

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

**Environmental Police Officer
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 EPO entry-level 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 Environmental Police Officer (EPO) examination. The EPO 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), Understanding Graphic Material (e.g., maps, charts, tables), Mathematical Computation, Decision Making, Critical Thinking, English Language, and Written Expression. These abilities have been determined to be important to the effective performance of entry-level EPOs 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 entry-level EPOs.

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 entry-level EPOs.

All three EPO 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 EPO entry-level 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 EPO candidates in August 2024. 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 EPO entry-level 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 45 minutes (165 minutes) to read the test instructions and take the three components of the EPO 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 EPO 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 90 minutes on the Ability Test, about 25 minutes on the Work Styles Questionnaire, and about 35 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. 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 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 (more on this in bullet #8 below). 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 entry-level EPOs in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The Ability Test contains 88 questions. Each question will be followed by three, four or five response alternatives (A through C, A through D, or A through E). For each question, you should identify the single best answer and record the response chosen.

You should use approximately 90 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 seven (7) 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. **Understanding Graphic Material:** The ability to read and interpret illustrated material such as maps, charts, graphs, and tables.
3. **Mathematical Computation:** The ability to solve basic arithmetic problems (add, subtract, multiply, divide) using whole numbers, decimals, percents, and simple fractions.
4. **Decision Making:** The ability to read a set of rules or procedures, follow them, and apply them to new situations.
5. **Critical Thinking:** The ability to analyze and integrate facts and draw valid conclusions based on the logical implications of such facts.
6. **English Language:** The ability to recognize and apply correct spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, and word usage.
7. **Written Expression:** The ability to determine the most effective way to report information in writing clearly, logically, and concisely.

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 28-36. Try to answer the sample questions yourself before looking at the answer key.

Example Visual Memory Questions:

Note that correct answers and explanations for these example questions are presented on page 28 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 sauce pan

- 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.

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 29 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. **Understanding Graphic Material:**

There are three types of Understanding Graphic Material questions that may appear on the exam.

The first type requires you to examine, understand, and interpret information presented in a table. For these questions, it is important to pay attention to all of the information presented, including the title of the table and the individual column or row headers that explain what kind of information is presented in the table. Make sure you understand what each cell in the table means, and how information is related across columns or rows. When reading the questions, pay close attention to how the question is worded so you know whether the question is referring to a particular row, column, or cell in the table, or whether the question is asking you to identify a pattern or trend presented in the table (e.g., the highest or lowest value, differences between certain types of information presented in various rows or columns).

For these questions, the table will remain visible for your reference at any time while answering the questions related to that table. You do NOT need to memorize any information presented in the table. Also note that multiple questions will be asked about each table that is presented on the exam.

Example Understanding Tables Questions:

Note that correct answers and explanations for these questions are presented on pages 29-30 of this booklet.

Example Table 1: July Catch and Release Fishing Derby Winners

Fish Species	Competitor Division	Fish Length (Inches)	Winner Name
Albacore	Adult	29.5"	Sam Ramos
	Junior	27"	Jamie Conley
Bluefish	Adult	39"	Sheila Merrell
	Junior	36"	James Davis
Catfish	Adult	36"	Sam Ramos
Rainbow Trout	Junior	23"	Laura Freeman
Striped Bass	Adult	47"	David Amato
	Adult	47"	Rick Lambert
	Junior	45"	Jackson Lambert
Tuna	Adult	86"	John Brandt
	Junior	90"	Jamie Conley
Walleye	Adult	23.5"	Mason Montegna

- 9) The longest fish caught during the derby was caught by:
- A. Jamie Conley
 - B. Rick Lambert
 - C. Jackson Lambert
 - D. John Brandt
- 10) The species of fish that had a tie for longest fish caught in one competitor division was:
- A. catfish
 - B. striped bass
 - C. bluefish
 - D. albacore
- 11) Which one of the following individuals won in the adult division for more than one species of fish?
- A. Jamie Conley
 - B. David Amato
 - C. Sam Ramos
 - D. Rick Lambert
- 12) The shortest winning fish caught during the derby was a:
- A. rainbow trout
 - B. walleye
 - C. catfish
 - D. albacore

