

PREPARING FOR AN EXAMINATION



**Department of
Corrections &
Rehabilitation**

**Human Resources
Office of Workforce
Planning and Selection**

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Table of Contents

- Introduction3
- Equal Opportunity Employer.....4
- Testing Offices5
- Steps in the Examination Process.....6
- Types of Examinations 7-8
- How Examinations can be Administered 9-10
- Examination Bulletins..... 11-14
- How to Submit an Application for an Examination15
- Preparing for an Examination 16-18
- Tips to Control Test Anxiety 19-21

Introduction

This handbook is designed to help you understand the civil service examination process and start you on your way to a successful career in State service with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR).

California State government established a civil service system to eliminate preferential hiring of public servants based on non job-related criteria. The cornerstone of this system is the examination process. Examinations are administered by the State Personnel Board (SPB) or by individual State departments and are typically held either on an Open basis (anyone who meets the minimum qualifications can apply) or on a Promotional basis (only current State employees can apply). All examinations may include one or more of the following: a Written Test, a Qualification Appraisal Panel (QAP) interview (oral interview), a Qualification Assessment (previously known as a Supplemental Application), a Written Qualification Appraisal Test or a review of the Education and Experience indicated on the examination application.

Examinations are advertised by various means (websites, posting, etc.), however, the most important form is the examination bulletin. The examination bulletin has all the critical information you need to know about the classification being examined for and the examination itself. Each examination tests the knowledge, skills and/or abilities as determined by the classification specification that are needed for successful job performance.

Once you have successfully passed an examination, you will be notified of your score and ranking. Your name will be placed on an eligible list in rank order and will remain there until the eligible list expires or you place yourself inactive. Eligible lists are used by individual hiring programs to fill vacant positions. As your rank becomes reachable, you will be notified of vacancies and have the opportunity to participate in a hiring interview if you are interested in the particular vacancy. You can decline the particular notification, also known as a waiver, and remain on the list. Note: Eligibility on Open examinations is limited to a maximum of three waivers; Promotional examinations are unlimited.

If you need further information about the examination process, please contact:

Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation
Office of Workforce Planning and Selection
1515 S Street, Room 522-North
P.O. Box 942883
Sacramento, CA 94283-0001
Telephone: (916) 322-2545
TDD: 1-800-735-2922

Equal Opportunity Employer

The State of California is an Equal Opportunity Employer. All State civil service jobs are filled by examinations that are open to all, regardless of race, color, creed, national origin, ancestry, sex, marital status, disability, religious beliefs or political affiliation, age or sexual orientation.

California residency is not required for participation in civil service examinations.

Employment Citizenship Requirements

Only individuals authorized to work in the United States will be hired.

State Employment and Drug-Free Work Environment

It is an objective of the State of California to achieve a drug-free work environment. Any applicant for State employment is expected to behave in accordance with this objective because the use of illegal drugs is inconsistent with the laws of the State, the rules governing civil service, and the special trust placed in public servants.

Testing Offices

In 1985, the State Personnel Board (SPB) delegated the examination process for specific civil service classifications to CDCR. This resulted in CDCR establishing its own testing offices in Headquarters and within the adult institutions. This also allowed CDCR the ability to administer examinations to create hiring lists for its own use. CDCR is unique because it has three separate testing entities:

1. **Headquarters Office of Workforce Planning and Selection** – The Office of Workforce Planning and Selection has the ultimate responsibility for administering the Department’s testing program, including oversight for the testing programs at the adult correctional facilities. The Office of Workforce Planning and Selection administers examinations for promotional and open, entry-level examinations and establishes eligibility (hiring) lists for CDCR’s department-wide use.
2. **Local Testing Offices** – The Office of Workforce Planning and Selection delegates testing authority to the adult correctional facilities through Local Testing Offices, primarily for open, entry-level classifications that are recruited for locally, such as Cook Specialist II or Heavy Equipment Mechanic. The Local Testing Offices each have a Delegated Testing Officer who oversees the administration of the examination and the establishment of an eligible list for use at the adult and juvenile correctional facility within a geographic area or region.
3. **Regional Testing Offices** – The Office of Peace Officer Selection of CDCR is responsible for three Regional Testing Offices, one in Sacramento, one in Fresno, and one in Rancho Cucamonga. These offices test for entry-level peace officer classifications (Correctional Officer, Youth Correctional Officer, Parole Agent I, Adult Parole, Youth Correctional Counselor and Correctional Counselor I).

