

SANTA ROSA POLICE DEPARTMENT

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER



POLICE OFFICER/TRAINEE TESTING PREPARATION GUIDE

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PURPOSE OF THE PREPARATION GUIDE

The purpose of this *Preparation Guide* is to help you prepare to take the Santa Rosa Police Department's Police Officer Part I testing. This *Preparation Guide* will provide you with a better understanding of the nature and format of Part I testing: Report Writing Exercise

We encourage you to familiarize yourself with the test format shown in this *Preparation Guide*. If you are not accustomed to test taking in general, or if you tend to get tense in testing situations, you may find it helpful to practice doing activities similar to those described in the *Preparation Guide*.

The *Preparation Guide* is organized into two sections:

1. The first section provides helpful strategies for [Testing Taking](#).
2. The second section provides a description and quick tips for the [Report Writing Exercise](#).

This *Preparation Guide* will provide you with information about what you will be allowed to bring with you when you take the exam. Also included in this section is information about what is expected of you and what you can expect from the test proctors. It is a good idea to be aware of the basic test guidelines/rules before the day of the testing so that you will not be distracted during the actual administration and can focus all of your efforts on doing well on the exam.

You should gain a clear understanding of what the test assesses, and how to get the most out of this *Preparation Guide*. These basic test-taking tips may help improve your overall test performance. How well you do on the test is an indication of your commitment to the job and a strong indication of how well you'll do on the job.

The information provided in this *Preparation Guide* is not comprehensive or all-encompassing. We encourage you to act upon whatever additional course of study or strategies you believe will enhance your chances of performing effectively in the testing and on the job.

BASIC TEST GUIDELINES

It is very important to pay close attention to this section of the *Preparation Guide*. The general test-taking strategies presented in this section can help to ensure that you work as efficiently and effectively as possible in the testing. Following these general test-taking strategies may help to improve your testing performance.

1. Promptness is mandatory for admittance to the test on the date and time scheduled. Make all necessary arrangements to ensure that you arrive early at the test site. Organize your schedule so you can perform your best on test day. You may need to make advanced arrangements for such things as prearranged approval for time off from work or school, a ride to the test site, or child care. It would also be wise to anticipate poor weather or traffic delays in traveling to the test site and to allow extra travel time to ensure an early arrival even with delays.
2. Give yourself ample time to find parking and follow the detailed instructions you are provided pertaining to parking requirements. (Do not park in the parking lot in front of the Public Safety Building).
3. Plan up to 1.5 hours for the Report Writing Exercise, including instructions.
4. Legally accepted photo identification is mandatory for admittance to the test, arrive 10 minutes early for check in.
5. The Public Safety Building test site is a fragrance-free City facility.
6. Do not bring any testing supplies with you. All testing supplies are provided.
7. Use or possession of cell phones and other communication devices will not be permitted during testing. If you choose to use an unauthorized communication device, in violation of testing guidelines, your test will be collected and considered invalid.

8. Handbags or other personal items shall be placed on the floor under your work area (table). You may not open your handbag or any other personal belongings during the testing process. No food is allowed at the test site. Luggage and backpacks will not be allowed in the exam room unless inspected and approved by the proctor.
9. All candidates will undergo the same standardized testing procedure.
10. Due to the current approved security measures, only authorized candidates will be admitted to the test site. All candidates will wear a clearly visible Visitor's Badge at all times while at the Public Safety Building test site.
11. All questions or concerns that arise during the testing process should be directed to the appropriate designated test proctors.
12. It is strictly prohibited for you to leave the test site with any test materials. All test materials supplied must be returned before you exit the test site.

GENERAL STRATEGIES FOR TAKING EXAMS

Listen carefully.

The exam proctor will provide you with detailed instructions for taking the exam. Be sure that you pay close attention to all test instructions. It is extremely important that you completely understand the directions before the testing begins.

Ask questions.

If there are instructions that you do not understand or if something is not clear, please feel free to ask the test proctors any questions that you may have before the testing begins.

Be mindful of the start and end times.

Just before the test proctor begins the exam, the allotted time will be posted on the white board as well as the time that the exam will end.

