



**Department of  
Civil Service**

**A Guide to the Written Test**  
for the  
**Caseworker Series**

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## ***INTRODUCTION***

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The New York State Department of Civil Service has developed this test guide to familiarize you with the written test for the Caseworker Series. This test guide provides a general description of the subject areas which will be tested and the different types of questions you may see on the tests in this series.

The written test for the Caseworker Series has an overall time allowance of 3 hours. The test questions will cover the following three subject areas:

1. **ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING EFFECTIVE HELPING RELATIONSHIPS IN A SOCIAL CASEWORK SETTING:** These questions test for an understanding of the factors contributing to the development and maintenance of productive client-worker relationships. You will be provided with descriptions of specific client-worker interactions and asked to select the appropriate responses. The questions cover such topics as confidentiality, time management, professional ethics, and referral techniques.
2. **INTERVIEWING (CASEWORKER):** These questions test for an understanding of the principles and techniques of interviewing and their application to specific client-worker situations. You will be provided with a series of concrete interviewing situations for which you will be required to select an appropriate course of action based on an analysis of the situation, the application of the information provided, and the ramifications of various interviewing principles and strategies. You will also be asked questions about the interviewing process and various interviewing techniques.
3. **PREPARING WRITTEN MATERIAL:** These questions test for the ability to present information clearly and accurately, and to organize paragraphs logically and comprehensibly. For some questions, you will be given information in two or three sentences followed by four restatements of the information. You must then choose the best version. For other questions, you will be given paragraphs with their sentences out of order. You must then choose, from four suggestions, the best order for the sentences.

The next sections of this test guide explain how you will be tested in each of the subject areas listed above. A **TEST TASK** is provided for each subject area. This is an explanation of how a question is presented and how to correctly answer it. Read each explanation carefully. This test guide also provides at least one **SAMPLE QUESTION** for each subject area. The sample question is similar to the type of questions that will be presented on the actual test. This test guide provides the **SOLUTION** and correct answer to each sample question. You should study each sample question and solution in order to understand how the correct answer was determined.

## **SUBJECT AREA 1**

**ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING EFFECTIVE HELPING RELATIONSHIPS IN A SOCIAL CASEWORK SETTING:** These questions test for an understanding of the factors contributing to the development and maintenance of productive client-worker relationships. You will be provided with descriptions of specific client-worker interactions and asked to select the appropriate responses. The questions cover such topics as confidentiality, time management, professional ethics, and referral techniques.

**TEST TASK:** You will be presented with questions that describe specific client-worker situations. Each question will be followed by four choices listing different ways to handle the situation. You must determine which of the four choices is the best or most appropriate. **Note:** *You may be able to think of a better approach than any of the choices provided, but you must pick the best of those provided.*

### **SAMPLE QUESTION:**

A client has been unemployed for two years. She has tried to hold a job but has failed each time. She has come to you for help in securing employment. From your initial meetings with her, there are indications that she is not sincere about getting and keeping a job. Which one of the following is the best way to handle this situation?

- A. Suggest to her that a probable reason for her past failure is that she really doesn't want to work.
- B. Discuss job possibilities and direct her to the appropriate employment agencies.
- C. Ask her opinion on why she has been unable to keep a job.
- D. Ask her to explain why she thinks she needs a job.

*The best answer to this sample question is C.*

### **SOLUTION:**

*To determine the best way to handle this situation, you must evaluate each choice provided.*

**Choice A** is negative and confrontational. The client may become defensive and hostile. She may not recognize the fact that her behavior causes a problem. This will not help to engage her in a constructive dialogue to help find a solution.

**Choice B** ignores the client's problem. She has been unable to keep a job, and merely discussing job possibilities and referring her to employment agencies without addressing this problem is unlikely to help her to obtain and keep a job.

**Choice C** is the best among the choices given. The client is asked for her opinion about why she has been unable to keep a job, rather than being told a probable reason as in choice A. This approach is much more likely to lead to an open and productive discussion in which the client can recognize that she has a problem, and in which you can be seen as an ally in helping her, rather than as an accuser. Such a discussion may also reveal some issues that you were not aware of and which may be contributing to the client's inability to keep a job.

