

Prince George's County
Department of Corrections

Entry-Level Correctional Officer
Written Exam

Study Guide

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Why You Should Read This Information

The Prince George's County Department of Corrections is hiring people to become successful Correctional Officers. Among the first things that you will have to do to continue in the process to become a Prince George's County Correctional Officer is to pass two tests: the Entry-Level Written Multiple-Choice Exam (COEXAM) and the Entry-Level Correctional Officer Physical Agility Test (COPAT).

The Prince George's County Department of Corrections conducted studies that show that people who do well on these tests also do well during the Academy training and once on the job. Therefore, if you want to become a Prince George's County Correctional Officer it's in your best interest and in the best interest of Prince George's County that you do your very best on these tests.

This packet of information has been put together to help you prepare to take the written test. In this packet there are descriptions of each part of the test, sample questions, what you must do to pass each part and tips to help you do your best. ***The information provided here describes just one approach.*** It is not intended to suggest that other methods do not work equally as well. You should decide, based on your own skill and experience, what information in this orientation packet is useful to you.

Description of the Written Exam

The Entry-Level Written Multiple-Choice Test is designed to test for critical abilities that you must possess in order to be selected for and to attend The Department of Corrections Training Academy and become a successful Correctional Officer in Prince George's County. You do not need to have experience as a correctional officer to possess these skills or to do well on the test. The critical job areas directly assessed include the following:

- Memory skills – 16 questions
- Math – 9 questions
- Problem Solving/Reasoning/Reading – 25 questions
- Handling Situations – 27 questions
- Written Communication – 9 questions
- Following Directions – 12 questions

Each area listed above is tested in its own section of the test and has its own set of questions. There are 98 questions and the total test time including instructions, is about two (2) hours. This test is pass/fail.

Filling Out the Answer Sheet

Filling out the answer sheet correctly can have a direct impact on your success on the exam. If you do not fill out the answer sheet correctly, your score will not reflect your actual performance on the exam. One key factor in completing the test correctly is to make sure that the question number on the test booklet matches the number on the answer sheet. To prevent this mistake, frequently compare the question number and the answer sheet number. Also, it is very important that you make sure that your choice for a question (either “a”, “b”, “c”, or “d”) matches what you fill out on the answer sheet.

When selecting your answers you will find that the questions have 2, 3 or 4 options from which to choose, depending on the type of question. Therefore, it is important to make sure you are marking the right place on your answer sheet.

Review the answer sheet before beginning the test to avoid confusion and loss of time in correcting errors. There are two columns of questions with 50 questions in each column.

Frequently compare the number of the test question to the number on the answer sheet to make sure you are responding to the proper question number. If you change an answer to a question, erase your mark completely. Stray marks may be misinterpreted as your intended answer by the computer scanner. It is your responsibility to correctly mark the answer sheet.

Reading the Test Questions

Read the entire test question and each possible answer before choosing the answer you think is best. A common mistake is to choose an answer prematurely based on the first one you read that “sounds good.” Don’t fall into this trap! Read each possible answer carefully.

If you find you are spending too much time on a question, do your best to guess the answer and move on. You could put a light pencil mark next to the question number on the answer sheet so you can come back to it before time is called.

It is recommended that you do not skip any questions, but if you have, be sure to leave time at the end to go back and answer them.

Deciding on the Best Answer

Read all possible options before choosing the answer you think is the best response to the question. Try to reduce the number of possible answers by eliminating any choice that you feel is clearly wrong. Once you have eliminated one option your chance of choosing the correct answer increases.

Do not try to second-guess the test. Answer these questions in the way you think is best.

Do NOT leave any questions blank.

