Test Preparation Strategies

What to expect and how to prepare for the Classified selection process at LAUSD

This is not “Magic 101”...

- There are no magic tricks on how to succeed
- LAUSD employment tests are always job related
- If you have the job skills, you are likely to be successful on the employment test
- If you prepare, you will do even better!
This is Test Preparation Strategy!

You can score significantly higher if you have prepared yourself adequately by knowing...

- What to look for...
- What questions to research...
- What material to prepare...
- Where to look for answers...

Let’s go through the process...

- Where to find the job?
- What to look for in the bulletin?
- What is competency based testing?
- What test parts are commonly used at LAUSD?
- What are the characteristics of the different test parts?
- How can you prepare yourself for different test parts?

Before anything else...

- Make sure your email works
- Be comfortable using email. All correspondence is done via email
- Check our website daily. All our jobs are listed on the website
- Upcoming & Current examinations
- Pay attention to special messages related to the job (e.g., recruitment dates)
- You can register for jobs you are interested in (emails will be sent out when exam opens)
www.lausdjobs.org

Recruiting Gone Social

READ the Job Bulletin

- The LAUSD job bulletin is an excellent way to gain valuable insight into the examination you will be taking.
- This is your only insight into the test process.
- It is your guide to success – use it!
Pay special attention to:

- Minimum qualifications
  - Do you meet them?
  - How?
- Competencies
  - Do you have them?
  - How can you show that you have them?
- Test process
  - What test parts are included?
  - Are you prepared for this type of test?
- Test dates
  - Mark your calendar and clear your schedule!

Competency based testing...

- What is a competency?
  - A competency is a cluster of work behaviors that share a common theme (e.g., oral communication, leadership, teamwork, listening, negotiating, handling stress etc.)
- What is a competency based exam?
  - A test that is designed to assess core competencies needed for the job

HINT: Core competencies are listed in the bulletin!!

How is a competency measured?

- Written tests
- Computer tests
- Interviews
- Technical projects/
  Work samples
- Performance tests
- Training & Experience
  Evaluations (T&E)
- Reference checks
- Background checks
Written Tests

- Usually first part of the process
- Computerized
- Multiple choice (50-150 questions is common)
- Measures specific knowledge needed for a specific professional field (e.g., tools, materials, applicable laws, common methods, safety regulations)

Sample Test Item

General Accounting Principles

Which of the following is a balance sheet item?
A) Accounts payable
B) Cost of goods sold
C) Gross profit
D) Sales

(Correct answer is A)

Preparing for a written test

- Refer to the job bulletin for job requirements, knowledge, skill, competencies needed.
- You are likely to be tested on these areas. Study!!!
  - Books (practices, laws, rules, technology...)
  - Trade journals (current trends, latest methods...)
  - Internet (LinkedIn, professional organizations...)
  - Other professionals (ask professionals in the field for information about the job, common challenges, solutions to typical problems, recommended work methods etc.)
- Gathering knowledge and storing facts in your memory is the best preparation for a written tests!
On the day of the test....

- Arrive early
- Read the instructions in the invitation letter carefully
- Watch for details that will tell you exactly how to proceed
- You must show a valid ID AND
- Your Social Security Card OR District ID

At the beginning of the test...

- Plan how you will use your time during the test
- Estimate how many minutes you have for each question so that you can finish within the time allotted
- Bring your own watch (clock on cell phone or other electronic device is not permitted)

While taking the test...

- Answer every question
- If you absolutely do not know the question, make a strategic guess and move on.
- Do not linger over difficult problems – you will loose time
- When you begin a new section, focus on that section
- Use scrap paper or write on the booklet (if allowed)
- Do not hesitate if you need to draw out a problem, create lists, or use symbols
- Writing or drawing can help you focus your mind and answer the question correctly
At the end of the test...

- Use remainder time effectively
- V all questions are answered
- Review difficult questions
- Cover your answers, work the problem again, and compare with your first response
- Change answers ONLY if you are certain

NOTE!!
The answer that comes to mind first is often the correct one...

Training & Experience Evaluation (T&E)

- A T&E is a scored evaluation of application material submitted by the candidate
- Examples: resume, application, work samples, cover letter, transcripts, responses to job-related questions, letters of recommendations...

T&E

- It is a test part. However, you do not have to be present.
- It is usually the first test part and it can sometimes be the ONLY test part.
- It is not a determination of whether or not you meet the minimum qualifications.
- It is often based on responses to technical questions (READ bulletin).

A T&E can be very competitive. Preparing for the T&E is critical for success!
Application material will be evaluated & scored based on:
- Recency
- Level
- Complexity
- Scope
- Quality/quantity
- Depth/breadth

How is a T&E scored?
- Two qualified raters with no prior knowledge of the candidate will assess the application material
- OR
- You score yourself by filling out an online questionnaire

Raters are NOT expected to...
- Read between the lines
- Make sense of disorganized, unfocused, or rambling information
- Know or research the curriculum and course content of your degrees, certificates etc.
Raters are NOT expected to...

- Compensate for a rushed or carelessly prepared application packet
- Adjust for candidates’ deviations from the required or expected structure of information
- Interpret illegible, ambiguous, or incompletely stated information

IMPORTANT!

