper's daughter was assaulted by a man in the woods.

Memory (Visual and Factual) Test Preparation

The best preparation for performing successfully on many of the Ability Test sections, including the Memory section, is practice. Practice studying images (of any kind) and remembering as many details as possible about what you have studied. Practice studying passages of information - rules, laws, procedures, descriptions, reports, etc. – and memorizing as many details as possible about what you have read. Set time limits for yourself while you study the images or passages, in order to best mimic the experience you will have on the actual test date.

2) **Reading Comprehension:**

The Reading Comprehension component of the exam measures the ability to read a passage of information and answer questions about it. Some questions will ask about information that can be found directly in the passage. Some questions will ask you to make an inference about what has been stated in the passage. Still other questions will ask about the purpose of or meaning behind the passage as a whole.

Each passage of information will have numerous questions associated with it. Each question appears on a separate page of the exam, but the passage always appears at the top of the page. You are **NOT** required to memorize any of the information in the passage. You can always refer back to the passage to help you answer the questions. All questions will be multiple-choice and will have one correct answer.

Important Note: The passages you will read are **NOT** examples of reading materials that are likely to be encountered in the job of a CPO A/B. The information and questions presented on the exam (and in this preparation guide) are designed to assess candidates' general reading comprehension.

Example Reading Comprehension Questions:

Note that correct answers and explanations for these example questions are presented on page 22 of this booklet.

An example passage of information is presented below, followed by 3 example questions associated with that passage. For each question, select the one best response. You may refer back to the information in the passage to help you answer the questions.

Example Passage:

If an attention line is used in a letter, it must appear on the envelope. Attention lines are typed in capital and lowercase letters for regular mailings using commercial envelopes. They are typed entirely in capitals for mass mailings that will be presorted for automatic processing.

Example Questions:

- 9) When addressing a large number of letters that are to be sorted before mailing, the attention line should be typed in:
- A. lowercase letters.
 - B. capital letters.
 - C. capital and lowercase letters.
 - D. abbreviated form.
- 10) Which one of the following is used for regular mailings?
- A. lowercase letters only.
 - B. capital letters only.
 - C. commercial envelopes.
 - D. automatic processing.

11) The primary purpose of the passage is to:

- A. ensure an attention line is always used when mailing a letter.
- B. provide guidelines for which types of envelopes should be used.
- C. ensure the attention line is typed in all capital letters.
- D. provide guidelines for proper processing and mailing of letters.

Reading Comprehension Test Preparation

The best preparation for the Reading Comprehension component is practice. Reading any and all types of information you can get your hands on will help you with this test component. Reading different types of materials – novels, textbooks, technical information, news articles, short stories, etc. – will help ensure you come across as many different types of passages as you can. Practice writing summaries of what you have read or telling someone else about what you have read by summarizing the main points. Make sure you can identify the main idea of the content. Study resources, tips, and quizzes can be easily found online to help enhance your performance on a Reading Comprehension assessment.

Enhancing your vocabulary is also likely to improve your reading comprehension ability. Again, the best strategy for this is practice. While you are reading anything and everything you can find, make note of any words you do not know the meaning of. Look up the word's definition, and search for synonyms for that word using a thesaurus. Keep a running list of the words you are looking up so you can study them periodically and keep the information fresh in your mind.

3) **Decision Making:**

The Decision-Making items on the exam require you to read and understand a set of rules of procedures, then decide how best to apply those rules or procedures to given situations.

For these questions, the given rules or procedures will remain visible for your reference at any time while answering the related questions. You do **NOT** need to memorize any of the information presented. Also note that multiple questions will be asked about each set of rules or procedures that are presented on the exam.

Important Note: The rules and/or procedures provided for the Decision-Making questions are **NOT** rules or procedures that are likely to be encountered in the job of a CPO A/B. The information and questions presented on the exam (and in this preparation guide) are designed to assess candidates' general decision-making capability in following and applying any types of rules, procedures, or directions.

Example Decision Making Questions:

Note that correct answers and explanations for these example questions are presented on pages 22-23 of this booklet.

For the following example questions, read the example set of procedures or decision rules provided. Use the information contained in the procedures to decide on the best course of action to be taken for each situation presented in the questions.

Shipping Order Procedures

Ship all new orders immediately, except under the circumstances listed below.

1. When the new order is between \$1,000 and \$3,000, always obtain authorization from the Unit Supervisor before shipping it.
2. When the new order is over \$3,000, always obtain authorization from the Department Manager before shipping it.

- 12) According to the shipping order procedures, which one of the following actions should be taken given the situation below?

Situation:

Customer Account Number: 1-3615

Previous Balance Due: \$200.00

Past Due: 30 Days

New Order Amount: \$650.00

- A. Ship immediately
- B. Obtain authorization from Department Manager
- C. Obtain authorization from Unit Supervisor

- 13) According to the shipping order procedures, which one of the following actions should be taken given the situation below?

Situation:

Customer Account Number: 4-4679

Previous Balance Due: \$0.00

Past Due: No Amount Past Due

New Order Amount: \$1,254.37

- A. Ship immediately
- B. Obtain authorization from Department Manager
- C. Obtain authorization from Unit Supervisor

- 14) According to the shipping order procedures, which one of the following actions should be taken given the situation below?

Situation:

Customer Account Number: 2-2009

Previous Balance Due: \$1,450.00

Past Due: 15 Days

New Order Amount: \$3,000.50

- A. Ship immediately
- B. Obtain authorization from Department Manager
- C. Obtain authorization from Unit Supervisor

Decision-Making Test Preparation

As with other components, practice is the best preparation strategy for this section. Practice reading and following any kind of instructions or procedural manuals and following the directions, rules, or procedures given. You should also be able to easily find online quizzes that will test your ability to understand and apply rules, procedures, instructions, or directions.

4) Forms Checking:

The Forms Checking component presents information in a paragraph, and then that same information entered into a form. There may be errors or mismatches in how the information from the paragraph was entered into the form. Pieces or lines of information in the form (e.g., dates, numbers, descriptions, amounts) will be labeled with a circled number. For each numbered piece of information, you will be asked to determine whether the information entered into the form is **Correct** (matches the information in the paragraph) or **Incorrect** (does not match the information in the paragraph). You do not have to check every line on every form – only those lines that have circled numbers in front of them.