Steps in the Examination Process

To be hired with CDCR, you must first apply to take and pass an examination for the classification in which you are interested and for which you qualify (you must meet the minimum qualifications). Once you successfully compete in an examination, your name will be added to the eligibility list, which is sometimes called an employment list. Usually Ranks 1, 2 and 3 are immediately reachable for employment and may be hired if there is a vacant position that needs to be filled. Typically, ranks below Rank 3 must wait until a rank above no longer contains names of people who are interested in employment before they can be offered a position.

1. An examination bulletin is released. Occasionally a bulletin will need to be amended or changed. When this occurs, applicants will be notified of the change via a letter or a rider to the bulletin. The rider may indicate a change in the type of examination being administered, the date of the examination, or a change in the filing deadline, etc.
2. Applicants submit applications to the testing office listed on the bulletin or rider by the final filing deadline.
3. Applications are reviewed to determine if they were submitted on time and if the applicant meets the minimum qualifications for admittance to the examination.
4. Applicants who meet the minimum qualifications are notified of their acceptance to the examination and the date and time of their examination.
5. Applicants who do not meet the minimum qualifications are also notified and are given an opportunity to provide additional information that may indicate they meet the minimum qualifications. They are also provided information on their right to appeal to SPB. The appeal process can be lengthy, and the date to take the examination may have passed by the time the appeal is settled. In the event this occurs and if the appeal is successful, the applicant will be scheduled to take the examination after the date that the original examination was administered. If the applicant receives a passing score, his or her name will be added to the eligibility list.
6. The examination is administered.
7. Competitors are notified of their scores and ranks approximately six to eight weeks after the examination has been completed. Competitors who did not pass the exam are provided information on their right to appeal.
8. An eligibility list is established for specific programs use in the hiring process.

Types of Examinations

Open Examinations – Competition is open to all interested applicants who meet the minimum qualifications that are listed on the classification specification. The classification specifications can be found on the SPB's website at: www.spb.ca.gov. Applicants do **not** have to be a State employee to qualify to take the examination. Veterans Preference Points¹ (Government Code §18973) are applied only if the examination is an entrance examination (requiring **both** of the following: education less than a Bachelor's Degree **and** two years of experience). Career credits² (Government Code §18951) do **not** apply.

Open/Non-promotional Examinations – Competition is open to qualified State employees and all applicants who meet the minimum qualifications. Career credits are applied to the final score of State employees who have permanent civil service status (those who have successfully passed their initial probationary period). Veterans Preference Points³ are applied; however, if an applicant receives Veterans Preference Points, he or she cannot also receive career credits.

Open/Spot Examinations – Competition is open to all interested applicants who meet the minimum qualifications. Competitors must take the examination at the location indicated on the examination bulletin, regardless of the place of their residence, since the vacancies being tested for occur only at the specified spot (location). **Note:** If the examination is administered in several spots (locations), there will be a note on the examination bulletin or rider that indicates that a competitor may only compete once in a testing period. That testing period will be noted on the examination bulletin. These types of examinations are usually administered by the Local Testing Offices.

Departmental/Promotional Examinations – Competition is limited to those who are already State employees. Competitors must: 1) have a permanent civil service appointment with whatever State department is participating in the testing; and 2) meet the minimum qualifications.

Servicewide Examinations – Competition is limited to State employees who: 1) have a permanent civil service appointment with **any** State department; and 2) meet the minimum qualifications.

Multi-Departmental Examinations – Competition is limited to State employees of the participating departments who: 1) have a permanent civil service appointment; and 2) meet the minimum qualifications.

¹ NOTE: Due to changes in the law, effective January 1, 1996, veterans who have achieved permanent civil service status (that is, veterans who have successfully passed a probationary period in a position with California State government) are not eligible to receive Veterans Preference Points.

² Career credits, consisting of three points, are given in certain circumstances to applicants who are currently State employees.

³ Same footnote as #2 above.