**Choice D** asks the client why she thinks she needs a job. This question does not address the point of the interview -- the client's inability to keep a job.

## **SUBJECT AREA 2**

**INTERVIEWING (CASEWORKER):** These questions test for an understanding of the principles and techniques of interviewing and their application to specific client-worker situations. You will be provided with a series of concrete interviewing situations for which you will be required to select an appropriate course of action based on an analysis of the situation, the application of the information provided, and the ramifications of various interviewing principles and strategies. You will also be asked questions about the interviewing process and various interviewing techniques.

**TEST TASK:** You will be presented with questions that describe specific client-worker situations. Each question will be followed by four choices listing different ways to handle the situation. You must select the most appropriate course of action to take, based on an analysis of the situation, the application of the information provided, and the ramifications of various interviewing principles and strategies. **Note:** *You may be able to think of a better approach than any of the choices provided, but you must pick the best of those provided.*

### **SAMPLE QUESTION:**

You have been interviewing a client and now have enough information to make the necessary decisions. However, the client just will not stop talking and is repeating, in slightly different words, the information that he has already given you. Which one of the following is the best way to deal with this situation?

- A. Tell the client that the interview time is up and that if he has more to say, you can set up another appointment for the near future.
- B. Thank the client for coming in. Tell him that his information has been very helpful and you will contact him if you need additional information.
- C. Tell the client you would like to hear more, but that it will have to be postponed to some future date.
- D. Thank the client for coming in, but explain that others are waiting so you must end the interview.

*The best answer to this sample question is B.*

### **SOLUTION:**

*To determine the best way to deal with this situation, you must evaluate each choice provided.*

**Choice A** gives the initiative to schedule another appointment to the client. This may lead to an unnecessary appointment. You already have enough information to make the necessary decisions, and there is no need for another appointment with the client in the near future.

**Choice B** is best. By thanking the client for coming in, you are being positive. By telling him how helpful his information has been, you continue in this positive direction. By telling him that you will contact him if you need additional information, you make it clear that you have the necessary data, and you maintain the initiative to schedule another appointment.

**Choice C**, like choice A, gives the initiative to schedule another appointment to the client and may result in an unnecessary appointment. Also, telling the client you would like to hear more, but postponing it to some future date, is contradictory and sends the client a mixed message.

**Choice D** begins well -- thanking the client for coming in is positive. However, explaining that others are waiting so you must end the interview leaves the client with the impression that you are rushing him out and that you are more concerned with the people who are waiting than you are with him.

## **SUBJECT AREA 3**

**PREPARING WRITTEN MATERIAL:** These questions test for the ability to present information clearly and accurately, and to organize paragraphs logically and comprehensibly.

**TEST TASK:** There are two separate test tasks in this subject area.

- For the first, **Information Presentation**, you will be given information in two or three sentences, followed by four restatements of the information. You must then select the choice which presents the information most clearly, accurately, and completely.
- For the second, **Paragraph Organization**, you will be given paragraphs with their sentences out of order, and then be asked to choose, from among four suggestions, the best order for the sentences.

### **INFORMATION PRESENTATION SAMPLE QUESTION:**

Martin Wilson failed to take proper precautions. His failure to take proper precautions caused a personal injury accident.

Which one of the following best presents the information above?

- A. Martin Wilson failed to take proper precautions that caused a personal injury accident.
- B. Proper precautions, which Martin Wilson failed to take, caused a personal injury accident.
- C. Martin Wilson's failure to take proper precautions caused a personal injury accident.
- D. Martin Wilson, who failed to take proper precautions, was in a personal injury accident.

*The best answer to this sample question is C.*

### **SOLUTION:**

**Choice A** conveys the incorrect impression that proper precautions caused a personal injury accident.

**Choice B** conveys the incorrect impression that proper precautions caused a personal injury accident.

**Choice C** best presents the original information: Martin Wilson failed to take proper precautions and this failure caused a personal injury accident.