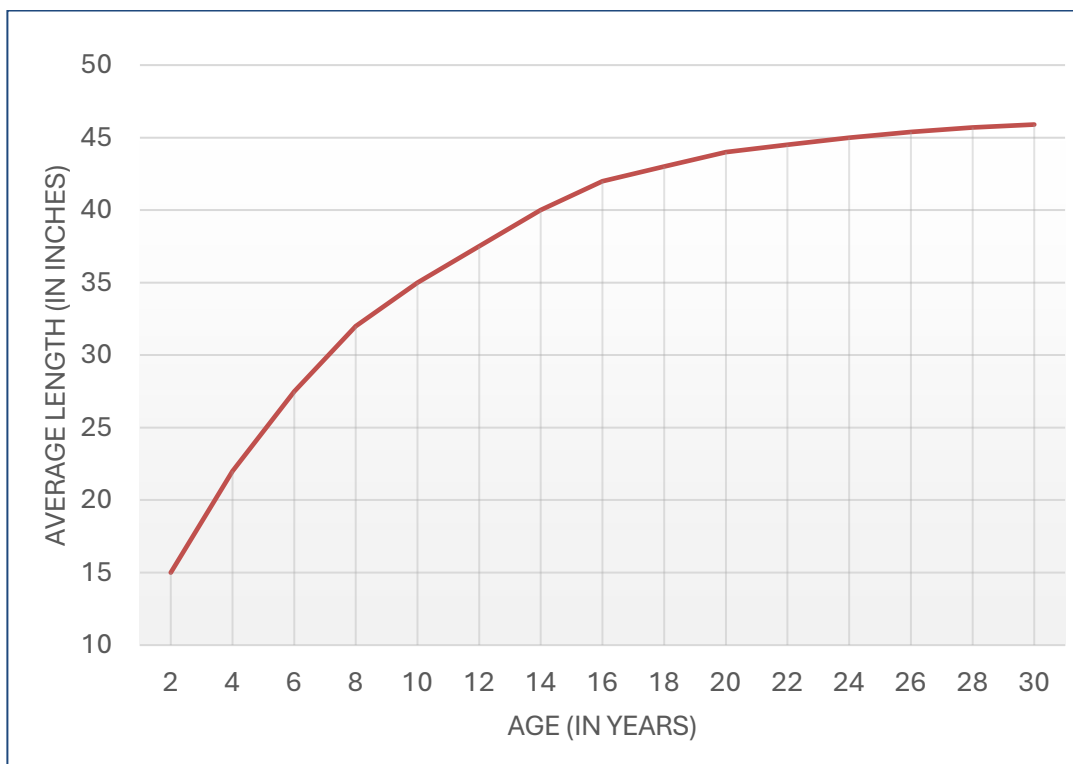
The second type of Understanding Graphic Materials question requires you to examine, understand, and interpret information presented in a chart or graph. For these questions, it is again important to pay attention to all of the information presented, including the title of the chart, and labels explaining what is presented in the chart, and note that there are often numeric values presented in a chart that may be presented as whole values, percentages, fractions, etc. Pay attention to the unit of measurement represented by the numbers so that you are best able to interpret the information presented in the chart. When reading the questions, pay close attention to how the question is worded so you know whether the question is referring to a particular portion of the chart, a specific value in the chart, of a pattern or trend illustrated in the chart (e.g., trends over time, differences between groups).

For these questions, the chart will remain visible for your reference at any time while answering the questions related to that chart. You do NOT need to memorize any information presented in the chart. Also note that multiple questions will be asked about each chart that is presented on the exam.

Example Understanding Charts/Graphs Questions:

Note that correct answers and explanations for these questions are presented on page 30 of this booklet.

Example Chart 1: How Old Is My Striper? Age and Average Length of Stripers Caught in 2023



- 13) According to the chart, an average-sized 35-inch-long striper would most likely be _____ years old.
- A. 6
 - B. 8
 - C. 10
 - D. 12
- 14) According to the chart, which one of the following is most accurate regarding the relationship between striper age and length?
- A. There is no noticeable relationship between striper age and length.
 - B. Older stripers tend to be shorter in length.
 - C. Older stripers tend to be longer in length.
 - D. Striper length tends to stay the same once a striper is 6 years or older.
- 15) According to the chart, if someone caught an average-sized 30-year-old striper, that striper would be expected to be:
- A. Approximately 7 inches long.
 - B. Less than 25 inches long.
 - C. Exactly 30 inches long.
 - D. More than 45 inches long.
- 16) According to the chart, a 2-year-old striper is likely to be 15 inches long on average. At what age will the striper most likely be double that length?
- A. 4 years old
 - B. 6 years old
 - C. 7 years old
 - D. 9 years old

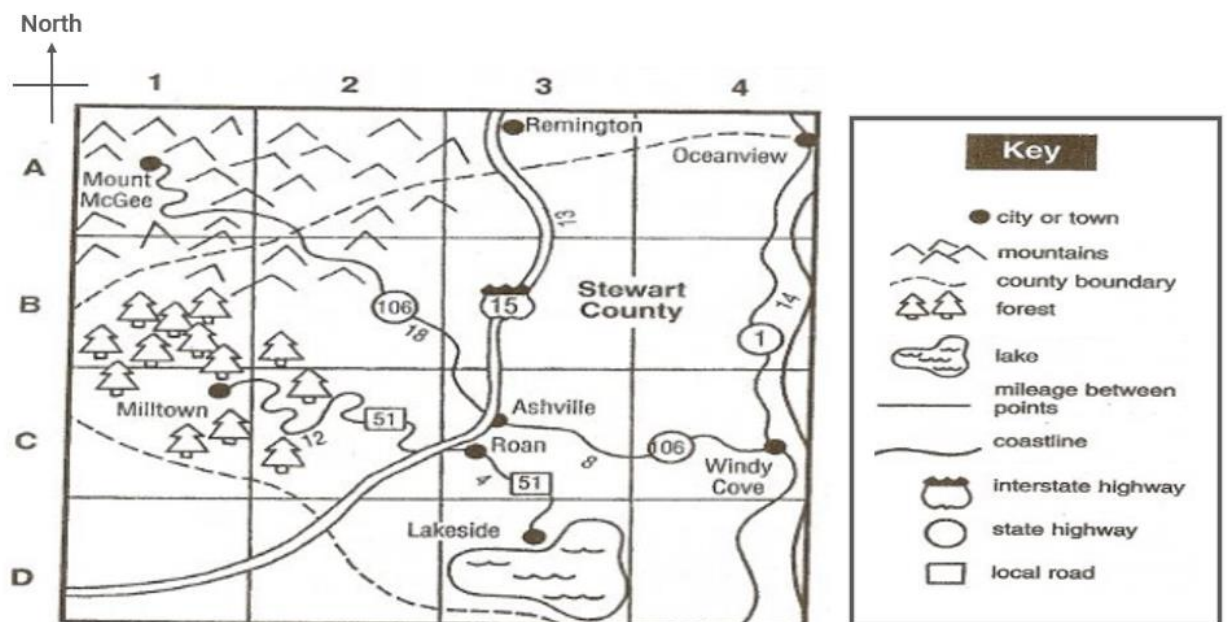
The second type of Understanding Graphic Materials question requires you to examine, understand, and interpret information presented in a map. For these questions, pay close attention to all information in the map, including the directionality (i.e., which direction is north), street names or trail names, other location names, and any legend or key given to indicate what various symbols mean on the map. Spatial ability will be important for some of the questions related to understanding maps. For example, if you are traveling north and then turn left, which direction will you be traveling?

