

Student name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Prepare for pre-employment drug screening, assessment and skills tests

### Objectives:

- A. Understand the process of drug screening.
- B. Understand the process of pre-employment tests.
- C. List ways to prepare for the pre-employment test.

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### MODULE 3H: INFORMATION SHEET

*TO THE STUDENT:* Read and study this information sheet and complete the activities at the end.

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#### Pre-Employment Tests

A pre-employment test is a paper-and-pencil test or performance test administered by an employer as part of the job application process. For almost all state and federal government jobs, applicants must take one or more pre-employment tests.

One type of test is the civil service test. This test is administered to a job applicant seeking a government job. The intent of civil service testing is to promote fairness in employment. Job applicants with the highest civil service test scores are given preference in hiring.

Non-government (private) employers may also administer pre-employment test. Large employers often give them as part of the job application process. For entry-level jobs with the government or private employers, the most common types of tests are general ability test and performance tests.

#### General Ability Tests

A general ability test measures basic learning skills such as reading, spelling, vocabulary, and arithmetic. These written tests are similar to the types of tests that you have taken throughout your school years.

## Performance Tests

In a performance test, you are asked to demonstrate skills needed for a specific occupation. Some performance tests are paper-and-pencil tests. An example would be a clerical skill test that requires you to proofread a business letter for possible errors.

Many performance tests are hands-on tests. They require you to use actual tools or machines. Suppose you are applying for a job as a data processing operator. Before being considered, you might be tested on a computer. By testing your skills now, employers avoid possible surprises later.

## Taking a Test

You should not let the thought of taking a pre-employment test scare you away from a possible job. You will do better on the test if you do not spend time worrying about it.

Almost everyone experiences some test anxiety. You may be surprised to learn that mild test anxiety can be good. Studies have shown that mild stress actually improves the performance of athletes, entertainers, public speakers, and yes test-takers. Stress can sharpen your attention, keep you alert, and give you greater energy.

Most tests don't require any advanced preparation. If you haven't used your skills for a while, you may want to do some practicing before you take a performance test. The best preparation, though, is probably to prepare you mentally and physically to take the test. Be positive. Think of the test as a chance to show what you know and can do. During the days before the test, try to exercise, relax, eat well, and get plenty of sleep.

Many tests have time limits. You will be told how much time you have. Listen carefully to the instructions you receive. If you do not understand what you are expected to do, be sure to ask questions before the test begins.

After you start the test, work steadily and carefully. Do not spend too much time on any one question. If math is required, double-check each answer. If you finish ahead of time, use the remaining time to go back and complete unanswered questions or recheck answers.

Once the test is over, do not worry about it. Employers do not expect perfection. They just want some idea of whether or not you can do the work. Do not leave until you know what the next step will be. Ask when and how you will be told the test results. Some employers will hold an interview immediately after a pre-employment test. The test may even be scored at that time. Other employers will

invite applicants back after they have examined the job application and the test results. Regardless of the procedure, if your test scores are good, you probably will get a job interview.

### **Lie Detector and Honesty Tests**

If you apply for a job in which money, merchandise, or drugs are handled, you may have to take an “honesty test.” One type is a polygraph, or lie detector test. A polygraph is an electronic machine that is connected to the body of a subject. The person is asked a series of questions, while the machine records electronic impulses and other data on a graph. If the person tells a lie, the device supposedly detects slight changes in the person’s breathing rate, pulse, blood pressure, or perspiration.

Many experts in the field question the accuracy of polygraph tests. As a result, Congress passed a law in 1988 to restrict the use of such tests. The law prohibits polygraph tests for screening job applicants. An exception is for those seeking jobs in government, as security guards, or handling narcotics. The law also curtails the use of polygraphs for workers already on the job. Managers cannot ask employees to take the test unless there is a “reasonable suspicion that they have committed a crime.” Even then, the test is voluntary. An employee cannot be fired for refusing to take the test.

### **Drug Testing**

Many companies require drug tests to be taken before any extension of employment is given. The purpose of such tests is to identify employees who use illegal or illicit drugs, such as marijuana and cocaine. Not only is the use of such drugs illegal and dangerous, but the drugs have also been linked to accidents, absenteeism, and low productivity. For example, in a train crash that killed 16 passengers and injured 176 others, the engineer had been smoking marijuana.

To identify drug users, employers often require each employee to submit a urine or hair sample for analysis. The urinalysis can detect traces of cocaine up to two days after the drug was taken. Marijuana can show up in the urine for several weeks after use. Hair analysis can detect drug use for approximately the previous 90 days.

Currently, a majority of the nation’s 500 largest corporations have drug-testing programs. Testing may be required for job applicants, employed workers, or both. Some employers test workers for “cause”; for instance, if they notice a worker is not performing well. Others test randomly, without announcement and without even suspecting wrongdoing.

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**MODULE 3H: STUDENT ACTIVITIES**

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*TO THE STUDENT: Read and study the above information sheet and complete the following activities.*

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**Answer the following questions:**

1. A pre-employment test that is administered to a job applicant seeking a government job is called:
2. A paper-and-pencil test or performance exercise administered by an employer as part of the job application process is called:
3. Suppose you wanted to apply for a job that required you to have an average score of 70 on four pre-employment tests. You scored 60, 72, 69, and 75 on the four tests.

What is the average of the four test scores?

Did you meet the requirement for the job?

4. Name three jobs you think should require lie detector or honesty tests.
  5. Would you apply for a job that required a lie detector or honesty test?
  6. What do you think about the practice of requiring a lie detector test as part of the job application process? Write a paragraph discussing both your and the employer's point of view.
  7. What job do you think should require candidates to be screened for drug use? Why?
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8. If you were an employer, would you require drug testing of your employees? Why or why not?

9. Log onto <http://sites.state.pa.us/patp/pat03.htm> and find out information about taking civil service test for the state of PA. List 3 jobs that are available and the dates and times that the tests are being given.

Job 1:

Job 2:

Job 3:

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**MODULE 3H: STANDARDS ADDRESSED IN THIS MODULE**

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**Pennsylvania’s Academic Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening (RWSL)****1.1.11. Learning to Read Independently**

- E. Establish a reading vocabulary by identifying and correctly using new words acquired through the study of their relationships to other words. Use a dictionary or related reference.

**1.5.11. Quality of Writing**

- A. Write with a sharp, distinct focus.
- Identify topic, task and audience.
  - Establish and maintain a single point of view.
- B. Write using well-developed content appropriate for the topic.
- Gather, determine validity and reliability of, analyze and organize information.
  - Employ the most effective format for purpose and audience.
  - Write fully developed paragraphs that have details and information specific to the topic and relevant to the focus.
- D. Edit writing using the conventions of language.
- Spell all words correctly.
  - Use capital letters correctly.
  - Punctuate correctly (periods, exclamation points, question marks, commas, quotation marks, apostrophes, colons, semicolons, parentheses, hyphens, brackets, ellipses).
  - Use nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions and interjections properly.
  - Use complete sentences (simple, compound, complex, declarative, interrogative, exclamatory and imperative).