**Choice D** states that Martin Wilson was in a personal injury accident. The original information states that Martin Wilson caused a personal injury accident, but it does not state that Martin Wilson was in a personal injury accident.

## **SUBJECT AREA 3 - CONTINUED**

### **PARAGRAPH ORGANIZATION SAMPLE QUESTION:**

The following question is based upon a group of sentences. The sentences are shown out of sequence, but when correctly arranged, they form a connected, well-organized paragraph. Read the sentences, and then answer the question about the best arrangement of these sentences.

1. Eventually, they piece all of this information together and make a choice.
2. Before actually deciding upon a human services job, people usually think about several possibilities.
3. They imagine themselves in different situations, and in so doing, they probably think about their interests, goals, and abilities.
4. Choosing among occupations in the field of human services is an important decision to make.

Which one of the following is the best arrangement of these sentences?

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

*The best answer to this sample question is D.*

### **SOLUTION:**

**Choices A and C** present the information in the paragraph out of logical sequence. In both **A** and **C**, sentence 1 comes before sentence 3. The key element in the organization of this paragraph is that sentence 3 contains the information to which sentence 1 refers; therefore, in logical sequence, sentence 3 should come before sentence 1.

**Choice B** also presents the information in the paragraph out of logical sequence. Choice **B** places sentence 4 in between sentence 1 and sentence 3, thereby interrupting the logical sequence of the information in the paragraph.

**Choice D** presents the information in the paragraph in the best logical sequence. Sentence 4 introduces the main idea of the paragraph: "choosing an occupation in the field of human services." Sentences 2-3-1 then follow up on this idea by describing, in order, the steps involved in making such a choice.

## **GENERAL TEST-TAKING GUIDELINES**

**Read all test directions and instructions carefully.** Make sure that you carefully read and follow all directions and any special instructions for the test. If sample questions are provided, do them for practice. *Make sure you understand the directions and instructions before you start to answer the questions.*

**Make sure you are answering the correct test questions in the correct test booklets.** The particular test you are taking may involve skipping some questions in the test booklet or may involve answering questions in more than one test booklet. You are responsible for making sure you get the right test booklets for your particular test and for determining which questions you are to answer. Refer to your test materials for information on which test booklets and questions you are to answer.

**Make sure the choice you mark on your answer sheet matches the question you are answering in the test booklet.** Most written multiple-choice tests are scanned and scored by machine. You will not get credit for choices you mark in the wrong place on the answer sheet. Check your work to make sure that the number of the question you are answering in the test booklet matches the choice you are marking on your answer sheet.

**Make sure you record all your answers on the answer sheet.** Only the answers you mark on your answer sheet will be counted toward your score.

**Make sure you fill in the circles for your choices completely and carefully.** Avoid making stray pencil marks on your answer sheet. The scanning machine may interpret these marks to be your answers.



# **STRATEGIES THAT MAY IMPROVE YOUR TEST PERFORMANCE**

## **Budget your time wisely**

Take note of the test time allowance and of the starting and stopping times. Look at the whole test first and then decide how much time to allow yourself for each part.

You may want to answer the easy questions first. You get just as much credit for an easy question as for a hard one. Do not take too much time trying to answer the difficult questions. Jot down the number of the difficult questions and then come back to them later if you have time. (*If you do skip a question in the test booklet, make sure you skip that answer on your answer sheet as well.*)

Keep track of the time as you go through the test. Know how much time you have and how many questions you have left to do. If some parts of your test are separately timed, work as rapidly as you can but stay calm and pay attention to the time limit.

## **Read each question carefully**

Make sure you read what is actually printed in the test booklet. The questions are designed to test your knowledge, skills, or abilities in a subject area. They are not meant to trick you or to be deceptive.