For these questions, the map will remain visible for your reference at any time while answering the questions related to that map. You do NOT need to memorize any information presented in the map. Also note that multiple questions will be asked about each map that is presented on the exam.

Example Understanding Maps Questions:

Note that correct answers and explanations for these questions are presented on page 31 of this booklet.

Example Map 1: Stewart County Features Map



17) According to the map, which one of the following locations lies outside the Stewart County boundary?

- A. Milltown
- B. Windy Cove
- C. Roan
- D. Remington

18) According to the map, route 106 is a/an:

- A. local road.
- B. state highway.
- C. interstate highway.
- D. county boundary.

19) According to the map, which primary direction would you need to travel to get from the mountains to the forest?

- A. North
- B. South
- C. East
- D. West

20) According to the map, the fastest route to drive from Windy Cove to Mount McGee would be route number:

- A. 1
- B. 15
- C. 51
- D. 106

Understanding Graphic Materials Test Preparation

Again, practice is the best preparation for this section. Practice reading any kinds of tables, charts, graphs, or maps you can find. You may find tables, charts, and graphs in magazines, newspapers, online articles, or on everyday items (e.g., nutrition tables). Seek out maps and practice reading them. Carefully study the items to make sure you understand everything that is depicted in the materials and how to interpret the information presented.

3. **Mathematical Computation:**

The Mathematical Computation questions encountered on the Ability Test are straightforward math equations that require you to add, subtract, multiply, or divide using whole numbers, decimals, percents, and simple fractions. Pay close attention to the symbols used to make sure you know exactly which function (add, subtract, multiple, divide) you are being asked to perform.

Important Note: You will NOT be allowed to use a calculator or scratch paper to help you solve these equations.

Example Mathematical Computation Questions:

Note that correct answers and explanations for these example questions are presented on pages 31-33 of this booklet.

For the following example questions, choose the response option that provides the correct answer to the equation. If the correct answer to the equation is not listed, choose X (response option E).

21) $360 \div 4 =$

- A. 32
- B. 90
- C. 180
- D. 356
- E. X

22) $7.2 + 5.1 =$

- A. 7.3
- B. 12.21
- C. 12.3
- D. 35.2
- E. X

23) 25% of 500 =

- A. 5/500
- B. 1/5
- C. 5.25
- D. 125
- E. X

24) $16 \times 4 =$

- A. 12
- B. 20
- C. 46
- D. 64
- E. X

25) $1.5 \times 36 =$

- A. 45
- B. 48.5
- C. 52
- D. 54
- E. X

26) $\frac{1}{3} + \frac{1}{5} =$

- A. $\frac{1}{8}$
- B. $\frac{2}{8}$
- C. $\frac{1}{15}$
- D. $\frac{2}{15}$
- E. X

27) $5.25 - 2.52 =$

- A. 2.37
- B. 2.73
- C. 3.27
- D. 3.33
- E. X

28) $\frac{5}{6}$ of 30 =

- A. $\frac{30}{6}$
- B. 25
- C. 36
- D. 150
- E. X

Mathematical Computation Test Preparation

Practice is critical for this section. Have friends or family members create math problems for you to solve involving addition, subtraction, multiplication, or division using whole numbers, decimals, percents, or fractions. You can also easily find several free online quizzes to test your mathematical computation ability. We advise you to find and take as many of those quizzes as possible as practice for the actual exam.

Depending on your current level of understanding, you may also find it helpful to study mathematical information that you can easily find online regarding how to solve general addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division problems. If you struggle with or do not understand how to compute a percentage of a number, how to add or multiply fractions, or how to do computations with decimals, study this information and make sure you know it before the exam.

4. **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 an Environmental Police Officer. 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 page 33 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.

29) 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

- 30) 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

- 31) 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 understanding and apply rules, procedures, instructions, or directions.

5. **Critical Thinking:**

For the Critical Thinking 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.

Example Decision Making Questions:

Note that correct answers and explanations for these example questions are presented on page 34 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.

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

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

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

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

34) 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.