Types of Examinations (Continued)

Departmental/Promotional/Spot Examinations – Competition is limited to State employees who: 1) have a permanent civil service appointment with the State department(s) indicated on the examination bulletin; and 2) meet the minimum qualifications. The examination must be taken at the location (spot) indicated on the examination bulletin or rider, regardless of the competitor’s place of residence. **Note:** If an examination is being administered at multiple spots, competitors may compete for one spot only.

Examination Type	Who Can Apply	Career Credits	Veterans Preference Points
Open	Anyone who meets the MQs	No	Possible
Open/Non-promotional	Anyone who meets the MQs	Yes	Possible
Open Spot	Anyone who meets the MQs	No	Possible
Departmental Promotional	Departmental employees who meet the MQs	No	No
Servicewide	All State employees who meet the MQs	No	No
Multi-Departmental	State employees who meet the MQs and who work for the Department giving the exam	No	No
Departmental/Promotional/Spot	Departmental employees who meet the MQs	No	No

How Examinations Can be Administered

All examinations consist of at least one component that assesses a competitor's knowledge, skills, and abilities relative to the classification being tested. The most common types of examinations are described below:

Written Examination – A written examination is timed and consists of various job-related, multiple-choice questions that cover the knowledge and abilities needed to successfully perform the duties of the classification being tested. The examination bulletin or rider indicates the scope of the written examination. The written examination is sometimes used in conjunction with a Qualifications Appraisal Panel (QAP) interview examination, with the results of each examination being given a specific weight in the overall testing process.

Qualifications Appraisal Panel (QAP) Interview Examination – A QAP interview consists of an oral interview that is conducted by a panel, usually comprised of a chairperson (who represents SPB) and two State Service Representatives who are subject matter experts. The examination is tape recorded, timed, and consists of a set of predetermined job related questions that are read to every candidate. The candidate's responses are scored against a predetermined list of suggested responses and benchmark scores that were developed prior to the examination by subject matter experts and a Selection Analyst.

Written Qualification Appraisal Test (WQAT) – A WQAT exam is similar to a QAP examination, however, the candidate provides written bullet-type responses in an answer booklet rather than verbally citing their responses to a panel. The candidate's answer booklet is scored by a panel comprised of a chairperson (who represents SPB) and two State Service Representatives who are subject matter experts against a predetermined list of suggested responses and benchmark scores that were developed prior to the examination by subject matter experts and a Selection Analyst. The WQAT is also a timed examination.

Education and Experience (E&E) Examination – An E&E examination consists solely of rating a competitor's education and experience as indicated on the examination application against predetermined rating criteria. This type of examination is used for smaller candidate groups, subject to administrative requirements set forth by SPB. The resulting list is limited to three ranks.

How Examinations can be Administered (Continued)

Qualification Assessment (QA) Examination (previously known as Supplemental Application) – The QA is combined with either a standard State application or a modified application designed specifically for the classification being tested. The competitors indicate the level of their knowledge and experience to predetermined questions, in addition to indicating the frequency they have performed specific job related tasks. Additionally, some QAs may include narrative questions that require a detailed response to specific job-related questions. The responses are rated against a predetermined list of suggested responses that were developed by subject matter experts and a Selection Analyst.

Online/Internet Examination – The Office of Workforce Planning and Selection recently began placing examinations online via SPB's website in order to expedite the examination process. These examinations are typically Qualification Assessments (previously known as Supplemental Applications) which will provide you with an opportunity to explain significant aspects of your qualifications. The information you provide will be rated based on objective criteria created by Subject Matter Experts and that rating will be used to determine your final score in the examination. Your name will be merged onto a list based on your final score, and that list will be used by CDCR facilities statewide to fill their existing positions.

Examination Bulletins

Before applying for an examination, you must ensure that an examination is being given. This information is always contained on examination bulletins which can be found at CDCR's Intranet/Internet websites at: <http://intranet/ADM/DSS/hr/owp/Pages/default.aspx> (intranet) or http://www.cdcr.ca.gov/Career_Opportunities/index.html (internet). You can locate the examination information within the Human Resources page of the website. These websites post the Annual Departmental Examination Plan which displays information concerning all examinations administered each fiscal year and the anticipated bulletin release dates.