Important Note: The forms you will see on the exam are NOT examples of forms that are likely to be encountered in the job of a CPO A/B. The information and questions presented on the exam (and in this preparation guide) are designed to assess candidates' general ability to pay close attention to details and ensure the accuracy of information provided in forms and documents.

Example Forms Checking Questions:

Note that correct answers and explanations for these example questions are presented on page 23 of this booklet.

Sample Paragraph:

On March 14, 2004, a check of the 635 orders for the week showed that all orders were processed on time. Of these orders, 86 were partial shipments. Of the 86 partial shipments, 79 were shipped with some items back-ordered, and 7 were shipped with some items missing due to discontinued stock.

Sample Form:

15)	Date of Report	3-14-2004
16)	No. of Orders for Week	635
	No. of Partial Shipments	86
	No. of Shipments with Back Orders	79
17)	All Orders Processed on Time for the Week	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Directions: For each problem, mark the circle to indicate whether the information given is correct or incorrect.

	Correct	Incorrect
15)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Forms Checking Test Preparation

Practice is critical for the Forms Checking component. Have friends or family members create forms for you to check. You may also be able to find free online quizzes to test your attention to detail in checking forms in this way. We advise you to find and take as many of those quizzes as possible as practice for the actual assessment. Note that spatial reasoning is a closely related ability, so quizzes that test your spatial reasoning may help bolster your ability in this area as well.

5) **Reasoning:**

For the Reasoning questions on the exam, you will be required to read a list of facts and a corresponding list of conclusions. You will need to determine whether:

- a) the conclusion is definitely true based on the given facts (True),
- b) the conclusion is definitely false based on the given facts (False), or
- c) the facts do not provide enough information to determine whether the conclusion is true or false (Not enough information provided).

These questions require you to draw logical conclusions based **ONLY** on the facts provided. Be careful **NOT** to make assumptions or pull in previously known information or opinions when making a determination about any of the conclusions. For example, you may believe that all dogs are beautiful, or you may know that Mr. Hamilton owns a dog, but if such information is not provided in the stated facts on the exam, that information should **NOT** enter any of the determinations you make regarding the stated conclusions. Never allow your opinions or beliefs to influence your determination regarding any of the stated conclusions and be sure to base your determinations only on the facts that are given on the exam.

For these questions, the given facts will remain visible for your reference at any time while answering the related questions. You do **NOT** need to memorize any of the information presented. Also note that multiple conclusions will be asked about following each set of facts.

Important Note: The facts and conclusions you will see on the exam are **NOT** examples of information that is necessarily relevant to the job of a CPO A/B. The information and questions presented on the exam (and in this preparation guide) are designed to assess candidates' general ability to reason critically and logically through information to arrive at accurate conclusions.

Example Reasoning Questions:

Note that correct answers and explanations for these example questions are presented on page 24 of this booklet.

For the following example questions, read the list of facts. Then determine whether each conclusion is definitely true (True), definitely false (False), or whether not enough information has been given in the facts to make a determination about the stated conclusion (Not enough information provided).

Facts

Mr. Jackson works for Westmont Company.
Ms. Gaynor is a part-time employee.
All Westmont Company employees work full time.
Northern Lumber Company has some part-time employees.

18) Conclusion: Ms. Gaynor works for Westmont Company.

- A. True
- B. False
- C. Not enough information provided

19) Conclusion: Ms. Gaynor works for Northern Lumber Company.

- A. True
- B. False
- C. Not enough information provided

20) Conclusion: Mr. Jackson works full time.

- A. True
- B. False
- C. Not enough information provided

Critical Thinking Test Preparation

Practice can come in many forms for this section. Anything that requires critical thinking or logical reasoning is good practice for these types of questions. Practice playing logic games or doing logic puzzles is an excellent approach. Online quizzes may also be found that test your ability to think critically, apply logical reasoning, and draw sound conclusions based on given facts.

III. **Ability Test Example Question Answer Key and Test-Taking Strategies:**

This section presents the answer key for the 20 example questions presented in the prior section, along with explanations where needed of why the correct answer is correct. Where helpful, this section also includes tips for thinking about and responding to some of the specific types of questions that will be presented on the Ability Test component of the exam.

1) Memory (Visual and Factual)

Correct answers to each of the example questions are listed below.

Visual Memory Answer Key

Example Question 1) D. 4

Example Question 2) B. green

Example Question 3) D. blue tea kettle

Example Question 4) A. polka dots

Each of these answers can be verified by looking back at the scene that was presented.

Visual Memory Test-Taking Strategies

For these items, be sure to study and memorize as many details as you can from the scene. Pay attention to things like the types, numbers, locations, and colors of various objects or individuals in the scene, as well as patterns, shapes, or other details.

Factual Memory Answer Key

Example Question 5) B. 2

Example Question 6) A. orange

Example Question 7) A. 5

Example Question 8) B. The campers saw a man behaving suspiciously near their camp site.

Each of these answers can be verified by looking back at the passage that was presented.

Factual Memory Test-Taking Strategies

For these items, study and memorize as many details as you can from the passage. It is recommended that you first read through the entire passage one time just as you normally would read any paragraph. The purpose of this is to ensure you understand the information presented in the passage. Be sure to read through quickly, as you will be under a time limit. Then, go back through the passage and pay attention to as many details as you can regarding people, objects, or actions mentioned in the passage. If you find during your practice that this strategy does not work well for you or causes you to run out of time, then you may prefer to read through only once and attempt to retain as many details as possible during that single read-through.

2) Reading Comprehension

Correct answers to each of the example questions are listed below.

Reading Comprehension Answer Key

Example Question 9) B. capital letters.

The last sentence of the sample passage states that “They (attention lines) are typed entirely in capitals for mass mailings that will be presorted for automatic processing.” Thus, when addressing a large number (mass mailing) of letters that are to be sorted before mailing, the attention line should be typed in capital letters.

Example Question 10) C. commercial envelopes.

The second sentence of the passage states that “Attention lines are types in capital letters and lowercase letters for regular mailings using commercial envelopes.” Thus, commercial envelopes are using for regular mailings.

Example Question 11) D. provide guidelines for proper processing and mailing of letters.

As a whole, the passage discusses how to properly process and mail different types of letters (i.e., how the attention line should appear in one circumstance versus another, what kind of envelope is used, etc.).