- Read each question carefully, follow the directions given, and answer each question based on the information given and on the actual question asked.
- After you read the question carefully, read each choice carefully.
- Make sure that you understand each choice before you decide which one is best.
- Pick the one choice that best answers the question given.
- Do not jump to conclusions.
- Be thorough and think about all the choices. If you do not read each choice carefully, you could easily miss the best one.

## **Be alert to key words**

Key words establish a condition that only the *correct* answer meets. Words like *best*, *greatest*, *always*, or *most* are examples of key words. If a question asks you to identify the *best* choice among four given, it may be that each of the four choices is a *possible* answer, but only *one* of the four choices is the *best* answer. To answer this type of question correctly, you must carefully read and compare all the choices given.

Here are some examples of questions that contain key words. These examples may be different than the types of questions used in the tests covered by this test guide. They are presented here only to illustrate the importance of key words.

1. Of the following foods, which one provides the **most** vitamin C in a one-cup serving?

- A. grapefruit juice
- B. sliced peaches
- C. mashed potatoes
- D. chopped broccoli

## **Answer:**

This question asks which of the foods listed provides the **most** vitamin C in a one-cup serving. The key word in this question is **most**. All of the foods mentioned in the choices contain some vitamin C. Many people know that citrus fruits, like oranges, lemons, and grapefruits, are good sources of vitamin C. That makes choice A look attractive. But one cup of broccoli actually contains more vitamin C than one cup of grapefruit juice. Choice D is the **best** answer. To answer this question correctly, you must read **all four** choices carefully before you can determine the **best** answer.

2. Of the following, which one is **generally** the **best** way to repair a Compton machine that will not start?
- A. Replace the entire engine.
  - B. Replace the ignitions wires.
  - C. Clean the carburetor.
  - D. Clean the valves.

**Answer:**

This question asks which one of the choices listed is generally the best way to repair a Compton machine that will not start. The key words in this question are **generally** and **best**. Assume that in 99 out of 100 cases, the best way to repair a Compton machine that will not start is to replace the ignition wires. Then choice B, replace the ignition wires, is **generally** the **best** way to do the repair. Choice B is the correct answer to this question.

Questions that use words like *generally* and *usually* are looking for the rule, not the exception. Other key words of this type are *common*, *likely*, *more*, *often*, *primarily*, *probably*, *typically*, and *usually*. When you see these words in a question, look for the choice that would be correct most of the time.

- Do not select the choice that would be correct only some of the time or on rare occasion.
- Be alert to questions that use words like *disadvantage*, *except*, *least* and *not*.
- If the question asks about a *disadvantage*, be sure not to choose an advantage as your answer. Words that begin with *non-* or *un-* are ways of saying *not*.

3. If grease in a pan catches fire, it is **unwise** to do which one of the following?
- A. Cover the pan with a lid.
  - B. Pour water on the fire.

**Answer:**

This question asks you to identify which action is unwise to do if grease in a pan catches fire. The key word in this question is **unwise**. This word should alert you that the question is looking for what you should **not** do, rather than what you should do if grease in a pan catches fire. Choice A, covering the pan with a lid, would smother the fire by cutting off the oxygen it needs to burn. Choice A is what you *should* do if grease in a pan catches fire. However, since this question asks what is unwise to do, choice A is the *wrong* answer to this question. Choice B, pouring water on the fire, would cause the grease and fire in the pan to spatter because water and grease do not mix. This could cause injury or make the fire spread. So, it is *unwise* to pour water on the fire. Therefore, Choice B is the *correct* answer to this question.

4. If an alarm goes off in a mechanical room and the situation appears to be a threat to health or safety, what should you do **first**?

- A. Turn off the power.
- B. Call your supervisor.
- C. Call the security staff.
- D. Have people leave the area.

**Answer:**

This question asks what you should do first if an alarm goes off in a mechanical room. The key word in this question is **first**. When a question uses the word *first*, consider the choices in the order in which they should be done. For the question above, all four choices list actions that should be taken. The important thing to know is which to do first in the situation. Since the situation could be life-threatening or could result in injury, the first thing to do is to have people leave the area. This allows people to remain safe while the reason for the alarm is determined and the situation is fixed. Choice D is the first thing to do. If the situation were **not** life-threatening, choice A, turning off the power, might be the first thing to do.

