



Louisiana Department of State Civil Service

**Sample Questions for
Series 8100
PROFESSIONAL LEVEL EXAM (PLE)**

This booklet contains SAMPLE QUESTIONS ONLY.

None of the questions in this booklet are actual test questions. They are samples and are not intended to cover all topics which may appear on the test.

Studying this booklet
WILL NOT NECESSARILY IMPROVE YOUR TEST SCORE.

February 2013

PREPARING FOR THE PROFESSIONAL LEVEL EXAM

INTRODUCTION

This test makes it possible for an applicant to be considered for several different professional entry level jobs through a single examination by measuring basic abilities that are common to these jobs.

Taking the test: Applicants should prepare for taking the test by following the practices and techniques suggested below:

1. Study the sample questions included in this document carefully. Also, the instructions included in the actual test booklet should be read carefully.
2. Use the clock or your watch as an aid in keeping track of the time during the examination.
3. In order to avoid running the risk of arriving too late to be admitted to the examination, allow extra time for traveling to the testing center.

How to answer the questions: Read each question carefully. Then read all of the answer choices to each question before deciding which answer is correct. If you are having difficulty determining the correct answer to a question, skip that one and come back to it later if you have time. It is to your advantage to answer each question even if you must guess at the answer. The final grade will be based only on the number of correct answers. There is no penalty for guessing.

Make no marks in the test booklet: All answers will be marked on a separate answer sheet. A mark on the answer sheet may be erased; however, care should be taken to make sure the erasure is complete. Any stray marks on the answer sheet may count against you. Scratch paper will be provided for making calculations. (Note: You will NOT be allowed to use calculators on the test.)

Additional Suggestions: Oral directions by the monitor and written directions in the test booklet are given to help the examinee and should be followed very closely. Pay close attention to the instructions given by the monitor at the beginning of the test session.

Test Contents (not necessarily in the order listed below on the actual test)

Problem Solving (25 Questions)

Communication and Interaction with Others (25 questions)

Written Communication (35 Questions)

Interpreting Written Material (20 Questions)

Total = 105 Questions

PROBLEM SOLVING

Many jobs require the ability to conceptualize work requirements, accurately project resource needs, and coordinate activities. This requires skill in evaluating circumstances, identifying concerns and information needs, making computations and analyzing data, and considering alternatives. The test questions designed to assess these skills will be based on information in a chart or table that you must review, interpret, and in some cases, manipulate. The key to answering these types of questions is to make sure that you thoroughly review the information and consider the larger context or objective to which the information relates.

Sample Question 1

Session 3 Program Summary

	Attendees at Orientation	Program Registrants	Participants Completing Program
Program A	88	72	61
Program B	45	39	30
Program C	58	52	46

1. Which of the programs has the greatest success in getting orientation attendees to register for the program?
 - A. Program A.
 - B. Program B.
 - C. Program C.

The correct answer is response option C. This is determined by computing the ratio of attendees to registrants for each of the three programs which is done by dividing the number of program registrants by the number of attendees. In this case, Program A would be $72/88$ which rounds to .82 or 82% success, Program B would be $39/45$ which rounds to .86 or 86% success, and Program C would be $52/58$ which rounds to .90 or 90% success.

The best approach for these types of questions is to first review the entire table to get a good idea what information is being depicted. Next, carefully read each question and pay special attention to key words such as “greatest” or “least” to be certain what the question is asking you to determine. Then, consider the mathematical operations necessary to interpret the information presented. In this case, it was necessary to compute a ratio or percentage. In other problems, you might need to compute sums, averages, or similar basic arithmetic calculations. The key is to remember that this type of information represents relationships between things and you must accurately determine the relationship that is the subject of the problem and then select the correct approach.

Sample Question 2

Orientation Meeting Planning:

You must plan orientation meetings for new participants in a State program. You will be traveling to different locations and want to fit as many meetings into a single day as possible at each location. You have the information shown below to assist you in planning.

Time to allow for each meeting:	45 minutes
Time to allow after each meeting to organize enrollment forms:	10 minutes
Start time:	8:15 a.m.
Breaks:	20 minutes mid-morning 20 minutes mid-afternoon
Lunch:	1 hour as close to noon as possible
End time:	No later than 5:00 p.m.

2. What is the maximum number of meetings that can be scheduled in a single day?
- A. 5
 - B. 6
 - C. 7
 - D. 8

The answer is option C, 7 meetings. To determine the answer, you must plan out a complete schedule using the information provided.