Reading Comprehension Test-Taking Strategies

Though it is tempting, particularly when under a time limit, to start answering questions before reading the entire passage, the best strategy is to read the entire passage first, at least one time. Do not spend an excessive amount of time reading the passage. Certainly do not feel like you have to memorize any of the information in the passage, as it will always be visible on screen for every question that relates to that passage. But do take the time to read through the passage at least once before attempting to answer the associated questions. This will actually lead to a more streamlined and time-efficient approach to answering the questions. It will ensure that you are reading the passage as a whole at least once, which will help you figure out the purpose of the passage and ensure you have seen all of the information in the passage. If you try to read only a portion of the passage at a time while answering questions that pertain to just that portion, you are likely to miss parts of the information and even more likely to have difficulty piecing together the message that the passage as a whole is trying to convey.

3) Decision-Making

Correct answers to each of the example questions are listed below.

Decision-Making Answer Key

Example Question 12) A. Ship immediately

Example Question 13) C. Obtain authorization from Unit Supervisor

Example Question 14) B. Obtain authorization from Department Manager

For these questions, the shipping procedures listed provide various rules only for new orders. Therefore, all you need to pay attention to for these questions is the amount of the new order provided in each question. Any new orders between

\$1,000 and \$3,000 need authorization from the Unit Supervisor. This applies to question 13, as the new order amount is \$1,254.37. Any new orders over \$3,000 need authorization from the Department Manager. This applies to question 14, as the new order amount is \$3,000.50. All other new orders (i.e., new order less than \$1,000) should be shipped immediately. This applies to question 12, as the new order amount is only \$650.00.

Decision-Making Test-Taking Strategies

Paying close attention to details is the most important strategy for these questions. Make sure you are very carefully reading and following each detail of the instructions, rules, or procedures provided. Pay attention to the order or sequence of any procedures or rules stated, if applicable, and pay very close attention to any exceptions noted to a specific rule or instruction.

4) Forms Checking

Correct answers to each of the example questions are listed below.

Forms Checking Answer Key

Sample Item 15) Correct

The date mentioned in the paragraph is March 14, 2004. Though written in a different format, the information entered into the form in the Date of Report line matches the date mentioned in the paragraph, and is therefore Correct.

Sample Item 16) Correct

The paragraph mentioned that there was a check conducted of the 635 orders for the week. The form notes 635 as the number of orders for the week and is therefore Correct.

Sample Item 17) Incorrect

The paragraph mentioned that all orders were processed on time. The form, however, indicates “No” under the section “All Orders Processed on Time for the Week” and is therefore Incorrect.

Forms Checking Test-Taking Strategies

Attention to detail is critical for these types of items. When numbers are presented, pay close attention to the order of the numbers, as items may have the same numbers in them, but not in the same order – e.g., 123 in the paragraph versus 132 in the form. If the order is different, then you should select Incorrect. Also pay close attention to numbers that are different but at first glance may look the same. It may be easy, for example, to confuse 6 with 9 or confuse 3 with 8 if you are trying to work quickly. If there are decimals or symbols included in a number, pay close attention to the placement of those symbols. For example, 11.00 is NOT the same as 1.100. If a description is provided, pay close attention to each word in the description to make sure it matches what was provided in the paragraph. For example, “400 large, blue buttons” is NOT the same as “400 large, black buttons,” but the difference may be easy to overlook if you are not being careful or are trying to move too quickly.

5) Reasoning

Correct answers to each of the example questions are listed below.

Reasoning Answer Key

Example Question 18) B. False

The facts state that “All Westmont Company employees work full time” and that “Ms. Gaynor is a part-time employee.” It must therefore be false that Ms. Gaynor works for Westmont Company.

Example Question 19) C. Not enough information provided

The facts state that “Northern Lumber Company has some part-time employees” and that “Ms. Gaynor is a part-time employee.” It is therefore possible that Ms. Gaynor works for Northern Lumber Company; however, the correct answer is NOT A. True because that conclusion cannot be drawn for certain – i.e., is NOT definitely true. This is because the facts do not stipulate that everyone who works part-time works for Northern Lumber Company, or that Northern Lumber is the only company that employs part-time employees. Ms. Gaynor could work somewhere else and still work part-time. The correct answer is therefore C.

Example Question 20) A. True

The facts state that “All Westmont Company employees work full time” and that “Mr. Jackson works for Westmont Company.” Therefore, it must be true that Mr. Jackson works full time.

Reasoning Test-Taking Strategies

Attention to detail is critical for these types of questions. Pay close attention to words like “all,” “some,” “only,” or “most.” For example, if the facts state that (1) all part-time employees work at XYZ Company and that (2) Mrs. Sample is a part-time employee, then it logically follows that Mrs. Sample must work at XYZ Company (because all part-time employees work there). On the other hand, if the facts state that (1) XYZ Company employees only part-time employees and that (2) Mrs. Sample is a part-time employee, then it cannot be logically concluded that Mrs. Sample necessarily works at XYZ Company. In this case, XYZ Company employs only part-time employees, which means that all employees who do work for XYZ Company are part-time. This does not mean, however, that XYZ Company is the only company that employs part-time employees; a part-time employee (e.g., Mrs. Sample) may very well work at a different company that also employs part-time workers.

Be careful NOT to make assumptions or pull in previously known information or opinions when making a determination about any of the conclusions listed. For example, you may believe that all dogs are beautiful, or you may know that Mr. Hamilton owns a dog, but if such information is not provided in the stated facts on the exam, that information should NOT enter into any of the determinations you make regarding the stated conclusions. Never allow your opinions or beliefs to influence your determination regarding any of the stated conclusions. Be sure to base your determinations only on the facts that are given on the exam.

IV. General Tips for Completing the Ability Test:

This section presents general tips that may help you to more successfully get through the Ability Test component of the exam.

1. **Make sure you understand the question.** Read each question carefully. Try to answer the question before you look at the choices. If you know the answer, compare it to the available choices and choose the closest alternative.
2. **Use the process of elimination.** If you don't know the answer to a question, first eliminate those choices that are clearly wrong. This will save you time by reducing the number of answers you have to re-read and re-evaluate before making your final choice.
3. **Tackle difficult questions methodically.** Don't get bogged down if there is a word or sentence you do not understand. If you come to an unfamiliar word or a sentence you do not understand, re-read the information to understand the general message of the passage. You may get the main idea from the rest of the question without knowing a specific word or understanding a specific sentence within the question.
4. **Read carefully.** Mistakes in responding to Ability Test questions often occur because a candidate overlooked a key word or phrase. Be sure to identify the key words and phrases in the question, check the details of the possible answers with the details you identified, one-by-one. If every detail doesn't match, consider that answer suspect and try another, always keeping in mind you are looking for the single best possible answer.