Current examination dates and testing information for CDCR and SPB are also available from the following sources:

CDCR's Information Center

- CDCR's Customer Service Unit: (916) 322-2545 – Customer Service Unit staff can answer your questions regarding upcoming examinations, status of examinations in progress, etc.
- California Relay Service for the deaf or hearing impaired: 1-800-735-2922.

SPB's Information Center

- SPB's website contains valuable information relating to CDCR's examinations as well as all other State departments. It is also very valuable in searching for new job opportunities as it lists information for vacancies for all State departments.

The website address for examinations is:

http://www.spb.ca.gov/jobs/exams/exam_bulletins.htm

The website address for vacancies is:

<http://www.spb.ca.gov/jobs/vpos/index.htm>

- Requests for general examination information along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope can also be sent to:

State Personnel Board
801 Capitol Mall
Sacramento, CA 95814

- SPB has an information line available in Sacramento at (916) 653-1502.

Examination Bulletins (Continued)

Examination bulletins provide important information on test dates, methods of testing, requirements to participate in the examination, knowledge, skills and/or abilities, salaries, locations, and position descriptions. The following information is contained in each examination bulletin:

Examination Title – provides the classification name of the examination being administered.

Examination Base – identifies the type of examination being administered and the type of list that will be established.

Who Should Apply – identifies who can apply for the examination and gives the limitation of the testing period for the classification, if applicable.

How to Apply – gives the location and address(es) where applications for the examination must be submitted.

Application Deadline / Requirements – gives the date (final filing date) when all applications must be submitted and the time by which applicants must meet minimum qualifications.

Test Date – shows the anticipated testing date(s).

Salary Range(s) – lists the beginning and ending salaries and lists any pertinent information that may affect salaries.

Minimum Qualifications – lists the minimum education and/or experience needed for the applicant to be admitted to the examination. The minimum qualifications are taken directly from SPB's classification specification.

Examination Plan – describes the examination, the weight of each component, and the knowledge, skills, and/or abilities required for the classification being tested.

Additional Desirable Qualifications – if applicable, lists any special personal or physical characteristics or additional desirable qualifications that are deemed valuable for the performance of the job. The additional desirable qualifications are also taken directly from SPB's classification specification.

Eligible List Information – the proposed duration and type of employment list.

Position Description and Location(s) – provides a brief description of the responsibilities and duties of the classification and the location of current or anticipated vacancies and/or positions.

Special Testing Arrangements – gives instructions for those who request reasonable accommodation for taking the examination.

Veterans Points / Career Credits – in some examinations, veterans preference points or career credits are added to a candidate's final score. Veterans preference points are granted in Open and Open/Non-promotional entrance examinations only. Career credits apply to Open/Non-promotional examinations only.

Examination Bulletins (Continued)

Special Requirements – if applicable, provides information on peace officer requirements and classifications (some medical and records classifications) for which background investigations are required.

General Information – describes general information about California civil service laws and rules pertaining to examinations. This information includes the competitor's responsibilities in the examination process.

Current CDCR Testing Information – gives telephone numbers to call for testing information, as well as a number to call for California Relay Service.

When reviewing an examination bulletin to see if you meet the minimum qualifications, you need to be aware of the following terminology.

Experience Requirements

The term **experience** means experience equivalent to full-time work, typically defined as 40 hours a week. If you work part time, your work experience will be prorated based on the number of hours you work.

The words “**performing the duties of...**” or “**experience in the class of...**” mean that you must have been appointed to and working in the specific classification mentioned in the minimum qualifications for the specified amount of time.

The words “**in a position comparable to...**” or “**in a position equivalent to...**” or “**duties comparable to those of...**” or “**duties of a class with a level of responsibility not less than that of...**” means you must have experience of the type and length of time in a classification at the same (or higher) level of responsibility as the classification specified.

The words “**candidates who are within six months of satisfying the experience requirement**” allow a candidate to be admitted to the examination process but require full satisfaction of the experience requirements before the candidate can be appointed to the position.

Examination Bulletins (Continued)

Education Requirements

The words “**equivalent to completion of the twelfth grade**” generally mean graduation from high school. However, this requirement may also be met by passing the California High School Proficiency Test; the General Educational Development (GED) Test; admission to and completion of at least 12 semester units of college-level courses at a recognized college; business college work in clerical and accounting classes or possession of an Associate of Arts degree or higher degree from an accredited college.

