



DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Study Guide Advanced Fiscal Series Written Examination

- The Advanced Fiscal Series exam is required for the following classifications: Accounting Associate I & II, Revenue Inspector, and Senior Fiscal Specialist.
- 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 Advanced Fiscal Series written exam. This exam is used to fill Accounting Associate I & II, Revenue Inspector, and Senior Fiscal Specialist positions. 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.

ADVANCED FISCAL SERIES WRITTEN EXAM

The Fiscal Classifications 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 processing information and data.
- your oral and written communication skills.
- your skill in performing clerical problem-solving activities.
- your knowledge of bookkeeping concepts.

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: PROCESSING INFORMATION AND DATA

This exam section contains thirty (30) questions designed to assess your skill in processing information and data. This includes the performance of coding, data comparison, alpha and numeric filing, and basic arithmetic tasks. All of these tasks require significant attention to detail. A good strategy for approaching these types of questions is to first make sure that you understand exactly what information or action the question requires. For example, does the question ask you to identify a certain type of error, find specific information contained in a chart or table, or arrange information in a certain sequence? Once you clearly understand the required task, carefully consider each of the answer choices, keeping in mind that they may be very similar. A difference of a single letter or digit may 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 these types of questions are shown below. Each question is followed by a brief explanation of 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

Expense	Code 1	Department	Code 2	Vehicle Type	Code 3
Fuel	750	Administration	100	Sedan	25
Fluids	790	Budget and Finance	300	SUV	17
Tires	760	HR and Risk Mgt	200	Truck	22
Repairs	740	Operations	500	Van	14

1. What is the correct code to identify the cost of tires for a truck assigned to Budget and Finance?
 - A. 790-300-22
 - B. 760-300-22
 - C. 790-300-25
 - D. 760-200-22

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #1 is answer choice "B". 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 depicted in the columns each represent a type of identifying information, such as types of costs, the departments where vehicles are assigned, and vehicle types. Then, 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 sequence. Therefore, you must reorder the information to reflect the correct code order. Specifically, in the table, in the column labeled Expense is the entry Tires followed by the number 760 in the column labeled Code 1. In the column labeled Department is the entry Budget and Finance followed by the number 300 in the column labeled Code 2. In the column labeled Vehicle Type is the entry Truck followed by the number 22 in the column labeled Code 3. Therefore, the correct code is 760-300-22 which is answer choice "B".

For the question below, you are to determine whether the two sets of information shown are exactly alike. If they are not exactly alike, then you must indicate how many of the three lines have differences. Use the key below to indicate the result of your comparison of the two sets of information.

KEY

- A = The two sets of information are exactly alike.
- B = There is a difference in one line.
- C = There are differences in two lines.
- D = There are differences in all three lines.

2. \$30,581	\$30.581
\$32,158	\$33,185
\$29,613	\$29,613

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #2 is answer choice "C". In the first line, there is a comma after the "30" in the value on the left while the value on the right has a decimal point in the same place. In the second line, the last two digits are transposed with the value on the left ending in "58" and the value on the right ending in "85". Only the third line has no differences between the two values. Therefore, two of the three sets of information have differences, which is answer choice "C".

3. Arrange the following names in alphabetical order for filing.

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 #3 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 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".

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

1. 54352
2. 54145
3. 54319
4. 53402

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

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #4 is answer choice "D". To identify the correct answer, you must first determine the correct numerical order for the four values. This is accomplished by comparing each digit 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, third, and fourth digits of the values. Comparing the second and third digits shows that the order is 53402 (4), 54145 (2), and then, including the fourth digit, 54319 (3), and 54352 (1). Therefore, the correct answer is 4, 2, 3, 1, answer choice "D".

5. An external auditing firm charges \$380 per hour for services that include review of year end audit reviews. This fee applies to the first 20 hours that services are provided and is then reduced by 25 percent for any additional hours. If this firm's staff spends 27 hours on a year-end review, the total fee will be:
- A. \$ 8,265.
 - B. \$ 9,559.
 - C. \$ 9,595.
 - D. \$10,260.

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #5 is answer choice "C". To determine the correct answer, you must determine the fee for 20 hours at the base rate and add this to the fee for seven (7) hours at the reduced rate. The fee for the first 20 hours is $20 \times \$380$ which equals \$7,600. The reduced rate is \$285 per hour. This is calculated by determining the amount that is 75 percent of the base fee ($\$380 \times .75 = \285). The fee for seven hours at this rate is \$1,995. Therefore, the correct answer is obtained by adding \$1,520 and \$855, which is \$9,595 and this is answer choice "C".

EXAM SECTION 2: COMMUNICATION SKILLS

This exam section contains thirty (30) questions that evaluate your knowledge of how to communicate effectively with others orally and in writing.