SECTION 3: WORK STYLES QUESTIONNAIRE OVERVIEW

In addition to the cognitive and ability requirements placed upon CPO A/Bs, certain personal characteristics are also important to effective performance. The Work Styles Questionnaire will be used to assess these important characteristics.

You should use approximately 25 minutes of the total exam administration time to complete the Work Styles Questionnaire. No preparation is necessary (or expected) for the Work Styles Questionnaire component of the exam. However, this component will be scored, and your score will be combined with your scores on the Ability Test and Situational Judgment Test to determine your continued eligibility in the selection process.

The Work Styles Questionnaire contains a series of 135 short statements. You will read each statement (see examples below) and then decide the degree to which you agree with each statement as it applies to you.

I. Characteristics Measured:

The Work Styles Questionnaire measures characteristics categorized into the following five (5) dimensions:

1. **Problem-Solving and Decision-Making Style:** This dimension includes characteristics related to one's tendency to critically evaluate information and identify problems, along with one's preference for generating new or innovative ideas for solving those problems or employing well-established, more traditional solutions. This dimension also includes measures of one's tendency to prefer dealing with facts and figures or with feelings and emotions.
2. **Accountability and Responsibility:** This dimension includes characteristics related to one's tendency to be conscientious, reliable, thorough, detail-oriented, and punctual; to take responsibility for one's own mistakes and to hold others accountable; to behave in a professional, honest, and trustworthy manner; to plan ahead, prioritize, and set goals; and to adhere to rules, procedures, policies, and guidelines.
3. **Adaptability and Composure:** This dimension includes characteristics related to one's tendency to be open to change and willing to adapt behavior to suit different situations or interactions; to remain calm and composed in difficult or emergency situations; to persist through obstacles and setbacks and maintain optimism; and to be tough-minded and tolerant of criticism.
4. **Independence and Initiative:** This dimension includes characteristics related to one's tendency to take initiative and be willing to work independently with minimal supervision, direction, or assistance; and to be achieving and ambitious, seeking to improve one's performance and capabilities.
5. **Interpersonal Characteristics:** This dimension includes characteristics related to how one interacts with others, including one's tendency/willingness to work cooperatively as a member of a team; to demonstrate empathy and compassion for others; to be willing and able to interact politely, respectfully, and equitably with others at all levels, from all backgrounds; and to be comfortable interacting with others and building relationships.

II. Work Styles Questionnaire Instructions and Sample Questions:

On the Work Styles Questionnaire, you will be instructed to:

- Consider a number of statements.
- Rate each statement based on how well it applies to you, by choosing one of the scale points below.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
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- Choose “Unsure” ONLY when you are truly not sure how to rate the statement as it applies to you.

The following are example statements similar to the statements that might appear on the exam. These specific examples are presented ONLY for illustrative purposes and do not actually appear on the Work Styles Questionnaire component of the exam.

1. I set goals and strive to achieve them.
2. I prefer to work alone.
3. I take time to think about why people do things.
4. I find myself taking control in group situations.
5. I find that it is not necessary to have all of the facts before making a decision.
6. Insults don't bother me.

III. General Tips for Completing the Work Styles Questionnaire:

This section presents general tips that may help you to more successfully get through the Work Styles Questionnaire component of the exam.

1. **Make sure you understand the rating scale.** Read the rating scale carefully, so you know which points on the scale indicate agreement with the statement as it applies to you versus disagreement with the statement as it applies to you.
2. **Work quickly.** Do not spend too much time thinking about your responses to these statements. Respond with your first instinct regarding how closely the statement applies to you.
3. **Respond honestly.** It is possible that others may have suggested or will suggest that you respond in certain ways to try to increase your chances of success, even if those responses do not accurately reflect your typical behaviors, attitudes, or feelings. There are two important reasons why you should respond honestly. First, the Work Styles Questionnaire contains internal mechanisms that can be used to identify candidates who are not responding honestly. If the pattern of your responses suggests that you are not responding honestly, you may be disqualified from the selection process. Second, research has shown that candidates who attempt to guess what kinds of responses are desirable on the Work Styles Questionnaire very often guess incorrectly and thereby hurt their chances of success on the assessment.
4. **Respond to every statement.** Even if no single point on the rating scale describes you or the way you feel perfectly, be sure to provide a response to every statement. Candidates who do not respond to all statements on the Work Styles Questionnaire may be disqualified from the selection process.

SECTION 4: SITUATIONAL JUDGMENT TEST OVERVIEW

The Situational Judgment Test will ask you to consider the role of CPO A/B and view a series of 8 job relevant scenarios. Following each scenario, you will view 4 to 6 potential actions that the CPO A/B in that scenario might take in response to the situation presented. You will be asked to rate the effectiveness of each action as a potential response to the situation described. The purpose of this section is to assess your judgment in recognizing effective vs ineffective behaviors as they relate to particular behavioral dimensions described later in this section.

You should use approximately 30 minutes of the total exam administration time to complete the Situational Judgment Test. No preparation is necessary (or expected) for the Situational Judgment Test component of the exam outside of reading and understanding the information presented in this guide. However, this component will be scored, and your score will be combined with your scores on the Ability Test and Work Styles Questionnaire to determine your continued eligibility in the selection process.

