



## DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

### **Study Guide** Entry Clerical Series Written Examination

- The Entry Clerical Series exam is required for the following classifications: 311 Call Center Representative, Automotive Parts Technician, Automotive Service Writer, Clerical Specialist, Communications Security Specialist, Complaint Specialist, Crime Specialist, Dispatcher, Fiscal Specialist, Mail Clerk, Parking Garage Attendant I & II, Senior Clerical Specialist, Senior Crime Specialist, Stock Clerk I & II, Senior Stock Clerk, and Surveillance-System Monitor.
- This booklet contains **SAMPLE QUESTIONS ONLY**. Studying this booklet will not necessarily improve your exam score.

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## **PURPOSE AND CONTENT OF THIS EXAM PREPARATION GUIDE**

This guide was developed to help you prepare to take the Entry Clerical Series written exam. The guide contains general exam-taking advice and also provides specific information related to the exam content. This information includes the subject areas covered by the exam, the kinds of questions to expect, strategies for approaching the questions, and sample questions. Though this information cannot guarantee a higher exam score, it can give you direction for your exam preparation that will assist you in doing your best.

### **PREPARING TO TAKE THE EXAM**

#### **Before the Day of the Exam**

- Review this guide to get familiar with the content of the exam. Knowing about the topics and kinds of questions that will be in the exam will ensure that you will not be surprised by the content of the exam or the manner in which it is presented. This can improve your ability to demonstrate your job potential.
- Make sure that you know where the exam will be administered and all of the relevant details, such as where to park, where to report for the exam, and what identification is required.

#### **On the Day of the Exam**

- Make sure that you are well rested and have eaten. These things will help your concentration during the exam.
- Plan your day to allow plenty of time to get yourself prepared and get to the exam site. Allow enough time to cope with weather, traffic, parking, etc. Hurrying creates anxiety, so do not put yourself in the position of having to hurry.
- Listen carefully to all instructions from the exam administrator. Make sure that you understand the instructions and carry them out correctly. Ask questions at the proper time before the exam begins if you are unsure of any aspect of what you should do during the exam.

## GENERAL EXAM TAKING TIPS

- Use your time carefully. The time limit should provide you with more than enough time if you move through the exam steadily and do not spend too much time on any one question.
- Read the questions and answer choices carefully. Read all of the answer choices before you select an answer.
- If you come to a question that is especially difficult, skip that question and come back to it later if you have time.
- Answer every question. Scores are based on the number of correct answers. You will receive no credit if you leave an answer space blank. It is to your advantage to use your best judgment to make a choice among the answer choices provided.

## ENTRY CLERICAL SERIES WRITTEN EXAM

The Entry Clerical written exam is based upon a job study that identified the most important knowledge, skills, and abilities required to perform the job successfully. These areas include:

- your skill in arranging information alphabetically and numerically for filing.
- your ability to read and interpret written information.
- your knowledge of customer service concepts.
- your skill in performing clerical problem-solving activities.

All of the exam questions are presented in a multiple-choice format. Each question is identified by a question number that is followed by a question statement. After the question statement, there are between two and four answer choices. You should read all of the answer choices and then choose the best answer. **Each question has only one correct answer.**

## EXAM SECTION 1: FILING ABILITY

This exam section contains twenty-five (25) questions designed to assess your skill in organizing information alphabetically and numerically for filing. To correctly answer this type of question, you must pay careful attention to the placement of letters and numbers and note their sequence. A difference of a single letter or digit can make the difference between the correct and incorrect choices. Given this, it is advisable to read through the question and answer choices more than once before selecting your answer.

Examples of the types of questions in this exam section are shown below. Each question is followed by a brief explanation of the correct answer.

1. Arrange the following authors' names in alphabetical order based on the spelling of their last names.

1. Garmen, LaVonne
2. Garnet, Duane
3. Garland, Mark
4. Garner, Phil

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

**Answer:** The correct answer to sample question #1 is answer choice "A". To identify the correct answer, you must first determine the correct alphabetical order for the names. This is accomplished by comparing each letter while moving from left to right. Then, use the number that precedes each name (1, 2, 3, or 4) to identify the choice that contains the correct order. In this case, the letters that affect the alphabetical order of the names are the fourth, fifth, and sixth letters of the last names. Comparing the fourth letters shows that the order is Garland (3), Garmen (1), and then, including the fifth and sixth letters, Garner (4), and finally, Garnet (2). Therefore, the correct answer is 3, 1, 4, 2, answer choice "A".