6. **English Language:**

The English Language questions on the exam require you to read a sentence and recognize correct or incorrect spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, or word usage in that sentence. For each question, a sentence will be presented, and part of that sentence will be underlined. The underlined portion of the sentence may or may not contain an error in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, or word usage. Watch for any or all of these potential errors, as it will NOT be stated what type of error you are looking for on each question. If the underlined part of the sentence does contain an error, you are to select the response option that provides the correct response to replace the underlined portion. If the underlined part of the sentence does NOT contain an error, you are to select the option that reads “No change.”

Example English Language Questions:

Note that correct answers and explanations for these example questions are presented on page 35 of this booklet.

In each example question below, part of the sentence is underlined. If the underlined part of the sentence contains an error in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, or word usage, select the response option that would be the correct replacement for the underlined portion. If the underlined part of the sentence does NOT contain an error, select “No change.”

35) The staff meeting will be held on Wensday.

- A. Wendsday
- B. Wednesday
- C. Wendseday
- D. No change

36) The principal the company owes on the loan is \$3,100.00.

- A. Principal the company owes
- B. principle the company owed
- C. principle the company owes
- D. No change

37) Featuring a range of safety enhancements, we gave our top-rating to this model.

- A. this model received our top-rating
- B. we gave our top rating to this model
- C. this model received our top rating
- D. No change

38) Klein Brothers, inc. advertised for an experienced receptionist.

- A. Klein Brothers, Inc.
- B. Klein brothers, Inc.
- C. Klein brothers, inc.
- D. No change

English Language Test Preparation

Practice for this section may involve reading, reviewing, and editing written documents, whether published documents or documents created by colleagues, friends, or family. Online quizzes are easily available to test your ability to recognize proper spelling, grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and word usage.

Further, study materials can easily be found online as well. Research and study commonly misspelled words and their correct spellings, along with commonly misused or mixed-up words (e.g., their, there, they're) and their proper usage. Study the rules of punctuation, capitalization, sentence structure, and grammar, including commonly violated grammar rules.

7. **Report Writing:**

There are two types of Report Writing questions that may appear on the exam.

The first type requires you to identify the most appropriate way to communicate a particular thought or idea to another individual in writing. For these questions, it is important to ensure that you choose the alternative that (a) accurately reflects the content of the original idea, and (b) expresses the original idea in the most clear and concise manner. Be careful not to select a response option that adds information that has not already been established in the question. Likewise, be sure to select a response option that includes all of the critical facts.

Example Written Communication Question:

Note that correct answers and explanations for these example questions are presented on page 36 of this booklet.

- 39) As an Officer arrived at the scene of a disturbance at an abandoned ranger station, the Officer noticed a van leaving the scene. Since the investigation revealed that the station had been vandalized, the Officer felt that the van leaving the scene should be included in the written report. The most effective way for the Officer to report this fact is to say:
- A. "As I arrived at the ranger station, I saw a van driving away from the scene."
 - B. "A van which should not have been there was at the ranger station."
 - C. "The vandals escaped in a van."
 - D. "I don't know if it's important, but as I got there, I saw a vehicle leaving the scene."

The second type of Report Writing question requires you to order your thoughts, or statements, in a logical sequence so that others will understand. Such questions will start with a list of statements to be made by an individual. For example, the statements may represent sentences contained within a report describing the sequence of events that occurred at an incident. These statements will not be presented in the correct order. The response alternatives will present you with several possible ways to order the statements. Note that there may be multiple possible ways to logically order the statements; however, only one correct possibility will be included among the response options provided.

For these types of questions, be sure to look at each and every alternative response option. Alternatives that are not correct should be eliminated until you find the one alternative that places the sentences in an appropriate, logical order.

Example Information Ordering Question:

Note that correct answers and explanations for these example questions are presented on page 36 of this booklet.

40) Officer Wilkins is preparing a report on a hit-and-run accident. The report will include the following sentences. (These sentences are NOT listed in the correct order.)

1. The Dodge struck the right rear fender of Mrs. Smith's Ford, and continued on its way.
2. Mrs. Smith stated that she was making a left turn from 40th Street onto Third Avenue.
3. As the car passed, Mrs. Smith noticed the rear license plate read 412AEJ.
4. Mrs. Smith complained to Officers of back pains and was transported by ambulance to Bellevue Hospital.
5. A green Dodge traveling on Third Avenue went through the red light at 40th Street and Third Avenue.

The most logical order for the above sentences to appear in the report is:

- A. 1, 3, 2, 5, 4.
- B. 2, 5, 1, 3, 4.
- C. 4, 5, 1, 2, 3.
- D. 5, 3, 1, 2, 4.

Report Writing Test Preparation

Practice for this section may involve reading various kinds of factual reports, accounts, or articles. Take note of how things are stated and think critically about whether the wording is clear, concise, accurate, factual/objective, and logical. Online quizzes may be found to test your Written Communication or Report Writing capabilities.

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

This section presents the answer key for the 40 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.

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.

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. Understanding Graphic Materials

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

Understanding Tables Answer Key

Example Question 9) A. Jamie Conley

Examining the Fish Length (Inches) column in Example Table 1 shows that the longest fish caught during the derby was 90 inches long. Moving across the row that contains 90" shows that the corresponding Winner Name for this fish was Jamie Conley.