I. Characteristics Measured:

The Situational Judgment Test was designed to assess a series of abilities or characteristics found to be important to effective job performance in the context of situations encountered by CPO A/Bs. Based on the job analysis results, the five (5) characteristics to be assessed during the Situational Judgment Test are identified below. In other words, the Situational Judgment Test scenarios reflect or align with the characteristics listed below:

1. **Problem-Solving and Decision-Making Style:** Ability to recognize or anticipate problems, generate effective solutions to problems of varying complexity, and employ sound judgment/decision-making based on reasonableness and knowledge of relevant laws, policies, procedures, facts, and circumstances.
2. **Accountability and Responsibility:** Ability to be reliable and assume one's share of the workload; ability to adhere to and apply policies, procedures, safety protocols, and standards in an appropriate, fair, and consistent manner; ability to take responsibility for one's own mistakes and to hold others accountable and correct problem behavior in a timely, fair, and consistent manner; ability to consistently demonstrate integrity, honesty, and professionalism in all activities; ability to be thorough and detail-oriented in one's work (e.g., report writing).
3. **Adaptability and Composure:** Ability to adjust to unexpected changes on the job (e.g., new schedules, new policies, job transfers); ability to manage effectively through difficult work situations (e.g., time pressure, emotional strain), persist through obstacles or setbacks to get the job done, and maintain optimism and bounce back after things go wrong; ability to remain calm, professional, and composed in stressful, adverse, or emergency situations, including when facing criticism or verbal abuse from others.
4. **Independence and Initiative:** Ability to work and make decisions on one's own with minimal supervision, direction, or assistance, while still being willing to follow direction from others and understand when to ask for help; ability to take initiative to improve one's wellness and performance, including accepting feedback and constructive criticism from others without being defensive or frustrated.

5. **Interpersonal Characteristics**: Ability to interact politely, respectfully, and helpfully with others, including coworkers, supervisors, and community members, regardless of demographic, social, or cultural background; ability to build and maintain positive working relationships and work as a member of a team or in cooperation with coworkers, supervisors, and other agencies.

II. Situational Judgment Test (SJT) Instructions, Scoring, and Example Items:

SJT Instructions

On the Situational Judgment Test, you will be asked to consider the role of CPO A/B and will be presented with a series of approximately 8 job relevant scenarios. Each scenario will describe a job situation which a CPO A/B might face. Following each scenario, you will be presented with 4 to 6 potential actions that the CPO A/B in that scenario might take in response to the situation presented. You will be asked to read, consider, and rate the effectiveness of each potential action using the following rating scale:

1 Highly Ineffective	2 Ineffective	3 Effective	4 Highly Effective
Very likely to worsen the situation OR Very unlikely to resolve the issue	Likely to worsen the situation OR Unlikely to resolve the issue	Likely to improve the situation OR Likely to resolve some or part of the issue	Very likely to improve the situation OR Likely to resolve most or all of the issue

When rating the effectiveness of each potential action, you should consider only the information presented in the scenario. If knowledge of any department-specific policy or procedure is needed to determine appropriate responses to a scenario, that information will be explicitly provided in the scenario description.

SJT Scoring

All responses on the Situational Judgment Test will be scored against an established scoring key. Each response will be worth a minimum of zero points and a maximum of two points. Note that candidates rate the effectiveness of each potential action the CPO A/B in that scenario might take using a scale that ranges from Highly Ineffective to Highly Effective. Each potential action that is rated by a candidate is considered a “response” on the Situational Judgment Test.

The scoring key for each potential action (i.e., the “correct” or most appropriate effectiveness rating for that scenario response) was determined by a group of Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) representative of CPO A/Bs across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. These SMEs determined the most appropriate effectiveness rating (i.e., the scoring key) for each potential action.

Candidates will receive one point for each response if the effectiveness rating identified by the candidate is on the same “side” of the effectiveness scale as the scoring key, plus one additional point per response if the effectiveness rating identified by the candidate matches the scoring key exactly. Zero points will be awarded for a response if the effectiveness rating identified by the candidate is on the opposite “side” of the effectiveness scale from the scoring key. Illustrative examples of the scoring process are provided below.

Candidate Effectiveness Rating	Scoring Key	Points Awarded to Candidate	Explanation
Highly Effective OR Effective	Ineffective	0	The candidate's response is on the "effective side" of the rating scale, and the scoring key is on the "ineffective side" of the rating scale. The candidate's response is therefore on the opposite side of the scale from the scoring key, and 0 points are awarded.
Highly Ineffective	Ineffective	1	The candidate's response is on the "ineffective side" of the rating scale, and the scoring key is on the "ineffective side" of the rating scale. The candidate's response is therefore on the same side of the scale as the scoring key, and 1 point is awarded.
Ineffective	Ineffective	2	The candidate's response is on the same side of the scale ("Ineffective") as the scoring key, so 1 initial point is awarded. In addition, the candidate's rating of "Ineffective" matches the scoring key exactly, so an additional 1 point is awarded. The candidate therefore receives 2 points for this response.

All scoring computations will be performed by Talogy using the scoring key established by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts SMEs.

SJT Example Items

Some examples are provided below to give you an idea of what to expect on the Situational Judgment Test. These example scenarios and potential actions are meant to illustrate the nature of the test you will complete. The format (i.e., instructions, scenario description, listing of potential actions with associated effectiveness rating scale) mirrors the format you will see during the actual Situational Judgment Test.

For each example scenario, the scoring key (i.e., the effectiveness rating that is considered most accurate) is provided on the page following the scenario. You may use the scenarios as practice items and then look to the page following the scenario for the answer key.

The final Situational Judgment Test items that appear on the actual exam have been vetted/approved by Commonwealth of Massachusetts Subject Matter Experts, who have also determined the official scoring key for each potential scenario response. However, because the items below are merely illustrative example items, these items have not been through this vetting process, nor has the scoring key indicated for these example items been officially determined/approved by Commonwealth of Massachusetts experts; however, the scoring key provided for the sample items follows the same logic and judgment process as that used by the experts to develop the key for the actual SJT.

At the beginning of the Situational Judgment Test on the actual exam, you will see the following instructions:

The Situational Judgment Test is comprised of 8 scenarios with 4-6 potential actions per scenario. Each brief scenario describes a situation similar to what a Correctional Program Officer (CPO A/B) in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts might encounter on the job. After reading each scenario, you will be asked to rate the effectiveness of several options for addressing the challenge presented in that scenario.

These scenarios are designed to assess your judgment regarding effective versus ineffective CPO A/B behaviors in various job situations.