Examples of the Memory Skills Section

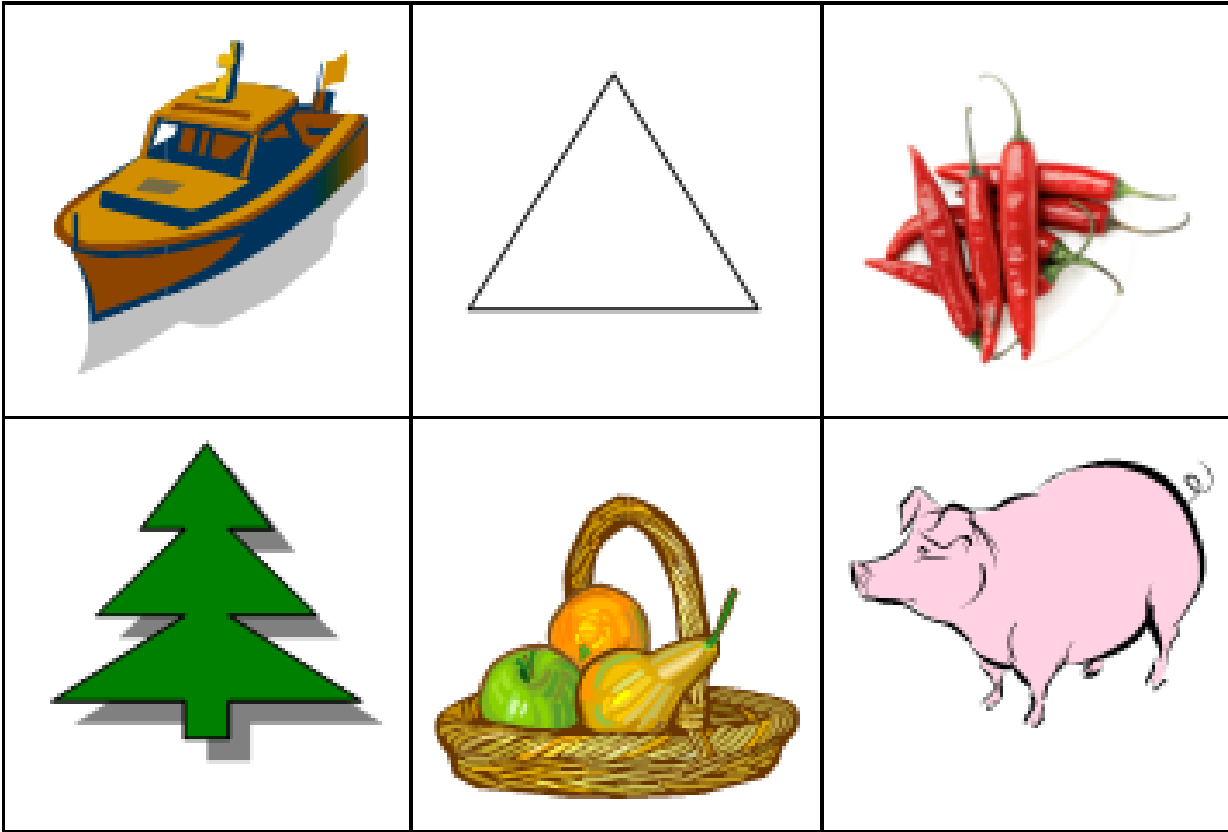
What are the Memory Skills section questions like? The Memory Skills Section is designed to test your ability to memorize information in much the same way that successful Correctional Officers do when on the job. In the Memory Skills section a picture will be presented on a screen at the front of the testing room. It will remain on the screen for 25 seconds. You will NOT be able to take notes so you should spend that time memorizing the details of the picture. When the picture is removed from the screen you will be instructed to answer a series of questions regarding that picture. You must work fast because the next picture will be shown after a 30 second time period for you to answer the questions.

The test has 4 different pictures that will be shown on the screen. There are 4 questions associated with each picture

On the next page is a sample picture similar to what you might see during the test. To practice, place the picture face down on your desk. Turn the picture over and study it for 25 seconds (use a watch to time yourself). When time is up, turn the page face down and answer questions 1 through 4 on the next page. You have 30 seconds to answer questions 1 through 4 (use a watch to time yourself).

Prince George's County Department of Corrections
Orientation Guide for COEXAM

Picture 1



To answer the following questions, do not look back at Picture 1.

Questions for Picture 1

1. Which of the following items was in the picture?
 - a. Basket.
 - b. Timer.
 - c. Calendar.
 - d. Jar.

2. What kind of animal was in the picture?
 - a. A fox.
 - b. A dog.
 - c. A bird.
 - d. A pig.

3. Which of the following means of transportation was in the picture?
 - a. A car.
 - b. A train.
 - c. A boat.
 - d. An airplane.

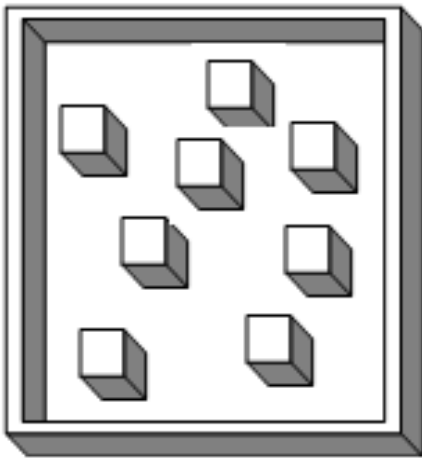
4. Which color was the tree in the picture?
 - a. Blue.
 - b. Red.
 - c. Pink.
 - d. Green.