Example Question 10) B. striped bass

Examining the Fish Length (Inches) column in Example Table 1 shows that two fish, both 47", were both caught in the same Competitor Division, the Adult division. Moving across the corresponding row shows that the Fish Species was striped bass. You may also notice that two fish were caught at 36"; however, these fish were not caught in the same Competitor Division. Further, these two fish were of different Fish Species. One was a bluefish and one was a catfish, so neither of those answers are correct. Finally, looking at the row for albacore reveals that the two winning fish were in different Competitor Divisions and were of different lengths, so albacore cannot be the correct answer.

Example Question 11) C. Sam Ramos

Examining the names in the Winner Name column of Example Table 1 reveals that only two names appear more than once – Sam Ramos and Jamie Conley – so one of those two must be the correct answer. Looking at the rows corresponding to Jamie Conley reveals that this individual won in the Junior division, so Jamie Conley cannot be the correct answer. Looking at the rows corresponding to Sam Ramos reveals that this individual won in the Adult division, so Sam Ramos is the correct answer.

Example Question 12) A. rainbow trout

Recall that every fish listed in the table is a winning fish within its species and division. Therefore, examining the Fish Length (Inches) column for the shortest length will lead to the answer for this question. The shortest length in that column is 23", and moving across that same row reveals that the Fish Species for this fish is rainbow trout.

For questions related to tables, pay close attention to all of the information presented, including the title of the table and the individual column or row headers that explain what kind of information is presented in the table. Make sure you understand what each cell in the table means, and how information is related across columns or rows. When reading the questions, pay close attention to how the question is worded so you know whether the question is referring to a particular row, column, or cell in the table, or whether the question is asking you to identify a pattern or trend presented in the table (e.g., the highest or lowest value, differences between certain types of information presented in various rows or columns).

Understanding Charts/Graphs Answer Key

Example Question 13) C. 10

Note that the lengths depicted in Example Chart 1 are all average lengths for the age of fish plotted in the chart. Therefore, to find the answer to this question, find the number 35 on the left-hand side of the chart, which corresponds to a 35-inch fish, then scan your eyes to the right across the horizontal gray line corresponding to 35 until you reach the plotted orange graph line. From that point on the plotted orange line, scan your eyes downward along the vertical gray line to find the corresponding age, which is 10.

Example Question 14) C. Older stripers tend to be longer in length.

Example Chart 1 depicts that as striper age increases, average length tends to be longer, indicating that C is the correct answer. The average length for a 2-year-old striper is 15 inches, for a 4-year-old striper is approximately 22 inches, for a 6-year-old striper is approximately 27 inches, etc. The length increases somewhat less at older ages, but still increases.

Example Question 15) D. More than 45 inches long.

To find the answer to this question, find the number 30 on the bottom axis of the chart, which corresponds to a 30-year-old fish, then scan your eyes upward along the vertical gray line corresponding to 30 until you reach the plotted orange graph line. From that point on the plotted orange line, scan your eyes to the left to find the corresponding length, which is slightly more than 45 inches. Be sure to NOT mistake one axis for the other. For example, if you mistakenly look at 30 on the left-hand side of the graph, you will be looking at a 30-inch fish rather than a 30-year-old fish.

Example Question 16) C. 7 years old

The question asks at what age will a striper be double the length it is at 2 years old. At 2 years old, the striper is 15 inches long. So you are looking for the age at which a striper would be 30 inches long ($15 \times 2 = 30$ inches). To find the answer to this question, find the number 30 on the left-hand side of the chart, which corresponds to a 30-inch fish, then scan your eyes to the right across the horizontal gray line corresponding to 30 until you reach the plotted orange graph line. From that point on the plotted orange line, scan your eyes downward to find the corresponding age, which is 7 (between 6 and 8).

Understanding Maps Answer Key

Example Question 17) D. Remington

To answer this question, examine the Key shown to the right of Example Map 1. Note that, according to the Key, the dashed line represents the county boundary line. One boundary line runs roughly horizontally near the top of the map from grid B1 on the left to Oceanview on the right. Another boundary line runs from grid C1 on the left to grid D3 below the lake. The towns of Milltown, Windy Cove, and Roan all lie between these county boundary lines, whereas Remington lies outside of the top county boundary line.

Example Question 18) B. state highway.

Examining Example Map 1 reveals that route 106 is depicted with the number 106 inside an oval shape. According to the Key to the right of the map, the oval shape represents a state highway.

Example Question 19) B. South

Examining Example Map 1 reveals that the mountains are above (to the North of) the forest. This means that if you are starting at the mountains, you would generally need to travel South (downward when looking at the map on screen) to get to the forest.

Example Question 20) D. 106

Examining Example Map 1 reveals that Windy Cove is a town in grid C4. Two routes intersect at this town – route 1 and route 106, so the correct answer must be one of those two routes. Following route 1 will take you only to Oceanview, so route 1 cannot be the correct answer. Following route 106 will take you to Ashville first, but then if you keep following route 106 past Ashville, it will take you to Mount McGee, so 106 is the correct answer.