The questions that assess your oral communication skills 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, persuade or motivate others, 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 to respond to its customers and clients in the environment in which the work takes place.

The questions that assess your written communication skills will require you to review sentences and indicate whether they are correct or incorrect with regard to grammar and punctuation. Other questions will require you to select the correct word or phrase to complete a sentence. The most effective approach for doing your best on these types of questions is to review basic grammar and punctuation rules prior to taking the exam. Then, when taking the exam, sound each sentence out mentally to be certain that you are actually reading every word as it is presented. Sometimes our eyes may see something that is incorrect, but our brains interpret it as what we expect to see, rather than what is actually there.

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.

6. If you need to persuade others to follow a procedure that requires them to take an action that they find bothersome, you will be most successful if you provide them with which of the following pieces of information?
- A. Why the action needs to be taken.
 - B. Who created or authorized the procedure.
 - C. How they can file a complaint about the procedure.
 - D. That others have also been unhappy about the procedure.

Answer: The correct answer to sample question 6 is answer choice "A". The goal is to get people to follow the procedure. 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 procedure should not be followed.

Read the sentences that appear as questions #7, #8, and #9 and then use the answer key below to indicate whether the sentences are grammatically correct or incorrect. The kinds of errors you will find include incomplete sentences, incorrect word usage, inappropriate word forms, and subject-verb disagreements.

KEY

A = The sentence is grammatically correct.

B = The sentence is grammatically incorrect.

7. The Finance Department's fiscal reporting procedures site the State Revenue Code as their source.

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #7 is answer choice "B". This sentence contains the inappropriate form of a word. The word "site", which means a place or area of ground, should be replaced with the word "cite", which means to make reference to.

8. Only one of the accountants were at the meeting.

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #8 is answer choice "B". This sentence contains a subject-verb disagreement. The word "were" should be replaced with the word "was". A good way to detect such errors is to sound out the sentence in your mind, but omit the words between the subject and verb. For example, mentally sounding out "Only one were" and "Only one was" makes the error easier to recognize.

9. Is finding computational errors in the draft report even after its initial edits.

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #9 is answer choice "B". This is a sentence fragment, which means that it is incomplete. This fragment lacks a subject. In order to be complete, it needs to include who or what is finding the computational errors. For example, the sentence could be rewritten as follows: "Our review is finding computational errors in the draft report even after its initial edits."

10. It is the manager's assistant's responsibility to _____ that the agenda is emailed to the management team.

- A. insure
- B. assure
- C. ensure

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #10 is answer choice "C". The correct word to complete the sentence is "ensure", which means to make certain. The word "insure" means to arrange for compensation in the event of loss or damage, for example, of property or life. And the word "assure" refers to telling others something positive to dispel their doubt, fear, or uncertainty.

EXAM SECTION 3: CLERICAL PROBLEM SOLVING

This exam section contains thirty (30) 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 include 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.

11. It is 1:00 p.m. in the afternoon and you must leave the office by 5:00 p.m. today. The following are activities that you must complete this afternoon:
- > You have a meeting from 4:15 p.m. to 4:45 p.m.
 - > You must have a financial document to finish by 4:00 p.m. that will take an hour of your time.
 - > You have a 20-minute phone call to make this afternoon.
 - > You need 30 minutes of uninterrupted time to research an issue.

Your supervisor has just asked you to go to the conference room and assist with a project there. Although your immediate assistance is needed, it was made clear that you should help only for as long as you can without causing any problems or critical delays with the rest of your work. Given that, what is the latest time that you can leave the conference room to attend to the other activities that you must complete?

- A. 2:00 p.m.
- B. 2:25 p.m.
- C. 2:40 p.m.
- D. 3:00 p.m.

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #11 is answer choice "B". In order to determine this, it is necessary to determine how much work time you have this afternoon and how much time it will take for you complete your own activities. The difference is the amount of time that you can spend in the conference room. The total time that you have is from now, 1:00 p.m., until 4:15 p.m., when you have a meeting scheduled. That is 3 hours and 15 minutes, or 195 minutes: $(3 \times 60) + 15$. Prior to the meeting, you have activities to complete that require 60 minutes (financial document), 20 minutes (phone call), and 30 minutes (research time), for a total of 110 minutes. The difference between the two time periods is 195 minus 110, which is 85 minutes. This equals 1 hour and 25 minutes, which is the amount of time that you can help in the conference room before you must leave to attend to the other activities that you must complete today. Starting now, at 1:00 p.m., in 1 hour and 25 minutes it will be 2:25 p.m. This is answer choice "B".

Use the information below to answer the sample question that follows.

Description of Three Training Programs

Potential program participants attend an orientation to the program in which they are interested. At the end of each orientation, attendees can register to participate in that program. Then, those who complete each program receive a certificate of completion. The following data have been collected about the most recent offerings of the three programs.