Important considerations when rating the effectiveness of the potential actions listed as possible responses to each scenario:

- Please rate the effectiveness of all of the potential actions listed. Note that the same rating (e.g., Ineffective, Highly Effective) may be used for more than one action for a given scenario.
- You are not required to use all four of the effectiveness ratings within a single scenario. In other words, within any given scenario, you may find that there are no listed actions to which you give a rating of Highly Effective, or no responses to which you give a rating of Ineffective, etc.
- You do not need to consider information outside of what is provided in the scenario. Ask yourself, "Given the information presented **in this scenario**, how effective do I think each of the listed actions are?"
- The listed actions are each to be considered and rated independent of one another. The potential scenario responses are not listed in chronological order and are not intended to build on one another in any way. Be sure to rate each potential action separately.
- The listed actions may not reflect how you would *personally* respond to that scenario, and do not cover *all* possible responses to a given scenario. Please rate the effectiveness of the actions listed, even if they do not specifically include the actions you would take, and even if you can imagine other more or less effective ways to respond.
- The listed actions are to be rated in terms of their *effectiveness* in addressing the challenge described in the scenario. You are **NOT** to rate the *likelihood* that someone (including you) might take the action listed. Instead, you are to rate, if the individual in that scenario did take the listed action, how effective that action would be.

On each page of the Situational Judgment Test, above each individual scenario present, you will see the following reminder of the overall instructions:

Instructions: Read the brief scenario description below, followed by a number of potential actions the CPO A/B might take in response to the situation described. Rate the effectiveness of each separate action, independent of the other potential actions, using the rating scale provided. Be sure to rate the effectiveness of ALL of the potential actions. You may use the same rating (e.g., Highly Effective, Ineffective) for multiple actions within a single scenario. Further, within any given scenario, you are NOT required to use every effectiveness rating; there may be no listed actions to which you give a rating of Ineffective, for example, or no actions to which you give a rating of Highly Effective.

SJT Example 1

Instructions: Read the brief scenario description below, followed by a number of potential actions the CPO A/B might take in response to the situation described. Rate the effectiveness of each separate action, independent of the other potential actions, using the rating scale provided. Be sure to rate the effectiveness of all of the potential actions. You may use the same rating (e.g., Highly Effective, Ineffective) for multiple actions within a single scenario. Further, within any given scenario, you are NOT required to use every effectiveness rating; there may be no listed actions to which you give a rating of Ineffective, for example, or no actions to which you give a rating of Highly Effective.

Scenario

CPO Cooke is entering the office as his coworker, CPO Jones, is leaving. The two greet one another and CPO Cooke enters the office to find a large coffee spill all over the floor right inside the door.

		1 Highly Ineffective	2 Ineffective	3 Effective	4 Highly Effective
		Very likely to worsen the situation OR Very unlikely to resolve the issue	Likely to worsen the situation OR Unlikely to resolve the issue	Likely to improve the situation OR Likely to resolve some or part of the issue	Very likely to improve the situation OR Likely to resolve most or all of the issue
Potential Scenario Responses					
A)	CPO Cooke cleans up the spill and goes about his work as usual.	①	②	③	④
B)	CPO Cooke cleans up the spill, then calls CPO Jones to let him know he should not leave that kind of a mess unattended.	①	②	③	④
C)	CPO Cooke cleans up the spill, then lets the supervisor know that someone left a mess in the office and did not clean it up.	①	②	③	④
D)	CPO Cooke leaves the spill as is and goes about his work as usual, as he is not the one who created the mess.	①	②	③	④
E)	CPO Cooke leaves the office to track down CPO Jones and tells him to come back and clean up the spill that he ignored on his way out of the office.	①	②	③	④

In SJT Example 1 listed on the previous page:

- Option A is considered Effective (3; Likely to improve the situation OR Likely to resolve some or part of the issue) because CPO Cooke is taking care of the spill, which could be a slip-and-fall hazard if left as is. However, CPO Cooke does not address the fact that his colleague, CPO Jones, must have ignored the spill on his way out of the office. Thus, option A resolves only some or part of the issue.
- Option B is considered Highly Effective (4; Very likely to improve the situation OR Likely to resolve most or all of the issue) because CPO Cooke is both cleaning up the spill and addressing the issue with his colleague, CPO Jones.
- Option C is considered Effective (3; Likely to improve the situation OR Likely to resolve some or part of the issue) because CPO Cooke is taking care of the spill, which resolves some or part of the issue. CPO Cooke is also letting the supervisor know that someone left a mess and did not clean it up, but without knowing who left the mess, the supervisor cannot take specific action to address the behavior. Thus, option C still resolves only some or part of the issue.
- Option D is considered Highly Ineffective (1; Very likely to worsen the situation OR Very unlikely to resolve the issue) because no action is being taken to address the spill, which could be a slip-and-fall hazard, or to address the colleague who ignored the spill.
- Option E is considered Ineffective (2; Likely to worsen the situation OR Unlikely to resolve the issue) because, although CPO Cooke is at least attempting to address the issue with CPO Jones, he is leaving the spill in order to do so. This could be a slip-and-fall hazard in the meantime while CPO Cooke tracks down Jones. Further, if CPO Jones refuses to come back and clean up the spill, or simply is unable to come back right at that moment, then the spill will still not be addressed in the end.

SJT Example 2

Instructions: Read the brief scenario description below, followed by a number of potential actions the CPO A/B might take in response to the situation described. Rate the effectiveness of each separate action, independent of the other potential actions, using the rating scale provided. Be sure to rate the effectiveness of all of the potential actions. You may use the same rating (e.g., Highly Effective, Ineffective) for multiple actions within a single scenario. Further, within any given scenario, you are NOT required to use every effectiveness rating; there may be no listed actions to which you give a rating of Ineffective, for example, or no actions to which you give a rating of Highly Effective.

Scenario

CPO Nesmith is partnered for a lengthy assignment with a newly transferred CPO, Jackson. CPO Nesmith has heard that CPO Jackson has a reputation for being difficult to work with. On their first shift together, CPO Nesmith attempts to make conversation with Jackson, make her feel welcome, and get to know one another. CPO Nesmith offers to share any information with Jackson about the assignment, the location, or the team that might help Jackson given that she is a new transfer. CPO Jackson is very curt in her responses and, although focused on the job, seems uninterested in interacting with CPO Nesmith at all.