NOTE: For peace officer classifications “equivalent to completion of the twelfth grade” may be demonstrated by: (1) possession of a high school diploma issued by a U.S. institution; (2) passing the California High School Proficiency test; (3) passing the General Educational Development (GED) test meeting California high school graduation standards; or (4) possession of a college degree (Associate of Arts or higher) from an accredited college or university.

The words “**equivalent to graduation from college**” refers to a Bachelor’s degree. Applicants must have the number of semester or quarter credits, as well as the required coursework necessary to be awarded a four year Bachelor’s degree. When the college requirements indicate “**specialization in**” or “**major work in**” a certain field (such as accounting), it means you must possess a bachelor’s degree in that field or show completion of course work in the field sufficient to constitute a major.

NOTE: Completion of one or more Associate of Arts (AA) degrees from a two-year college or its equivalent does not meet the requirements for “equivalent to graduation from college.”

The words “**possession of a master’s/doctorate degree**” means completion of a graduate or doctoral program. Honorary degrees are unacceptable.

The words “**additional experience in a specific work area may be substituted for the education requirements**” when specified in the MQs allow the education requirement to be fulfilled through additional qualifying experience.

NOTE: When experience and a specific education degree are required to meet the MQs, experience gained as part of the educational process to obtain the degree cannot be used to meet the experience requirements. This would be double counting the experience.

How to Submit an Application for an Examination

To apply for an examination with CDCR, you must complete a standard State Application Form (Standard Form Number 678), unless the examination bulletin indicates that a different application form is required (as for Correctional Officer, Youth Correctional Officer, etc.). Submit your completed application by the **final filing date** indicated on the examination bulletin or rider. The standard application form is available at all departmental personnel offices, at SPB, at EDD offices, and on line at <http://www.spb.ca.gov/jobs/stateapp.htm>. Applications other than the standard application are available through the department giving the examination. Some may also be available on-line with the examining department.

It is very important to submit your examination application with **complete, accurate and updated information**. This will assist the Selection Technician in determining if the **education** and/or **experience** indicated on your examination application meets the minimum qualifications for the examination. You must provide **detailed information** about beginning and ending dates of employment, hours worked, names/locations of **employers** and **duties performed**. Frequently, applicants submit incomplete or illegible information which results in the applicant being denied from the examination erroneously. It is also important to understand the minimum qualifications for the classification and document your education and/or experience as it relates to the required qualifications, including any relevant experience gained outside of State service.

Preparing for an Examination

As with any examination, it is important to be prepared. The more knowledge you have about the examination process as well as the classification, the better prepared you will be during the examination. Below are critical steps to assist you in preparing for an examination:

General Preparation

- It is never too early to start preparing. Mentoring and training should be taking place every day in the workplace. Do not wait for an examination bulletin to be advertised before you begin to prepare for your next promotional opportunity. Your interest in your job, willingness to volunteer for additional/special assignments and eagerness to learn different tasks will provide you with invaluable knowledge. The total package - education and experience - is what provides you with the expertise to respond to the job related questions that are asked during your examination.
- Read the entire examination bulletin. Pay special attention to the section titled, "Examination Plan." The section will explain what type of examination will be administered (e.g., Written Test, Qualification Appraisal Panel, Qualification Assessment, etc.). This section will also explain the scope of the examination. The scope identifies the knowledge, skills and/or abilities required to be successful on the job. It is very important that you are familiar with the knowledge, skills and/or abilities of the classification because they are the basis for the examination questions.
- Review the Job Analysis for the classification being examined. The Office of Workforce Planning and Selection conducts job analysis for every examination administered. The most critical and frequently performed tasks are identified in the job analysis in addition to the knowledge, skills and/or abilities for the classification.

Job analyses can be found on the CDCR Intranet and Internet at:

<http://intranet/ADM/DSS/hr/ops/Pages/JobAnalysis.aspx> or

http://www.cdcr.ca.gov/Career_Opportunities/HR/OPS/Exams/Analysis/index.html

Additionally, a hard copy can also be obtained by visiting the Office of Workforce Planning and Selection at 1515 S Street, Room 522-North, Sacramento.