When you see a question like this, make sure you understand the question and the situation thoroughly. When you think you have decided the right order for the actions, mark down the choice that you think is the first action to take in the situation. That way, you think about the whole series of possible actions to take, not just one action by itself, and you are more likely to choose the correct answer.

**Break large problems into smaller parts**

A very large or complex problem may make more sense if you break it down and look at it one part at a time. Make diagrams or notes on your scrap paper to help you understand each of the separate parts, and how those parts collectively make up the whole problem. Sometimes you can work backwards from the answer to see which answer best fits the problem. Try each answer, in turn, to find the one that works best.

**Use a process of elimination**

Most multiple-choice questions give you four possible choices. You may not be sure of the answer, but you may see right away that one or two of the choices are not correct. If this is the case, immediately eliminate the choices you know are not correct. Then, just think about the others. Pick the best of the choices that remain. Even if one choice seems only a little better than the others, pick that one. If you can eliminate one or more of the choices and make an educated guess about the choices that remain, your chances of success are better than if you make a completely wild guess.

**Guess if you do not know the answer to a question**

If you do not answer a question, you will not get credit for it. If you guess correctly, you will get credit. Therefore, if you are not sure of an answer, you should still try to answer the question.

## **HELPFUL TIPS**

Your attitude and approach to the test will influence how well you perform. A positive attitude will help you do your best.

### **Before the test...**

- Study and review this guide to become familiar with what the test will cover.
- Study and review the subject areas that will be covered on the test.
- Study and review the New York State Department of Civil Service publication, "How to Take a Written Test." It is available on the same page as this and other test guides through [www.cs.ny.gov](http://www.cs.ny.gov), Job Seekers, Employment Opportunities with NYS Government, State Examinations, Test Guides and Resource Books. The direct link is: <http://www.cs.ny.gov/pio/publications/howtotakeawrittentest.pdf>. It includes a considerable amount of information on Civil Service tests, including a section titled, General Test-Taking Guidelines." This includes advice such as: **Read each test question carefully and completely. Read all of the choices before selecting your answer.**

### **On the day of the test...**

- Arrive at the test site on time.
- Bring your Admission Notice, two No. 2 pencils, a photo ID containing your signature, a quiet lunch or snack, and any other **allowed** materials.
- Do **NOT** bring this test guide to the test site.

### **At the test site...**

- Do **NOT** bring cell phones, beepers, headphones, or any electronic or other communication devices to the test site.
- The use of such devices anywhere on the grounds of the test site (in addition to the test room, this includes hallways, restrooms, building, grounds, and parking lots) could result in your disqualification.
- Do **NOT** use the calculator function on your cell phone.

### **During the test...**

- Read and follow all directions on your Admission Notice, test booklets, answer sheets, and Candidate Directions.
- Follow the Monitor's instructions.
- Keep track of time.

### **After the test...**

- Do **NOT** remove any test materials from the test room.
- Do **NOT** paraphrase, reconstruct, or reproduce the test material in any way.
- Do **NOT** discuss the test material with others.

## ***TEST SECURITY***

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The test you will be taking is the property of the New York State Department of Civil Service. Candidates may not remove test material from the test site and may not reproduce, reconstruct, or discuss the test content with others. Unauthorized possession or disclosure of the test material is prohibited by law and punishable by imprisonment and/or a fine. Additionally, candidates may be disqualified from appointment to the positions for which the examination is being held and from being a candidate for any civil service examination for five years. After you take the test, other individuals may want to talk with you about the test. You should not discuss the questions and answers, even in general terms. You should be careful that you do not inadvertently violate test security and put yourself at risk.

It is the policy of the New York State Department of Civil Service to provide reasonable accommodation to ensure effective communication of information to individuals with disabilities. If you need an auxiliary aid or service to make the information available to you, please contact the New York State Department of Civil Service Public Information Office at (518) 457-9375.

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