		1 Highly Ineffective	2 Ineffective	3 Effective	4 Highly Effective
		Very likely to worsen the situation OR Very unlikely to resolve the issue	Likely to worsen the situation OR Unlikely to resolve the issue	Likely to improve the situation OR Likely to resolve some or part of the issue	Very likely to improve the situation OR Likely to resolve most or all of the issue
Potential Scenario Responses					
A)	CPO Nesmith continues being polite and upbeat when talking with CPO Jackson, hoping that CPO Jackson will respond in a friendlier manner over time.	①	②	③	④
B)	CPO Nesmith leaves CPO Jackson alone, trusting that Jackson will ask if she has questions for him about anything.	①	②	③	④
C)	CPO Nesmith explains to CPO Jackson that they are both going to have a very long and difficult time working together if she is not more cooperative and outgoing.	①	②	③	④
D)	CPO Nesmith tells his supervisor that CPO Jackson is too difficult to work with and that he would like to be partnered with someone else.	①	②	③	④
E)	CPO Nesmith leaves CPO Jackson alone and tells his coworkers that, from what he has seen so far, Jackson's reputation for being difficult to work with is true.	①	②	③	④

In SJT Example 2 listed on the previous page:

- Option A is considered Highly Effective (4; Very likely to improve the situation OR Likely to resolve most or all of the issue) because CPO Nesmith is attempting to build a relationship and a rapport with CPO Jackson and is not giving up on the basis of one interaction.
- Option B is considered Effective (3; Likely to improve the situation OR Likely to resolve some or part of the issue) because CPO Nesmith is trusting that his colleague will behave professionally and will interact with him appropriately as needed to perform the job. Although CPO Nesmith is not attempting to continue to build rapport with Jackson, he also is not doing anything to harm a future relationship with his new partner.
- Option C is considered Ineffective (2; Likely to worsen the situation OR Unlikely to resolve the issue) because CPO Jackson's behavior is somewhat confrontational for a brand new colleague on their first shift together. This behavior is likely to worsen the situation more than it helps.
- Option D is considered Highly Ineffective (1; Very likely to worsen the situation OR Very unlikely to resolve the issue) because not only is CPO Nesmith not attempting to continue to build rapport with CPO Jackson, but is giving up entirely on any relationship with his new colleague by asking to be partnered with someone else after only one shift.
- Option E is considered Ineffective (2; Likely to worsen the situation OR Unlikely to resolve the issue) because, although CPO Nesmith may fully believe that what he is telling his colleagues is true, nothing is being resolved by telling them that Jackson is difficult to work with. In fact, this has the potential to worsen the situation if word gets back to CPO Jackson regarding what CPO Nesmith is saying, or if Nesmith's colleagues begin treating CPO Jackson poorly because of what Nesmith has said about her.

III. Situational Judgment Test-Taking Strategies:

This section presents test-taking strategies that may help you to more successfully get through the Situational Judgment Test component of the exam.

1. Make sure you understand the test format and requirements

- a) Read all directions carefully.
- b) Read each scenario and all potential actions carefully before attempting to rate them. Scenarios and potential actions are brief, so re-reading may be a good use of your time to ensure you have not misunderstood anything in the scenario or potential actions.
- c) Make sure you know how to use the rating scale to rate the effectiveness of each potential action.
- d) Make sure you know how much time you have remaining to complete the test. As you take the test, check the timer on the computer periodically so that you can keep track of the amount of time remaining in the testing period.

2. Proceed through the scenarios strategically

- a) Break down the rating scale. First, think about whether each potential action for the given scenario is generally “effective” or generally “ineffective.” Imagine the person in the situation responding in the way that is described in the given item. Then think about whether that action would generally make the situation better or worse, or think about whether that action would be generally likely or unlikely to help resolve the issue. When thinking about the ramifications of the given action, you may want to consider the impact that action would have on others described in the scenario. Consider things such as whether the action promotes or inhibits safety, whether the action is consistent with any expressly stated rules or policies provided in the scenario, and whether the action demonstrates strong levels of responsibility, adaptability, leadership, professionalism, etc. If you believe the given action would make the situation better, or would help to resolve the issue (at least in part), you should respond by selecting a rating on the “effective” side of the scale. If you believe the given action would make the situation worse, or would be unlikely to help resolve the issue, you should respond by selecting a rating on the “ineffective” side of the scale.

Once you have determined whether the potential action is effective or ineffective, then think about the degree to which that response is either effective or ineffective. If a given response is extremely or very likely to improve the situation, if the response would make the situation much better, or if the response would be likely to help resolve most or all of the issue, then you should select the “Highly Effective” rating. If you believe a given response is somewhat likely to improve the situation, if the response would make the situation a little bit better, or if the response would be likely to help resolve some or part of the issue, then you should select the “Effective” rating. Similarly, on the ineffective side of the scale, if you believe an action would be extremely or very likely to worsen the situation, would worsen the situation to a large degree, or would be very unlikely to help resolve the issue, you should select the “Highly Ineffective” rating. If you believe an action would be somewhat likely to worsen the situation, would make the

situation somewhat worse, or would be unlikely to help resolve the issue, you should select the “Ineffective” rating.

- b) Rate the “easier” potential actions first. As you read the potential actions for a given scenario, you may find that some of those actions are easy to rate (e.g., they are clearly “Highly Effective” or clearly “Ineffective”). Rate those potential actions first to get them out of the way and then spend time thinking about the actions that may be a little more difficult to judge. Don’t forget to use the strategy described above in step (a) to evaluate the effectiveness of the potential actions.
- c) Take a mental break when needed. If you feel that your ability to concentrate is decreasing at points during the test, take a brief mental break. Close your eyes and take a minute to clear your mind and relax. Of course, you must keep in mind the time limit for the test, but a brief mental break may well be worth the few seconds or minutes it takes.
- d) Answer every question. You will NOT lose any more credit for an incorrect response than you will for no response, so even if you must guess, rate every potential action. If the test period is about to end, and you believe there will be several scenarios that you will not be able to get to, reserve some time (e.g., 60 seconds) at the end of the test period to rate the scenario’s potential actions, even if you must guess. While your guesses may not be correct, the alternative is to leave these actions blank and be assured of getting them wrong.

3. Use extra time wisely

Once you complete the test, go back and review your responses to make sure they still make sense to you as you read through them again. Pay particular attention to scenarios and potential actions where you may have initially questioned your responses. Re-read them, think through them again in a systematic way, and make sure you are comfortable with your responses. You will not get extra points for completing the test before the time limit expires, so if time remains, review as many of your responses as time allows.

Remember, test administrators will be available to help every candidate, but only to clarify procedures. If you have any procedural questions, ask for assistance before the test begins.