- Review and study the State Personnel Board (SPB) classification specification. This is the legal document for the classification and states how the classification is used in general, identifies the knowledge, skills and/or abilities required and lists any other pertinent classification information. The classification specification can be found on the SPB's website at <http://www.spb.ca.gov/jobs/resources/jobspecs.htm>.

Preparing for an Examination (Continued)

- Find out where the classification is being used to broaden your understanding of the classification. Talk to an incumbent currently in the position for which you are examining, request copies of duty statements, or shadow people working in the classification. Oftentimes, the individuals currently performing the duties of the classification can provide you with insight of the actual on-the-job tasks.

General Preparation (Cont'd)

- Acquaint yourself with the mission and goals of CDCR, which are available on the departmental Intranet and Internet sites. Learn as much about the department and/or the various locations within the department that utilizes the classification for which you are testing. Remember, your classification may be used in other locations/units other than your own and may perform different tasks. This should provide you a more complete understanding of how the classification is used within the department and will help you formulate better job-related responses to the questions.
- Be in the role. Answer questions as if you were already in the classification or level for which you are testing. Oftentimes, candidates answer questions from their current classification or level of experience. At a journey level, you may have broad technical experience; however, you will need to be prepared to answer supervisory related questions when testing for supervisory levels. For example, an Associate Governmental Program Analyst testing for a Staff Services Manager I examination should respond to the questions by explaining how you would “direct your staff” rather than actually perform the tasks yourself. A trainee classification when taking a full-journey level examination should look at the questions and respond as being able to perform the tasks with little or no supervision – you are the expert.
- Confirm the date, time and location of your examination to ensure you do not miss the examination. Failure to show up for your scheduled examination may disqualify you from participating.
- Show up at least 15 minutes early to fill out necessary forms and to gather your thoughts.
- Turn off all cell phones or electronic devices as they are disruptive to you and other candidates during examinations.

Preparing for an Examination (Continued)

Written Exam Tips

- Read specific segment instructions carefully to ensure you are answering the question correctly.
- Read the question in its entirety before you look at the answers.
- Read all choices carefully before choosing your answer.
- Immediately eliminate answers you know are wrong.
- Do not keep changing your answer; usually your first choice is the right one.
- Do not skip around from section to section. This may cause you to get confused and need additional time to finish.
- Do not spend too much time on questions you are unable to answer. Move on and come back to those questions.
- Ensure the question you are answering corresponds to the number on your answer sheet or answer book.
- Pace yourself. Make sure you allow yourself time to get back to any unanswered questions.
- Review your test and ensure you answered all questions before turning in your test material.

Oral Interview Examination Tips

- Dress accordingly for the classification for which you are interviewing.
- Listen carefully to the questions as they are asked. If you do not understand the question, ask the panel to repeat it.
- You will be provided a copy of the questions. Follow along with the panel as they read the questions and re-read the question if necessary.
- Take a few seconds to formulate your answer before speaking. A few seconds may seem like forever, but it is good for your mind to formulate thoughts.
- Speak clearly and in complete sentences.
- Answer the questions as if the panel members have no knowledge of the subject or your background.
- Maintain eye contact with the panel members, even though the panel members will be taking notes and may not look at you often.
- Be sure to have good posture; do not slouch or lean in your chair.

There are many areas that are covered in an examination. The examination is a competitive process so while you are not expected to know everything, the more prepared you are, the more competitive you should be. Do your research and allow time for preparation. Keep your supervisor or manager in the loop – they are a valuable resource.

Tips to Control Test Anxiety

As with most people, you have probably experienced “Test Anxiety.” To assist people in overcoming this common problem, the Office of Workforce Planning and Selection has outlined some general tips to assist in overcoming anxiety when participating in an examination.

Body and Mind

1. **Take Care of Yourself** – Make sure to get a good nights rest, eat a good breakfast and avoid excessive use of foods or drinks containing caffeine. Additionally, avoid consuming alcohol or other drugs that will cloud your thinking. If you are sick the day of your examination, you could be approved for a reschedule if you provide substantiation from a doctor.