For questions related to maps, pay close attention to all information in the map, including the directionality (i.e., which direction is North), street names or trail names, other location names, and any legend or key given to indicate what various symbols mean on the map. Spatial ability will be important for some of the questions related to understanding maps. For example, if you are traveling north and then turn left, which direction will you be traveling? Practicing spatial or mental rotation tasks may be very helpful here. It may also be helpful to physically turn or tilt your head to view the map from a different perspective or angle. For example, if the question indicates you are traveling East (often to the right on a depicted map), it may be helpful to tilt your head to the right and imagine yourself actually traveling through the map in that direction.

3. Mathematical Computation

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

Mathematical Computation Answer Key

Example Question 21) B. 90

Dividing 360 into 4 equal parts results in an answer of 90. This answer can be verified by reversing the equation to show that $90 \times 4 = 360$.

Example Question 22) C. 12.3

Adding 5.1 to 7.2 results in an answer of 12.3. For equations involving decimals, you may find it helpful to break down the numbers into the whole number portions versus the decimal portions. Adding the whole number portions of 5 and 7 results in a total of 12. Adding the

decimal portions of .1 and .2 results in a total of 0.3. Adding these two results of 12 and 0.3 results in a final total of 12.3.

Example Question 23) D. 125

For equations like this, keep in mind that the word “of” indicates multiplication. In order words, this equation could be rewritten as $25\% \times 500$. Additionally, 25% can be rewritten as either .25 or as $25/100$, whichever is easier for you. So you can rethink of the equation as $.25 \times 500$ or as $25/100 \times 500$. Any of these equations results in a final answer of 125. A tip that may be helpful for some individuals is to think of 25% as “half of 50%” or “half of a half.” If it’s easy for you to determine that 50%, or half, of $500 = 250$, then it may be easy to do that in your head first and then take half of that number (250) to get down to 125.

Example Question 24) D. 64

Multiplying 16 by 4 results in an answer of 64. It may be helpful or easier for some individuals to think of multiplication as simply adding a number to itself multiple time. In this case 16×4 is the same as adding 16 to itself 4 times, or $16 + 16 + 16 + 16 = 64$.

Example Question 25) D. 54

Multiplying 1.5×36 results in an answer of 54. For multiplication or addition problems, keep in mind that the order of the numbers makes no difference. So if it is easier to consider 36×1.5 instead, think of it that way. Also remember that multiplication can be thought of as adding a number to itself multiple times. In this case 36×1.5 is the same as adding 36 to itself 1.5 times, or $36 + \text{half of } 36$, or $36 + 18 = 54$.

Example Question 26) E. X

Adding fractions can be tricky. Keep in mind that for the numerators (top numbers) of fractions to be simply added to one another, the denominators (bottom numbers) of those fractions must be the same. In this case $(1/3 + 1/5)$, the denominators are 3 and 5, are not the same, and therefore cannot be added together to get a denominator of 8. In order to get each fraction to have a common denominator, an easy method is to multiply the denominators together. In this case $3 \times 5 = 15$, so 15 can be a common denominator for each fraction. However, you must make sure that the fraction is equivalent when the denominator is 15 to the original fraction shown in this equation. In other words, a fraction of $1/3$ would be equivalent to a fraction of $5/15$. This is because if you are multiplying the denominator (3) by 5 to get 15, you also need to multiply the numerator (1) by 5 to get to 5. In other words, the fraction of $1/3$ become an equivalent fraction of $5/15$. Likewise, the fraction of $1/5$ becomes $3/15$ because if you multiply the denominator (5) by 3 to get 15, then you also need to multiply the numerator (1) by 3 to get 3. In other words, the fraction of $1/5$ becomes the equivalent fraction of $3/15$. Now the equation can be rewritten as $5/15 + 3/15$. Now that both denominators are the same, the numerators (3 and 5) can be added together to get a final answer of $8/15$. As this is not one of the listed answers, the correct answer is not shown, and therefore you must select option E. X.

Example Question 27) B. 2.73

Subtracting decimals can also be tricky. Keep in mind that for subtraction or division, the order of the numbers does matter. So do not attempt to reorder the numbers in a subtraction or division equation. It might be helpful to breakdown the number you are subtracting. In other words, it may be easier to think first about subtracting $5.25 - 2.00$, which leaves 3.25. But now you have only subtracted 2 and therefore need to subtract another .52. The next step would therefore be $3.25 - .52$. Even if you don’t know for certain that this answer is 2.73 exactly, it is clear that the answer would be less than 3.00. This eliminates C and D as possible correct answers, and leave A and B as possibilities. If you cannot find the exact correct answer, you may be able to at least eliminate incorrect answers and narrow down the

possible correct answers.

Example Question 28) B. 25

Remember that the word “of” indicates multiplication. This equation can therefore be thought of as $\frac{5}{6} \times 30$. Keep in mind that a whole number can be thought of as a fraction with a denominator of 1. So it may be easier for some people to think of this equation as $\frac{5}{6} \times \frac{30}{1}$. Multiplying across the numerators (5×30) and across the denominators (6×1) results in an answer of $\frac{150}{6} = 25$. Another thing to keep in mind is that the order in which you multiply and divide (as long as these are the only two functions in the equation) does not matter. So it may be easier for some people to think of this equation as $30 \times 5 \div 6$ (i.e., $150 \div 6 = 25$), or even as $30 \div 6 \times 5$ (i.e., $5 \times 5 = 25$).