By allocating the required time to each step you should see that since the 7th meeting ends at 4:20 p.m. and each meeting requires a total of 55 minutes, there is not enough time available in the day to schedule any more meetings.

Sample Question 3

Background: You work for a unit that provides administrative support to other State departments. Your supervisor asked you to have a meeting with your peers to discuss how to get client departments to turn in service requests in a more timely manner. The goal is to provide your unit with enough time to respond appropriately rather than just react to situations which have been delayed to the point that they are considered emergencies. When the group met, you summarized some of the main ideas and created the list shown below. You now intend to categorize the ideas based on a model of problem solving that identifies a problem's causes, symptoms, solutions, and relationship or correlation with other variables.

Task: Review the statements to familiarize yourself with the idea statements. Then, for each idea statement, determine if the idea is best categorized as a cause, symptom, solution, or relationship.

Initial Task Force Meeting

A	There is nothing on the request form that indicates how far in advance it should be turned in.
B	More than two-thirds of service requests are received at a point that requires expedited or emergency processing to meet the department's needs.
C	Requests that have been handled outside of the standard process have twice the likelihood of having errors.
D	An education briefing could be prepared for department representatives to provide information on the correct procedure and time requirements.

3. Statement A is best categorized as a:

- A. cause.
- B. solution.
- C. symptom.
- D. relationship.

The answer is response option A. The statement indicates that the request form does not indicate time requirements and this is a possible cause of the problem. To arrive at this answer, you must do two things. First, determine what the problem actually is. In this case, the problem has been defined as requests not being made in a timely manner. Next, look at each response option and decide how it relates to the problem. Statement A provides a reason why forms might be turned in late, making it a possible cause and, therefore, the correct answer. Statement B gives information that indicates the amount of requests that are late, making it a symptom. Statement C gives information related to the outcome associated with late requests, making it a relationship. Statement D offers an approach for making others more aware of time requirements, making it a solution.

COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION WITH OTHERS

Professional jobs require skill in communicating directly with others by working cooperatively, attempting to understand other people's needs, actively listening, and clearly conveying one's own ideas to minimize conflict, resolve disagreements, and effectively influence or persuade. Test questions in this area require the application of basic communication and interpersonal concepts within the context of the work environment. To successfully answer the questions, you should imagine yourself in the role of a State employee in the situation presented and select the answer that is most likely to achieve the desired objective and reflect appropriate behavior and professionalism for a State employee.

Sample Question 4

4. If you are engaged in conversation with another person, the communication technique that is most likely to ensure that you understand what the other person is attempting to communicate is to:
- A. make continued eye contact.
 - B. ask the person to speak slowly.
 - C. nod your head in agreement while the person speaks.
 - D. repeat back to the person what you believe they are saying.

The answer is option D. Making eye contact and nodding are aspects of communication, however, they are meant to show engagement and do not necessarily ensure understanding. Similarly, speaking slowly does not ensure that the message is accurately received. Only option D, repeating back the information is recognized as an effective technique for ensuring understanding.

Sample Question 5

5. If a person with whom you are interacting is frustrated about a situation and wants to vent by talking it out before moving on to productive conversation, it is best to:
- A. offer the person suggestions on how to calm down.
 - B. politely excuse yourself, but do not explain the reason.
 - C. point out to the person that the current behavior is unproductive.
 - D. recognize that this is an important part of moving past the emotion and allow them to express their feelings.

The answer is option D. The other three response options do not allow the person to work past their frustration and may antagonize the person more. Cutting the person off in the midst of this process may make the person feel that their feelings are not viewed as important or reasonable. Most people just want the opportunity to be heard.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

Professional jobs require written communication through various types of correspondence and reports. This requires skill in expressing ideas clearly and concisely with correct English usage. The types of questions that you will encounter in the test to assess these skills include identifying the best choice for completing a sentence, identifying errors in sentences, and determining the best organization of sentences to form a paragraph.

Sample Questions 6 and 7

Some questions will require you to identify the best choice for completing a sentence. For these questions, you will be provided with a written passage which is identified as a piece of correspondence that you must edit. The sentence will have numbered blanks for which you must select the best alternative for completing the sentence. The alternatives will provide one correct option while the remaining response options are incorrect in some way. Incorrect options will involve errors in punctuation, grammar, or word usage.

Below is a sample piece of text and the corresponding questions:

I wanted to 1 you that I have encountered some problems when using the client data base. Only one of my last five queries 2 accurate.