2. Arrange the following items in ascending numerical order for filing.

1. 43357
2. 44185
3. 44266
4. 43524

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

**Answer:** The correct answer to sample question #2 is answer choice "A". To identify the correct answer, you must first determine the correct numerical order for the four numbers. This is accomplished by comparing each number while moving from left to right. Then, use the number that precedes each of the numbers (1, 2, 3, or 4) to identify the choice that contains the correct order. In this case, the digits that affect the numerical order of the values are the second and third digits of the values. Comparing the second and third digits shows that the order is 43357 (1), 43524 (4), 44185 (2), and 44266 (3). Therefore, the correct answer is 1, 4, 2, 3, answer choice "A".

3. Based on last names, Brance, Angela would be correctly filed alphabetically between:

- A. Bradley, Lisa and Brammel, Evan.
- B. Brandt, Roland and Branson, Carla.
- C. Branagan, John and Branberg, Kevin.
- D. Branaugh, Connor and Branch, Erica.

**Answer:** The correct answer to sample question #3 is answer choice "D". To determine this, you must find which of the answer choices has both a last name on the left that comes alphabetically before Brance and a last name on the right that comes alphabetically after Brance. Brance would be correctly filed between such a pair of names. To do this, compare the letters in the last names to the left in each answer choice, moving from left to right. This shows that the last name to the left in choice "A", Bradley, comes alphabetically after Brance. So, "A" cannot be the correct answer. The last name to the left in choice "B", Brandt, also comes alphabetically after Brance. Therefore, "B" cannot be the correct answer. The last name to the left in choice "C", Branagan, comes alphabetically before Brance, but the last name to the right in choice "C" also comes alphabetically before Brance. So, "C" cannot be the correct answer. In answer choice "D", the last name to the left, Branaugh, comes alphabetically before Brance and the last name to the right, Branch, comes

alphabetically after Brance. Therefore, Brance, Angela would be correctly filed between these two names and answer choice "D" is the correct answer.

## **EXAM SECTION 2: READING WITH UNDERSTANDING**

This exam section contains twenty-five (25) questions designed to assess your ability to accurately read and interpret written information. The exam questions will be based on brief reading passages similar to the type of reading that is encountered on the job, such as work-related information and procedures.

A good strategy to use for this type of question is to read through the entire reading passage, then read each of the questions, and finally refer back to the passage as you answer each question. When reading each question, determine what information the question is specifically looking for by giving careful consideration to each of the words used to convey meaning. For example, does the question ask you to determine the best action to take in certain situations, identify the correct sequence of tasks, or plan activities to occur within a certain time frame?

It is important that you select your answer solely based upon the information provided. The exam questions are designed to assess your ability to correctly interpret what is provided, not to assess your knowledge of the subject area addressed by the reading passage.

Examples of these types of questions are shown below. Each question is followed by a brief explanation of the correct answer.

### **Taking Phone Messages**

When a caller asks you to take a message, make sure that you obtain all of the following information: the caller's complete first and last name, their company name or department, their telephone number, and a brief statement of the reason for the call. This information should be sent within thirty (30) minutes of the call's receipt to the appropriate person by email, along with the date and time of the call. Handwritten messages should only be used for urgent calls. Such messages should be legible and marked "URGENT" in the upper right corner. If you leave a message marked as urgent on a person's desk, you must confirm that the person received the message by follow-up email or personal contact within one hour of the call's receipt.

4. According to the procedure, all messages taken must:
  - A. be legibly handwritten.
  - B. indicate the purpose of the call.
  - C. be marked urgent in the upper right corner.
  - D. include the name of the person who recorded the message.

**Answer:** The correct answer to sample question #4 is answer choice "B". The part of the reading passage that lists all of the information that must be obtained includes "a brief statement of the reason for the call". The items noted in answer choices "A" and "C" apply only to calls that are urgent. The information in answer option "D" is not included in the reading passage.

5. You answered a call at 1:15 p.m. from a person who was trying to contact the division manager. The manager was not in and the caller asked you to take a message, noting that the matter was of an urgent nature. At 1:25 p.m. you placed a written message regarding the call on the manager's desk. According to the procedure, you should confirm that the manager received the message no later than:
- A. 1:45 p.m.
  - B. 1:55 p.m.
  - C. 2:15 p.m.
  - D. 2:25 p.m.

**Answer:** The correct answer to sample question #5 is answer choice "C". The last sentence of the reading passage addresses what one must do when a message for an urgent call is taken: "If you leave a message marked as urgent on a person's desk, you must confirm that the person received the message by follow-up email or personal contact within one hour of the call's receipt.". The call was received at 1:15 p.m., therefore, the confirmation of receipt of the message must be done by 2:15 p.m.