For these questions, pay close attention to the symbols used to make sure you know exactly which function you are being asked to perform:

- Add (+)
- Subtract (-)
- Multiply (X)
- Divide (\div)

For questions where a word is used in place of a symbol, pay close attention to make sure you know which function you are being asked to perform. For example, “ $\frac{7}{8}$ of 32” indicates $\frac{7}{8}$ multiplied by 32. Study rules regarding order of operations so you know when you might be able to flip the orders of number or of operations (e.g., multiplication and division or addition and subtraction) to help you think about the equation in an easier way.

4. **Decision-Making**

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

Decision-Making Answer Key

Example Question 29) A. Ship immediately

Example Question 30) C. Obtain authorization from Unit Supervisor

Example Question 31) 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 30, 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 31, 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 29, as the new order amount is only \$650.00.

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.

5. **Critical Thinking**

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

Decision-Making Answer Key

Example Question 32) 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 33) 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 34) A. True

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

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.

6. English Language

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

English Language Answer Key

Example Question 35) B. Wednesday

The underlined portion of the sentence contains an error in spelling. The correct spelling (including the capitalization) is “Wednesday.”

Example Question 36) D. No change

The underlined portion of the sentence contains no errors. The response options examine different possibilities for word usage (principal vs. principal), capitalization (Principal vs principal), and consistency of verb tense (“owes/is” vs “owed/is”). When referring to an amount of money owed or invested, the correct spelling of the word is “principal” (not capitalized). The word “principle” refers to a standard, rule, or guiding belief. The capitalized word “Principal” would only be used when referring to a specific individual who holds the job of a school principal (e.g., Principal Smith). Further, the company “owes” because the principal “is” \$3,100 – i.e., these verbs must both be present tense to be consistent within the same sentence. If the company “owed” the principal, then the sentence would need to state “was” \$3,100 – i.e., the verbs would both need to be past tense to be consistent within the same sentence.

Example Question 37) C. this model received our top rating.

The underlined portion of this sentence contains errors in punctuation and grammar. The underlined portion of the sentence states “we gave our top-rating to this model.” Option C is the only one of the listed responses that grammatically fits the sentence and contains no punctuation or other errors. Grammatically, the underlined portion of the sentence cannot begin with “we.” It must begin with “this model” because the phrase “featuring a range of safety enhancements” describes the model. “We” do not feature a range of safety enhancements; rather, “this model” features a range of safety enhancements. Therefore, either A or C must be correct. A cannot be correct because top rating should not be hyphenated. The correct answer is therefore “C. this model received our top rating.”

Example Question 38) A. Klein Brothers, Inc.

The underlined portion of the sentence contains an error in capitalization. “Klein Brothers, Inc.” is the name of the company, and therefore every word in the company name should be capitalized. Option A is therefore the correct answer.

Watch for any or all potential errors in this section. Remember that the underlined part of the sentence may contain an error in punctuation, spelling, capitalization, grammar, or word usage. The underlined part of the sentence might even contain more than one error. It will NOT be stated what type of error you are looking for on each question. Also remember that it is not always the case that the underlined part of the sentence does contain an error. If the underlined part of the sentence does NOT contain an error, you are to select the option that reads “No change.” A good strategy is to be methodical. Always read the underlined part of the sentence and every single response option. If you know every response options contains an error, then the original sentence must be correct, and you would select “No change.”

7. **Report Writing**

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

Written Communication Answer Key

Example Question 39) A. "As I arrived at the ranger station, I saw a van driving away from the scene."

The correct answer here is A because it is the only answer that correctly and completely reflects the facts, and only the facts, given in the question. Answers B and C are incorrect because they provide details that have not been established in the question. Answer B states that the van "should not have been there," which is not a fact established in the question. Answer C states that "the vandals escaped in the van," but it has not been established for certain that the individuals in the van were indeed vandals. The Officer is only able to state that the van was leaving the scene as the Officer arrived. Finally, answer D is not the best answer because it leaves out the important fact that the vehicle was a van.

For the Written Communication questions, it is important to ensure that you choose the alternative that (a) accurately reflects the content of the original idea, and (b) expresses the original idea in the most clear and concise manner. Be careful not to select a response option that adds information that has not already been established in the question. For example, if the question has established that two individuals drove away in a truck, but does not specify who the two individuals were, then you would **NOT** want to choose a response option that states that "Two burglars drove away in a truck." This is because you have no specific information indicating that the two individuals are burglars, so you would not want to assume that when writing a report on the incident. Likewise, avoid response options that leave out critical information. In the case above, you would **NOT** want to choose a response that states that "Two individuals drove away in a vehicle." This leaves out the critical piece of information stating that the vehicle was specifically a truck.

Information Ordering Answer Key

Example Question 40) B. 2, 5, 1, 3, 4.

The correct answer is B. To identify the correct order, the sentences for the report need to be placed into the proper time sequence. Sentences 1, 2, 3 and 5 describe the events of the accident. The proper sequence for these four events is 2, 5, 1, 3. (Mrs. Smith is attempting a left turn, a Dodge ran the red light, struck her vehicle and continued on its way, and as it passed she noticed its license plate number.) Answer B is the only alternative with this sequence.

For Information Ordering questions, look at the content of each sentence separately and determine whether it can stand alone, or whether it must precede or follow another sentence. If it can't stand alone, look for the sentence that contains the information you need. However, don't forget to evaluate that sentence in the same way as the first. Ask the questions, what happened first and what happened next? Similarly, consider whether there are sentences that the sentence under consideration cannot precede or follow. This also will help to narrow down the choices.