6. Which of the following is the most appropriate to place in space number 1?

- A. note
- B. advice
- C. advise
- D. instruct

7. Which of the following is most appropriate to place in space number 2?

- A. is
- B. are
- C. has been
- D. have been

The correct answer for question 6 is response option C (advise). Advise means to give information and is the most appropriate word for the context of the sentence. Options A and B are grammatically incorrect. Option D does not convey the intended meaning since the word used means to teach.

The correct answer for question 7 is response option C (has been). That option is the only verb form that is grammatically correct given the beginning of the sentence and the intent to reflect something that has occurred in the past. Viewing the sentence without the preposition “of my last five queries” makes this clearer. The sentence then reads “Only one has been accurate.”

Sample Questions 8 and 9

Some questions will require you to identify errors in sentences. The errors you must identify will involve errors in punctuation, grammar, and word usage. To respond to the questions you will only need to specify if the sentence is correct or incorrect. You will not need to specifically identify the errors.

Use the key below to answer the two questions that follow.

Key

A = The sentence is correct.

B = The sentence is incorrect.

8. Evaluating circumstances and recommending appropriate actions.
9. All client's records can be found in the master file.

The correct answer to question 8 is option B. The sentence is grammatically incorrect because it is a sentence fragment that does not contain both a subject and a verb. The correct answer to question 9 is also B. In this case, the sentence is incorrect because the punctuation of the word "client's" reflects a singular possessive. Since the sentence begins with the word "All", the word clients should be a plural possessive with the apostrophe after the "s" rather than before it.

Sample Question 10

Some questions will require you to organize sentences into the most appropriate order to form a logical and cohesive paragraph. To do this, you will need to identify which role each sentence should play including a topic sentence, the body of the paragraph, and the closing sentence. You must also determine if there are sentences that are inessential for conveying the paragraph's meaning in a clear and concise manner and could be eliminated.

Instructions: The sentences below comprise a paragraph about client information. Review the sentences and then answer the five questions that follow regarding how the sentences should be organized to form a logical and cohesive paragraph.

Sentence ID	Sentence Text
A	Such information is considered confidential and can only be released if specific procedures are followed.
B	Clients have a right to request information contained in their files.
C	Client files will be audited on an annual basis.
D	Once received, written requests will be responded to by a client services representative within five work days.
E	Requests for file information must be made on the forms provided in service offices and on the department's website.

10. Which sentence is the best sentence to use as a topic sentence to begin the paragraph?
- A. Sentence A.
 - B. Sentence B.
 - C. Sentence C.
 - D. Sentence E.

The correct answer to the question is response option B. The combined theme of the sentences is client information requests and how they are processed. Therefore, starting the paragraph with the statement that clients have a right to receive the information is the most logical and useful sentence placement. For logical development, sentences A and E should serve as the body of the paragraph. Sentence D reflects how the information release process is completed and, as such, is the best sentence to conclude the paragraph. Sentence C relates to the separate topic of auditing files and can be eliminated.

INTERPRETING WRITTEN MATERIAL

Professional jobs often require referencing written information to determine appropriate actions. Such information may be found in a wide range of documents such as policies, procedures, correspondence, reports, and regulations. This requires skill in interpreting and evaluating written information. Questions of this type will be based upon reading passages provided in the test.

Sample Question 11

Instructions: Use the information below to answer the question that follows.

Helping Young Children Handle Stress

Many circumstances may cause a child to experience stress. These circumstances usually arise from things that are out of the child's control such as family changes or discord, abuse, a change in residence, natural disasters, or tragic events. A child's thinking is not developed enough to fully consider options or the results of actions and this can increase stress levels. Those who work with young children can help them to better handle these circumstances by being supportive and engaging in activities that will help the children develop coping strategies. Activities that encourage and develop social skills, problem-solving skills, the ability to focus attention, and the ability to act independently will all help children cope better by increasing their resiliency. This resilience will promote the attitude and enhance the skills necessary for handling stressful situations successfully.

11. According to the reading passage, a person who works with children can best assist them in handling stress by helping them to develop skills that enable them to:
- A. avoid stress.
 - B. control circumstances.
 - C. become more resilient.
 - D. consider options more effectively.

The correct answer to the question is response option C. By reading the entire passage, the reader can follow the progression of thought and determine that the paragraph essentially states that children can learn to handle stress better if the adults who work with them engage them in activities which make them more resilient. This is clearly summarized in the paragraph's concluding sentence.

The best way to approach this type of question is to read the entire passage before reading the questions to familiarize yourself with its content. Then, read the question and go back to the paragraph to read specifically for the information requested by the question. Make sure to eliminate response options from your consideration that are clearly in error or those which are true statements, but not the answer to the question.