Be Prepared

1. **Learn Effective Study Habits** – Become efficient in your study habits, have a study schedule that makes use of “wasted time.” Study when you feel alert and rested and sit at a well-lighted desk or table. Create your own learning aides, use flash cards to learn terms, definitions, etc., and have your study materials gathered together and organized.
2. **Develop A Study Plan** – The key to success on an examination is to review and/or study any documents pertaining to the classification for which you are testing. This would include reading the examination bulletin, job analysis and/or classification specification. The study plan should also include time that you are setting aside strictly to study for the examination. The better prepared you are, the better you will perform on the examination date.
3. **Manage Your Study Time** – Keep an ongoing record of your study time and establish your priorities. Make sure you schedule short review sessions, do not try to cram for hours before an examination. In addition, schedule time for relaxing and reward yourself for having a good study session. Finally, take a “dry run” before taking a State promotional examination
4. **Research Examination** – Find out how the examination is going to be administered. Is it an oral interview, written test or perhaps a written exercise with a short oral interview? Sometimes just finding out how an examination is given helps to alleviate stress.

Tips to Control Test Anxiety (Continued)

Learn to Relax

1. **Discover Personal Relaxation Techniques** – There are many different techniques that can be utilized to alleviate test anxiety. The key is finding out which works for you and on the day of the examination, utilizing them in a way that will enable you to perform to your highest potential.
2. **Inform the test panel that you are nervous** – sometimes it helps to break the ice and relax you just by saying it out loud.
3. **Place feet flat on floor in sitting position on a straight backed chair** – hold the underside of the chair with your hands and push down against the floor with your feet and pull up on the chair with your hands at the same time. This technique can be used during both oral interviews and/or written examinations.
4. **Place hands in lap while taking exam** – if you are nervous during the examination, by having your hands out of the sight of the panel, you can move your hands as needed and it will not be noticed by anybody but you. This is a good method to use during oral interviews.
5. **Find a focal point to focus on** – having a focal point to focus on during an examination can help candidates feel more comfortable and enable them to perform at their highest potential.

Stay Focused

1. **Learn Good Test Taking Skills** – Take a deep breath or two to relax before you start to take the examination. Read or listen to the test givers instructions thoroughly before starting and do not jump ahead. Think as you read or listen so you completely understand the question. For written examinations, read all answers before choosing the most correct one. Make an educated guess by eliminating any you know are incorrect and then look for clues in the remaining choices. In addition, circle or skip difficult questions and return to them later. Finally, use the full time allowed for the examination. If you finish early, review your answers one time, making corrections only to those you marked incorrectly.
2. **Put on a Game Face** – The day of the examination has arrived! Dress in a way that makes you feel confident, think positive thoughts and keep telling yourself that you are going to do great on the examination. Confidence in yourself can go a long way.

Tips to Control Test Anxiety (Continued)

3. **Recognize That You Are Experiencing Test Anxiety** – sometimes just recognizing what is happening with your body will assist in calming you down. Up to a certain limit, anxiety increases test scores by speeding up the thinking rate. Above the optimal level, anxiety interferes with test taking ability by blocking an individual's ability to recall information, reducing the test-taking speed due to distraction.

Think Positive

1. **Positive Feedback** – before taking any examination, repeat these phrases to yourself. *I am prepared for this examination. Tests measure knowledge, not my worth as a person. I am going to relax and think positively and do the best I can do.* During the examination, remember these phrases and relax.
2. **Think positive thoughts regarding the exam** – do not doubt yourself or your knowledge regarding the classification. Ask yourself if your negative thoughts are making you anxious and fearful. Ask yourself what you can do to change those feelings or negative thoughts. Keep telling yourself that you are going to do well.
3. **Trust your instincts when answering questions** – the key is not to doubt your answers, especially if you have taken the time to prepare. Remember most of the time your first answer is usually correct. Focus positive attention on the examination and don't waste time or energy worrying, thinking about the consequences of not doing well or wondering what others are doing.
4. **Take your time during the examination** – regardless of how an examination is administered it is acceptable to utilize the entire time that has been allotted to every candidate. Remember, just because another candidate finishes ahead of you does not mean they will score higher on the examination.

Hopefully, these simple tips have enabled you to learn some new techniques in managing your level of stress during examinations. With the proper preparation, the sky is the limit. Good luck on your next examination!