- Only information that you have submitted will be evaluated
- Everything is submitted “as-is”
- You will not be able to change/add your information once submitted

Bottom Line!

It is up to you to communicate your qualifications by following instructions and submitting thorough information in a clear and organized way
With that in mind...

- Provide the **information** that is being **requested**
- Be **specific, clear, and accurate** on the recency, level, complexity, scope, and depth/breadth of your education and experience
- **Organize** your information so that it is easy to read and understand

Before you submit...

- Double check everything
  - Is it clear, organized, neat, complete...?
- Put yourself in the raters’ position. What does your application say about you?
- Ask a colleague for feedback before you submit it.

Performance Tests

- A real work situation is replicated to test a candidate's skill in performing critical and frequently performed job duties.
Most common performance test...

**Job Task**
- Candidates are given instructions to perform a specific task that highly resembles “real work”
- While they are working, they may be asked to explain what they are doing and why
- Safety is very important!

Another type of performance test...

**In-basket**
- Candidate is asked to sort through a manager’s inbox (emails, memos, descriptions, scenarios etc.)
- Candidate is asked to prioritize and respond to the content of the in-basket
- Two raters evaluate the result

Preparing for a performance test

- This is an applied test where previous hands-on and “how-to” skills are invaluable
- There are no short cuts, no books to study, no manuals to read...
- If you have extensive experience performing the duties of the job, you are likely to be successful on the test!
The Job Interview

“It takes a well thought out strategy, proper mental preparation, and insight into the prospective employer to pull off a winning interview”

The typical LAUSD interview is...

- Usually the last test part
- Tape/video recorded
- Two rater panel
- 15-45 minutes long
- Structured and consistent in content (everyone is asked the same set of questions)
- ALWAYS job-related (no surprise questions)
- Evaluated against structured and consistent rating standards

Different types of interviews...

- General fitness
- Technical Interview
- Presentation
- Role-playing
Different types of questions...

- **General fitness**
  - Asks about general preparation for a job
  - “Tell us how your background has prepared you for this job?”

- **Behavioral**
  - Asks about previous behavior that is similar to behaviors necessary to perform the job.
  - Assumption: previous behavior is a predictor of future performance.
  - “As a Job Supervisor, you will have to manage your own time, priorities, and resources to complete your assignments in an effective and efficient manner. Please give us a specific example from your current (or previous) job that demonstrates your ability to manage your own time and work load effectively.”

- **Situational**
  - Asks about hypothetical situations and your suggested actions.
  - “Assume you are the project manager at a construction site. All of a sudden, the contractor starts arguing loudly with the inspector and you fear that it might become physical. What will you do?”

- **Technical**
  - Asks about specific technical answers to specific technical questions.
  - Common in Technical Interview
  - “Discuss the legal and practical significance of the pesticide label in structural pest management.”

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A Three-Step Process to Answering Questions

1: Understand what is really being asked.

2: Answer the question effectively, yet briefly.

3: Answer the real question by presenting your related skills and back it up using

**EXAMPLES FROM YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE!**
**Situation Task Action Results**

- Give a brief overview of the **Situation**. Provide concise background information if necessary.
- Describe the **Task** at hand.
- Give a detailed account of what you did using **Action** words.
- Give a short summary of the **Result** of your action. End on a positive note (even if the result was negative).

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**Are YOU prepared?**

- Keep an on-going journal of your accomplishments.
- Review them before each interview so that they are fresh in your mind.
- Minimize "I wish I had thought of that-moments" after the interview is over and done.

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**DO**

- Answer the question.
- Prepare by having a well-rehearsed mental outline.
- Ask to have the question repeated if you don’t understand.
- Site specific examples from your work experience whenever possible.
- Use “I” statements.

**DON’T!!**

- Ramble/go off on a tangent.
- Repeat something you already talked about if you don’t have a good answer.
- Volunteer unrelated information (e.g., marital status, religion, country of origin etc.).
- Use “we” or “my team” statement.
### DO
- Know your audience! (research the department, “who is who”)
- Provide clear and concise answers. It is better to “spell it out” than to “leave it out”
- Be tactful and professional

### DON’T!!
- Make assumptions about what interviewers know or don’t know
- Use jargon when answering questions unless it is commonly used in the field and you are CERTAIN the interviewers are familiar with it
- Do not be rude or pushy

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### DO
- Be positive 😊!
- Make them smile
- Convey confidence and show enthusiasm and passion for the job
- Show that this is more than a job for you

### DON’T!!
- Whine or complain about a past or current employer
- Display a flat demeanor or non-caring attitude

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### The rule of **12-12-12...**

You will be judged by:
- Your appearance 12 feet away
- Your appearance 12 inches away
- Your 12 first words

Never underestimate the impact of your first impression!
Be Professional

Your behavior is viewed as a demonstration of how you will act on the job.

- Dress professionally (you cannot over dress for an interview)
- The importance of the hand shake!
- Maintain eye contact with both raters throughout the interview
- Answer the questions honestly and positively (don’t lie, guess, or use derogatory/negative statements)
- Turn off your cell phone
- Provide clean copies of work samples, resume (if applicable)
- Thank the raters when you leave

Good luck as you prepare for your next test!