Program Summary

	Attendees at Orientation	Program Registrants	Participants Receiving Certificates
Program A	88	72	61
Program B	45	39	30
Program C	58	52	46

12. Which of the three programs had the greatest exam success in getting orientation attendees to register for their program?
- A. Program A.
 - B. Program B.
 - C. Program C.

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #12 is answer choice "C". This is determined by comparing the percentages of attendees who went on to register for each of the three programs. These percentages are computed by dividing the number of program registrants by the number of attendees. In this case, Program A would be 72 divided by 88 which rounds to .82 or 82 percent, Program B would be 39 divided by 45 which rounds to .87 or 87 percent, and Program C would be 52 divided by 58 which rounds to .90 or 90 percent. Program C had the greatest exam success in getting orientation attendees to register and this is answer choice "C".

The best approach for these types of questions is to first review the entire table to get a good idea what information is being depicted. Next, carefully read each question and pay special attention to key words such as "greatest" or "least" to be certain what the question is asking you to determine. Then, consider the mathematical operations necessary to interpret the information presented.

13. Your supervisor informs you that 20 percent of your time should be spent on updating the project expenses database and submitting updates to project managers. You also have other administrative responsibilities that require seven (7) hours of your time each week. When planning your time, how many hours of your 40-hour work week are available to complete the rest of your workload?

- A. 13 hours.
- B. 22 hours.
- C. 24 hours.
- D. 25 hours.

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #13 is answer choice "D". To arrive at the correct answer, you must first determine how many hours are being spent on updating the database and submitting updates. That is 20 percent of 40 hours, or $0.2 \times 40 \text{ hours} = 8 \text{ hours}$. Then the 7 hours for administrative work is added to this and the sum is subtracted from 40 hours. This computation is as follows: $40 - (8 + 7) = 40 - 15 = 25 \text{ hours}$. This is answer choice "D".

EXAM SECTION 4: BOOKKEEPING

This exam section contains twenty (20) questions designed to assess your understanding of bookkeeping, which encompasses the record-keeping aspects of accounting. Question content consists of concepts related to the recording of financial transactions in business and governmental financial systems. This includes the preparation of source documents for all transactions, operations, and other events of an organization. A good strategy for answering questions in this section is to prepare before the exam by reviewing the areas described above. Then, when taking the exam, identify the issue or area addressed by the question, such as journals, ledgers, assets, liabilities, revenue, expenses, accruals, etc. When you have clarified the concept, you should be better able to draw upon your knowledge base and thoughtfully consider the answer choices.

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

14. The difference between current assets and other assets is a function of:
- A. whether the asset is tangible or intangible.
 - B. the length of time an asset has been owned or controlled.
 - C. when it is expected that an asset will be converted into cash.
 - D. the feasibility of determining the current fair market value of the asset.

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #14 is answer choice "C". By convention, any asset that is expected to turn into cash within one year is defined as current. All other assets are, by default, long-term assets. Similarly, liabilities that need to be paid off within one year are defined as current, while all others are long-term liabilities.

15. Accrual basis accounting requires that expenses incurred in generating revenues:
- A. be equal to the revenues generated.
 - B. be recorded in the reporting period in which they are incurred.
 - C. exclude costs associated with administrative activities and overhead expenses.
 - D. be recorded in the same reporting period in which the revenues are recorded.

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #15 is answer choice "D". Under the accrual basis of accounting, transactions are recorded when they occur, regardless of when cash is received or paid. The goal of the accrual method is to match corresponding costs of generating revenue to that revenue. This requires recording the two in the same reporting period, regardless of when expenses are actually paid. This matching principle is essential for elimination of the distortions of economic reality that frequently arise with the cash method.

The Parks and Recreation Department ordered the following supplies:

Quantity	Item	Price	Unit of Sale
2	Pruning Shears	\$17.50	each
36	Irrigation Fittings	\$15.00	per dozen
1	Wheelbarrow	\$80.00	each

16. The total cost of the items ordered by this department is closest to:
- A. \$112.50
 - B. \$160.00
 - C. \$637.50
 - D. \$655.00.

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #16 is answer choice "B". The total cost would be computed as: $(2 \times \$17.50) + (36 \div 12)(\$15) + \$80 = \160.00 . The best approach to numerical information presented in tables is to begin by reviewing the table to determine the nature of the information and the manner in which it is organized. Next, carefully read each question and look for key words that indicate exactly what the question is asking you to determine. In this sample, the key words are "total cost". Other typical key words might be "most", "less than", etc. When you are sure of the task being presented, then, consider the mathematical operations necessary to produce the desired result. Be sure to focus on the details in the table information. For example, in this sample question, it is important to note that the quantity of irrigation fittings is 36, but the price shown is per dozen.

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 Fiscal Classifications written exam.