### **Expense Reports for Vehicle Refueling**

All refueling must be noted on the Vehicle Expense Report. This report must be submitted to employees' immediate supervisors for review on the business day nearest to the 15<sup>th</sup> day of each month and then forwarded to the Fleet Manager by the last calendar day of the month. The report should indicate the number of gallons and odometer reading for each refueling and include the dollar amount and purchase location when the gasoline credit card is used.

6. If today is Wednesday and it is the 12<sup>th</sup> day of the month, on what day must an employee's Vehicle Expense Report be turned in to his/her immediate supervisor?
- A. On Friday.
  - B. On the following Monday.
  - C. On the last day of the month.
  - D. This cannot be determined from the reading passage.

**Answer:** The correct answer to sample question #6 is answer choice "A". The second sentence of the reading passage indicates that employees give the noted reports to their supervisors "on the business day nearest to the 15<sup>th</sup> day of each month." If Wednesday is the 12<sup>th</sup> day of the month, the Friday is the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the month, which is closer to the 15<sup>th</sup> than Monday (the 17<sup>th</sup>). The last day of the month is when the supervisor must provide the report to the fleet manager and is, therefore, not an appropriate choice.

### **EXAM SECTION 3: CUSTOMER SERVICE AND INTERPERSONAL SKILLS**

This exam section contains twenty-five (25) questions that evaluate your knowledge of effective techniques for interacting with customers and addressing customer service concerns. The questions will describe a situation and ask you to select the most effective response, given the circumstances. These questions focus on techniques that promote effective interaction with others, such as how to communicate clearly, address customers' concerns, and resolve conflict. For this type of question, it is important to remember to view the question from the perspective of how a government agency would want employees performing clerical work to respond to its customers in the environment in which the work takes place.

Examples of the types of questions in this exam section are shown below. Each question is followed by a brief explanation of the correct answer.

7. A new rule has been put in place that will require customers to submit an additional form in order to receive service. You know that the customers will be unhappy about having more to do. Since you are the person with whom the customers interact directly, you must persuade them to accept the change. You will be most successful in doing this if you inform them of which of the following?
  - A. Why the form needs to be completed.
  - B. The procedure for filing a complaint about the rule.
  - C. That the staff also has more work due to the new rule.
  - D. The reactions of others who have completed the new form.

**Answer:** The correct answer to sample question #7 is answer choice "A". The goal is to get people to comply with the rule. People are most likely to accept a situation when they understand the reason for it. The other answer choices either do not help people's understanding or could potentially reinforce the idea that the rule should not be followed.

8. A customer has come to your office to complain about a service problem. As the customer explains the situation to you, he becomes increasingly frustrated and upset. Assuming that you have the authority to handle the problem, you will be most effective in calming the customer if you:
- A. explain that anger will only make the problem worse.
  - B. try to ease the mood with humor or casual discussion.
  - C. use a more formal and business-like communication style.
  - D. ask the customer to describe what he feels would solve the problem in an acceptable manner.

**Answer:** The correct answer to sample question #8 is answer choice "D". The first step in answering a question of this type is to create a mental picture of the situation, considering who is involved, what is prompting their behavior, and what a good outcome would be. In this case, the customer's frustration is caused by a specific problem. Accordingly, if you can address the problem, the person's anger is likely to diminish. In such a situation, it is often helpful to ask the person who is upset to explain what they think would solve the problem. This conveys that you are open to listening and redirects the upset person away from their anger and towards finding a solution. Such an explanation also provides information that will guide in solving the problem. None of the other answer choices directly addresses what is causing the customer's frustration. In fact, such actions could be seen as aloof, insensitive, or not taking the issue seriously, which may increase rather than decrease the customer's frustration.

Instructions: Answer the following question by selecting "A" if the statement is true and "B" if the statement is false.

9. When you work with the same people every day, taking the time for small pleasantries, such as saying "good morning", "please", and "thank you", is not necessary.

**Answer:** The correct answer to sample question #9 is answer choice "B". Thoughtful and polite interaction is always beneficial to working relationships. This is true for both new and established relationships.

## EXAM SECTION 4: CLERICAL PROBLEM SOLVING

This exam section contains twenty-five (25) questions that assess knowledge and skills required to prioritize, organize, and complete clerical work effectively. The questions describe situations or provide information which you must interpret. Then, based on the circumstances, you must decide which answer choice will best accomplish what the question requires. Exam questions of this type may ask you to determine things such as what action to take based on written instructions or procedures, the best sequence for performing a number of tasks given certain parameters, or how much time or other resources will be needed to accomplish something.

Your success in completing these types of tasks is dependent upon your ability to accurately read and interpret detailed written information and, in some cases, your skill in determining the appropriate calculations to make and then accurately completing them. Questions that involve computations will involve basic operations common in a business setting, such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. The best strategy for approaching questions in this exam section is to carefully read all of the materials, make sure that you understand exactly what outcome each question is focused on, and double check any computations.