Answers to the questions above: 1.A, 2.D, 3.C, 4.D.

Examples of the Math Section

What are the Math section questions like? This Section is designed to test your ability to perform basic math skills that might be used in the job. You may be presented with an image with blocks in it, or a short narrative math problem or a chart with information in it to use in calculating an answer.

Below are three sample questions similar to what you might see in this section on the test.



- Using the image above, if you took out half of the cubes in the box, how many cubes would be left?
 - 0
 - 4
 - 8
 - 16

- Inmates must be served a meal every six hours. They are served breakfast, lunch and dinner, in that order. If they were fed breakfast at 5:00am, when would they receive dinner?
 - 11:00am
 - 1:00pm
 - 5:00pm
 - 6:00pm

Using the information below, answer question 3.

Commissary Items	Price per item
Bag of chips	\$0.95
Bottle of soda	\$1.25
Candy bar	\$0.80
Peanuts	\$0.65
Bag of cookies	\$1.45
Coffee	\$0.35

3. One of the inmates in your unit complained that he was overcharged for his commissary order. How much should he have been charged for two bags of chips, a bottle of soda and a candy bar?
- a. \$3.00
 - b. \$3.65
 - c. \$3.95
 - d. \$4.25

Answers to the questions above: 1.B, 2.C, 3.C

Examples of the Problem Solving/Reasoning/Reading Section

What are the Problem Solving/Reasoning/Reading Skills questions like? This section is designed to test your ability to take information and determine an answer. You will be presented with a passage and then directed to answer a series of questions related to that passage. The passages will vary in length.

Below are sample passages and questions similar to what you might see in this Section on the test.

To practice, carefully read the passage then answer the associated questions. Remember, you can re-read the passage as many times as you like while you answer the questions.

Example Passage 1:

Not all foods lose vitamins when they are cooked. For some, heat draws out the vitamins, making them more available to our bodies. Anti-nutrients present in some raw foods are deactivated by cooking, releasing their nutrients. The vitamin C in broccoli is a good example. When broccoli is cooked, vitamin C is released. Therefore, cooked broccoli has more vitamin C than raw broccoli. This is also true with carrots.

1. Which of the following best describes the main point of the passage?
 - a. The main point is to inform you about the importance of vitamin C.
 - b. The main point is to caution you about eating fatty foods.
 - c. The main point is to describe the nutritional contents of fruits and vegetables.
 - d. The main point is to explain that some foods do not lose vitamins when cooked.

2. Which of the following best describes what happens when food is cooked?
 - a. Carrots, like broccoli, provide more vitamin C when cooked.
 - b. Raw broccoli has more vitamin C than cooked carrots.
 - c. Raw carrots have more vitamin C than cooked broccoli.
 - d. Carrots, unlike broccoli, keep vitamin C when cooked.

Example Passage 2:

This week's work schedule: Jim is scheduled to work on Monday through Saturday. Kevin is scheduled to work on Sunday through Thursday. Linda is scheduled for Tuesday, Friday and Sunday. Sue is scheduled to work Tuesday through Saturday. There must be only three servers on the floor on any given day, except on Sunday when only two servers can be on the floor.

3. According to the passage, which of the following days has too many servers?
 - a. Saturday.
 - b. Tuesday.
 - c. Thursday.
 - d. Friday.

4. Linda is planning to go to the beach next weekend. Jim agreed to cover her shift on Sunday. Who can she request to cover her shift for Friday?
 - a. Jim
 - b. Sue
 - c. Kevin
 - d. Not enough information to determine.

Answers to the questions above: 1.D, 2.A, 3.B, 4.C

Examples of the Handling Situations Section

What are the Handling Situations section questions like? The section is designed to test your ability to respond to a variety of situations. The situations you will be given are about working with others and common situations that anyone may face in their everyday lives. For each situation, you will be presented with a number of possible actions to take. You must mark either “a” (I would take this action) or “b” (I would not take this action); failure to mark either “a” or “b” will be scored as an incorrect response.

It is important that you represent yourself accurately. It is possible to identify more than one action that you might take or not take. In fact, you could decide that for you, all of the actions are possible or none of the actions are ones that you would take.

Below is a sample situation of the type that you will find in the Handling Situation section of the test. To practice, carefully consider the situation and choose either “a” – I would take this action, or “b” – I would not take this action, for each response statement.