4. Use the rating scale appropriately

Candidates may mistakenly indicate a rating for a potential action other than the one they intended to indicate, simply due to misreading the scale. Be sure to make note of the scale anchors (1 = Highly Ineffective, 2 = Ineffective, 3 = Effective, 4 = Highly Effective) and the directionality of the rating scale - lower ratings indicate ineffective responses and higher ratings indicate effective responses.

In a similar vein, note that the rating scale asks about the *effectiveness* of each potential action. You are NOT to rate the *likelihood* that someone (including you) might take the action listed. Instead, you are to rate, if the individual in that scenario did take the listed action, how effective that action would be.

5. Avoid false assumptions

Candidates may fail to fully read the instructions, or may assume they already know how to proceed without reading the instructions, especially when there is pressure to finish before the test time limit. The instructions for rating the potential actions will be presented with each new scenario. It is important that you understand the instructions before rating the potential actions.

Important Note: You do NOT have to select a different rating for every potential action to the same scenario. You may rate more than one action as Effective, more than one as Highly Ineffective, etc. Similarly, you do NOT have to select every point on the scale when evaluating the potential actions within each scenario. In other words, it is NOT necessary to assume that every scenario will include at least one potential action at each of the four levels of effectiveness. Within any given scenario, you may find that there are no potential actions to which you give a rating of “Highly Effective,” or no actions to which you give a rating of “Ineffective,” etc.

An example is provided below of a scenario with four potential actions. The darkened numbered circles indicate the effectiveness rating selected by the candidate for each potential action. Notice that, in this example, a rating of “Effective” is given to two of the potential actions, and the rating of “Highly Ineffective” is not used at all. As previously mentioned, there is no requirement to select a rating from each point on the scale for the potential actions for the same scenario.

Scenario Example

A brief description of the scenario involving a CPO A/B will be presented here.

Potential Actions		1 Highly Ineffective	2 Ineffective	3 Effective	4 Highly Effective
		Very likely to worsen the situation OR Very unlikely to resolve the issue	Likely to worsen the situation OR Unlikely to resolve the issue	Likely to improve the situation OR Likely to resolve some or part of the issue	Very likely to improve the situation OR Likely to resolve most or all of the issue
A)	CPO Sample takes action A in response to the scenario above.	①	②	③	④
B)	CPO Sample takes action B in response to the scenario above.	①	②	③	④
C)	CPO Sample takes action C in response to the scenario above.	①	②	③	④
D)	CPO Sample takes action D in response to the scenario above.	①	②	③	④

6. Consider and rate the potential scenario actions independently

Within any given scenario, the listed actions that the CPO A/B might take in response

to that scenario are NOT to be viewed as chronological or as interdependent in any way. The responses do NOT build on one another. Instead, each potential action listed for a scenario is meant to be viewed and rated independently from the other actions. Be sure to rate each potential action separately.

7. Read carefully

Be sure to read carefully and thoroughly, re-reading if there is time. Make note of key words or phrases that may indicate the most effective ways in which to respond to a situation. Be sure not to overlook critical words such as “not” – for example, “this individual has not been trained to operate this particular piece of equipment.” Overlooking the word “not” in this phrase could lead to faulty assumptions about the most effective actions to take in a scenario that involves assigning the best resources to operate equipment.

8. Stick to the scenario as presented

When evaluating Situational Judgment Test potential actions, it is tempting to make assumptions or jump to conclusions based on preconceived notions or past experiences related to the scenario being described. Be careful NOT to make assumptions or jump to conclusions. Focus on the information provided in the scenario. Do not assume or add information or think about “what ifs” such as, “If the immediate supervisor has this type of personality, I might respond differently,” or “If this has been an ongoing issue, then this might be an appropriate response,” etc. Focus solely on the information provided when reading and thinking about the scenario and potential actions. If there is added information that is needed (e.g., information about personality conflicts, background stating that an issue is ongoing or has occurred repeatedly), that information will be clearly stated in the scenario. If some challenge, problem, or conflict is not stated in the scenario itself, do NOT assume it exists and do NOT let such an assumption impact your responses.

Similarly, focus on the potential actions that are provided. It may be that the course of action that YOU would take is not listed as an option, or that you can think of other, more or less effective, alternative actions that are not listed as potential actions. Do not allow yourself to be too distracted by thinking about alternative actions that are not provided. Focus on the potential actions that are listed, and the context provided around those actions in the scenario.

9. Avoid common rating errors or biases

When using any kind of rating scale, such as the effectiveness rating scale that will be used to rate the potential actions, candidates often tend to have natural biases that lead them to only use portions of the scale. One common bias is to use only the extremities of the scale – in this case, only “Highly Effective” or “Highly Ineffective.” Another common bias is to avoid those extreme ratings and only use the middle points of the scale – in this case, only “Effective” or “Ineffective.” Other common biases involve being overly “lenient” by rating every potential action somewhere on the “effective” side of the scale, or instead being overly “critical” by rating every potential action somewhere on the “ineffective” side of the scale.

The key to overcoming these errors or biases is to re-read the meaning of each anchor and systematically think through how effective each potential action is. Look back at

strategy 2a (*Proceed through the scenarios strategically – Break down the rating scale*) as a reminder.

10. Take the time to think through your ratings

When there is an overall time limit to the test, it is tempting to rush through the reading of the scenarios and the rating of the potential actions. Note, you should have sufficient time to read carefully through all the scenarios and potential actions. Do not agonize for several minutes over one potential action but do take the time needed to carefully read and consider the action. Some additional tips for systematically thinking through your ratings of the potential actions include:

- Have an answer in mind before you look over the potential actions. Thinking about the most effective action to a scenario may help you anticipate what effective versus ineffective actions might look like, which can aid you in rating the potential actions that are listed. Be careful, however, not to dismiss all listed potential actions as ineffective simply because they do not match exactly what YOU might do in that situation. Keep in mind there may be several effective (and by extension several ineffective) actions to addressing any given challenge.
- Consider the rationale behind your rating of each potential action. If someone were to ask you why you rated a particular action as Ineffective, as Highly Effective, etc., would you be able to provide a reason? If not, you may wish to re-think your rating.

CONCLUSION

We hope that this Guide gives you a better understanding of what to expect for the Correctional Program Officer A/B (entry-level) examination and provides you with some suggestions for preparation. The suggestions provided here are not exhaustive; we encourage you to engage in additional preparation strategies that you believe will enhance your chances of performing effectively on the exam.

BEST OF LUCK!