Examples of the types of questions in this exam section are shown below. Each question is followed by a brief explanation of the correct answer.

10. You are preparing to print reports for city-wide distribution and must make sure that there is enough paper available to complete the task. The report has 30 pages and you need 150 copies. If a ream of paper has 500 pages, how many reams of paper are needed to print all of the reports?
- A. 6.
  - B. 7.
  - C. 8.
  - D. 9.

**Answer:** The correct answer to sample question #10 is answer choice "D". To answer the question correctly, you must determine the total number of pages needed and then divide that number by the number of pages included in a ream of paper. The total number of pages that will be printed is the 30 pages in each report multiplied by 150 (the number of copies needed). The result of this computation ( $30 \times 150$ ) is 4,500 pages. The next calculation is to divide the total number of pages (4,500) by the number of pages in a ream of paper (500). This result of this computation is 9, which is the correct answer.

To answer the following question, you will need to use the information contained in the table below. Read the question that appears after the table and then use the table to choose the correct code.

**Vehicle Operation Costs**

<b>Expense</b>	<b>Code 1</b>	<b>Program</b>	<b>Code 2</b>	<b>Vehicle Type</b>	<b>Code 3</b>
Fuel	054	Administration	100	Van	25
Repair	062	Grounds	200	Truck	27
Maintenance	065	Operations	300	Economy	32
Fluids	058	Customer Care	400	Sedan	34

11. What is the correct code to identify the cost to repair a van assigned to Customer Care?
- A. 054-100-27
  - B. 058-300-25
  - C. 062-400-25
  - D. 065-200-27

**Answer:** The correct answer to sample question #12 is answer choice "C". When answering questions based upon information contained in a table, the first step is to familiarize yourself with the table. Determine the purpose of the table, how the information is organized, and what specific information is contained in the rows and columns. In this case, the purpose of the table is to show how to record costs associated with operating vehicles. Therefore, the codes contained in the columns represent types of identifying information, specifically, types of costs, the departments where vehicles are assigned, and vehicle types.

Now, look closely at the question to make sure that you clearly understand what information is requested and whether there are any differences between the presentation of information in the table and how the question is phrased. In this case, information for all three code areas in the table is requested, but the question does not present the information in the same order. Therefore, you must reorder the information to reflect the correct code order. Specifically, in the table, in the column labeled Expense is the entry Repair, followed by the number 062 in the column labeled Code 1. In the column labeled Program is the entry Customer Care, followed by the number 400 in the column labeled Code 2. In the column labeled Vehicle Type is the entry Van, followed by the number 25 in the column labeled Code 3. Therefore, the correct code is 062-400-25, which is answer choice "C".

12. It is currently 8:30 a.m. and you have just been asked to prepare 25 information binders for a meeting that is to be held at 11:15 a.m.. For each binder, you estimate that it will take four minutes to print the contents, an additional one minute to punch holes in the materials, and one minute to correctly organize the materials by sections in the binder. If you have the ability to dedicate all of your time to this task, start immediately, and have no interruptions, can all the binders be completed in time for the meeting?

- A. No, all of the binders cannot be completed in time for the meeting.
- B. Yes, the binders can be completed in time for the meeting.

**Answer:** The correct answer to sample question #12 is answer choice "B". The time available before the meeting is 165 minutes: (2 x 60 minutes) + 45 minutes. Each binder requires a total of 6 minutes to prepare and there are 25 binders. The total time to prepare the binders is 6 minutes x 25 binders = 150 minutes.

Instructions: Use the information for park shelter reservations shown below to answer the question that follows.

**Park Picnic Shelter Reservation Fees**

	<b>Weekday</b>	<b>Weekend</b>	<b>Holiday</b>
Small Picnic Shelter	\$75	\$100	\$125
Large Picnic Shelter	\$120	\$160	\$200
Recreation Equipment	\$50	\$75	\$100

13. What is the correct fee for an event that will include 2 small picnic shelters, one large picnic shelter, and the use of recreation equipment on a Saturday?
- A. \$320.
  - B. \$335.
  - C. \$435.
  - D. \$550.

**Answer:** The correct answer to sample question #13 is answer choice "C". The correct calculation requires that you first identify the correct column from which to select the appropriate fees. For this question, the correct column is the middle column labeled "weekend". Then, you must add the individual charges. The items to be added are 2 small shelters (\$200), 1 large shelter (\$160), and recreation equipment (\$75). The sum of these items is \$435, which is choice "C".

## **ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE**

If you feel that you would benefit from more practice, your local library or relevant Internet web sites may have reference materials that can be helpful. This is true for all of the subject areas covered by the Entry Clerical written exam.