Example Scenario: You have been asked by a coworker to work late tonight so the coworker can finish a project. You are not responsible for the project and will suffer no work-related consequences from its lack of completion.

1. I would rearrange my schedule to help my coworker.
 - a. I would take this action.
 - b. I would not take this action.

2. I would tell the person I could not help him on the project.
 - a. I would take this action.
 - b. I would not take this action.

3. I would offer my assistance immediately.
 - a. I would take this action.
 - b. I would not take this action.

4. I would ask my supervisor for advice on what to do.
 - a. I would take this action.
 - b. I would not take this action.

5. I would tell the coworker that he or she should have planned better.
 - a. I would take this action.
 - b. I would not take this action.

Note: since this is based on what you would actually do there are no identified answers.

Examples of the Written Communication Section

What are the Written Communication Section questions like? This section is designed to test your ability to determine proper written communication. Questions in this section may require a determination of the correct word to use, the correct spelling or the logical order of paragraphs in a passage. Some of these questions only have 3 options to choose from while others have 4 options.

Below are two sample questions similar to what you might see in this Section on the test.

1. Homes _____ typically have indoor bowling alleys.
 - a. don't
 - b. doesn't
 - c. doen't

Passage 1: In the summer there are more mosquitoes around. People can help with getting rid of mosquitoes by eliminating standing water, keeping grass cut and encouraging insects that eat mosquitoes.

2. Which of the following words is misspelled in Passage 1?
 - a. mosquitoes
 - b. eliminating
 - c. encourageing
 - d. insects

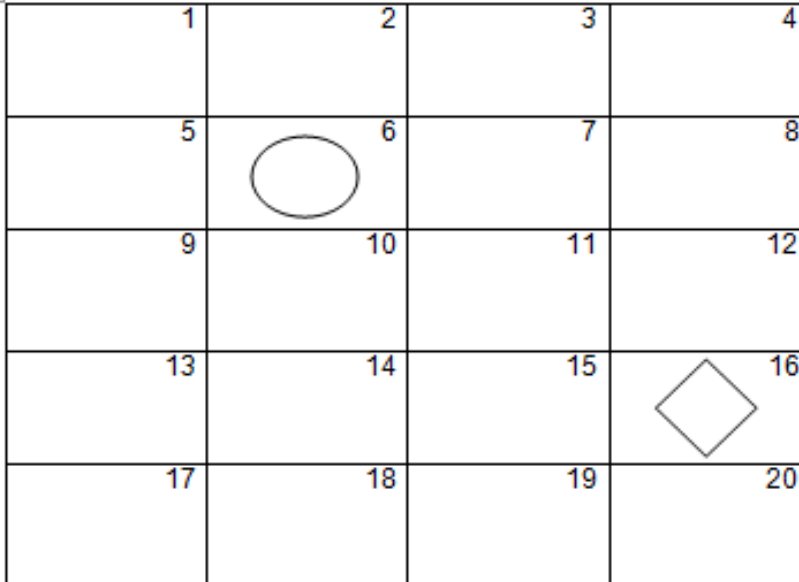
Answers to the questions above: 1.A, 2.C

Examples of the Following Directions Section

What are the Following Directions Section questions like? This section asks you to look at an image and follow a set of instructions that will then require you to answer questions about what you did.

Below is an image and two questions similar to what you might see in this Section on the test.

1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20

A 5x4 grid with 20 numbered blocks. A circle is located in block 6 (row 2, column 2). A diamond is located in block 16 (row 4, column 4).

- Using the above figure, move the circle to the right two blocks, down one block, and left one block. Where is the circle now?
 - 7
 - 10
 - 11
 - 15
- Using the above figure, move the diamond up one block, move the circle to the left one block, move the diamond to the left two blocks, and move the circle up one block. Where are the circle and diamond, respectively?
 - 1 and 6.
 - 2 and 6.
 - 1 and 10.
 - 2 and 10.

Answers to the questions above: 1.C, 2.C

General Issues

- If possible, get a good night's sleep before the exam.
- Arrive at least 30 minutes before the scheduled test time.
- Monitor the amount of beverages you consume before the exam. You do not want to get distracted by having to go to the bathroom.
- No beverages will be allowed in the testing room.
- Listen carefully to the test proctor. Do not take any directions for granted.
- Carefully complete your answer sheet.
- Practice the written test by using the samples in this material.
- Do not panic when others begin finishing the test. There are no points for finishing first!

GOOD LUCK!