While we suggest that you identify the pairs of sentences that must (or cannot) go together, we'd like to discourage you from attempting to determine the correct order of all of the sentences before checking the response alternatives provided. The reason for this is that there may be several logical ways in which to order the sentences. However, only one correct possibility will be included among the alternatives provided. Instead, we suggest that you work through each of the alternatives presented one-by-one, keeping in mind the

sentences that must (or cannot) appear together. Alternatives that are not feasible should be eliminated until you find the one alternative that places the sentences in an appropriate order.

If you're not sure which sentence should be first, you may find it easier to note which sentence should be last. This will help you considerably in eliminating obviously wrong choices. If you don't know which sentence should be first or last, then go by what you know for sure. In other words, even if you do not know the proper order of all of the sentences, or which sentence should come first or last, you may know that one of the sentences should come after another. If so, you may find that only one of the response options places those two sentences in the correct order relative to one another.

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.
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SECTION 3: WORK STYLES QUESTIONNAIRE OVERVIEW

In addition to the cognitive and ability requirements placed upon Environmental Police Officers, 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 for 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 Environmental Police Officer (EPO) and view a series of approximately 8 job relevant scenarios. Following each scenario, you will be presented with 4 to 6 potential actions that the EPO 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 35 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 EPOs. 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, and penalties, even when information is incomplete or conflicting (e.g., crimes in progress).
2. **Accountability and Responsibility:** Ability to be reliable and assume one's share of the workload; ability to adhere to and apply policies, procedures, 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 plan and prioritize task and manage one's time effectively to complete all tasks in an appropriate timeframe; ability to consistently demonstrate integrity, honesty, and professionalism in all activities; ability to be thorough and detail-oriented in one's work (e.g., investigations, 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 (e.g., follow chain of command) 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 demonstrate empathy and compassion, see things from another's point of view, and offer comfort and support where needed (e.g., victims, next-of-kin, disoriented persons); 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 EPO and will be presented with a series of approximately 8 job relevant scenarios. Each scenario will describe a job situation which an EPO might face. Following each scenario, you will be presented with 4 to 6 potential actions that the EPO 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 EPO 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 EPOs 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 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 an Environmental Police Officer (EPO) 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 EPO 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 EPO 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:

SJT Example 1

Instructions: Read the brief scenario description below, followed by a number of potential actions the EPO 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

EPO Cooke is entering the office as his coworker, EPO Jones, is leaving. The two greet one another and EPO 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)	EPO Cooke cleans up the spill and goes about his work as usual.	①	②	③	④
B)	EPO Cooke cleans up the spill, then radios EPO Jones to let him know he should not leave that kind of a mess unattended.	①	②	③	④
C)	EPO 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)	EPO 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)	EPO Cooke leaves the office to track down EPO Jones and tell 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 EPO Cooke is taking care of the spill, which could be a slip-and-fall hazard if left as is. However, EPO Cooke does not address the fact that his colleague, EPO 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 EPO Cooke is both cleaning up the spill and addressing the issue with his colleague, EPO Jones.
- Option C is considered Effective (3; Likely to improve the situation OR Likely to resolve some or part of the issue) because EPO Cooke is taking care of the spill, which resolves some or part of the issue. EPO 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 EPO Cooke is at least attempting to address the issue with EPO Jones, he is leaving the spill in order to do so. This could be a slip-and-fall hazard in the meantime while EPO Cooke tracks down Jones. Further, if EPO 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 EPO 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

EPO Nesmith is partnered for a lengthy assignment with a newly transferred EPO, Jackson. EPO Nesmith has heard that EPO Jackson has a reputation for being difficult to work with. One their first shift together, EPO Nesmith attempts to make conversation with Jackson, make her feel welcome, and get to know one another. EPO 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. EPO Jackson is very curt in her responses and, although focused on the job, seems uninterested in interacting with EPO 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)	EPO Nesmith continues being polite and upbeat when talking with EPO Jackson, hoping that EPO Jackson will respond in a friendlier manner over time.	①	②	③	④
B)	EPO Nesmith leaves EPO Jackson alone, trusting the Jackson will ask if she has questions for him about anything.	①	②	③	④
C)	EPO Nesmith explains to EPO 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)	EPO Nesmith tells his supervisor that EPO Jackson is too difficult to work with and that he would like to be partnered with someone else.	①	②	③	④
E)	EPO Nesmith leaves EPO 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 EPO Nesmith is attempting to build a relationship and a rapport with EPO 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 EPO Nesmith is trusting that his colleague will behave professionally and will interact with him appropriately as needed to perform the job. Although EPO 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 EPO 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 EPO Nesmith not attempting to continue to build rapport with EPO 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 EPO 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 EPO Jackson regarding what EPO Nesmith is saying.

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 describe 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 District/Deputy Fire Chief 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 an EPO 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)	EPO Sample takes action A in response to the scenario above.	①	②	③	④
B)	EPO Sample takes action B in response to the scenario above.	①	②	③	④
C)	EPO Sample takes action C in response to the scenario above.	①	②	③	④
D)	EPO 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 EPO 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 A2a (*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 Environmental Police Officer (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!