Use your time wisely.

It is important that you keep track of your time so that you are able to pace yourself throughout the testing. It is also important that you keep track of time so that you are able to allow a few minutes to proofread your report before the end of the exam.

Remain focused.

It is important that you remain calm throughout the testing so that you are able to work most effectively. You can't allow yourself to become nervous. If you believe that you may not have done well in recording accurate notes during this exercise, try to remain calm and focus on doing your best for the rest of the testing.

Be Confident.

The more confident you are in your abilities, the more likely you are to do well on the exam. Try to stay focused on the exam so that you don't overlook what you need to do. You want to take control of the exam by feeling confident in your skills. Focus on becoming relaxed but concentrate on the exam you are about to take.

Check Your Attitude.

These testing exams are an opportunity for you to show your skills and abilities, and a positive attitude can have an impact on increasing your test performance. There are a few ways to fine-tune your attitude about taking these exams: Look at these exams as a challenge but try not to get "stressed out" by thinking about it too much.

Remember that by using this *Preparation Guide* and practicing your strategies, you can be more prepared for testing.

REPORT WRITING

AN INTRODUCTION TO REPORT WRITING.

Most people enter law enforcement for the activity and excitement it offers, for the challenge of solving crimes, and for the chance to help others. They often do not realize the amount of paperwork involved. For almost every official action Police Officers take, they must write a report. Well-written reports are part of the service expected of Police Officers.

Every day a Police Officer is likely to produce multiple reports. Police Officers routinely write accident reports, incident reports, arrest reports, and supplemental reports. All of these reports will be read by many people for many different reasons. These reports may be used as evidence in court, as well as used by other officers, supervisors, reporters, citizens, attorneys, judges and jurors. Reports may also be read by a grand jury, appellate courts, and even the Supreme Court. In order to be an effective Police Officer, writing skills are necessary.

The basic purpose of any police report is to record the facts. Police Officers gather facts and take accurate notes of what they saw, heard, (possibly) smelled, observed, and experienced. Officers take multiple statements that are thoroughly and completely documented in notes. Police Officers then write an accurate report of the incident based on the information gathered from the detailed notes. Good notes include all relevant facts and are a prerequisite for a good report. A good report requires the Police Officer to write clearly, concisely and effectively; relay information accurately; and describe the incident in an organized chronological order.

If you feel that you need to strengthen your writing skills or your knowledge of grammar, you may find it useful to take a writing course at a local college or an online writing lab.

Handbook Resource:

[The Elements of Style \(William Strunk, Jr.\)](#)

Online Resources:

<https://www.butte.edu/departments/cas/tipsheets/grammar/would.html>

<http://yourpolicewrite.com/report-writing-practice/report-writing-practice-3/>

REPORT WRITING EXERCISE QUICK TIPS

REPORT WRITING EXERCISE.

The test described in this section evaluates your writing skills. In the report writing exercise, you will view a video of officers responding to a call. You will be instructed to take notes during the video scenario. At the conclusion of the scenario, you will be instructed to type a narrative report describing what occurred in the scenario. This is a timed exercise and you will be using a laptop computer to type your narrative report. Your narrative report will be evaluated for the following:

1. Narrative Organization.
2. Correct Grammar, Punctuation, Spelling, Word Usage.
3. Accuracy.

1. NARRATIVE ORGANIZATION.

Your narrative report must be written in chronological order. Just as a story goes in time from the beginning to the end, the narrative report needs to describe the sequence of events in the order that things happened. Anyone reading the report should be able to easily follow and understand what occurred without getting confused.

- ❖ Organization is critical to an effective report. Organize your narrative report in chronologically-arranged paragraphs. Reports that skip from one thing to another, repeat or go back and forth in time, will not present a clear picture of what happened. Each paragraph should focus the reader's attention on a specific aspect of the report.

➤ Avoid

- Like information scattered throughout the report
- Adding information that is not part of the incident
- Disorganized paragraphs containing several main elements or never-ending paragraphs

2. CORRECT GRAMMAR, PUNCTUATION, SPELLING, WORD USAGE.

Every effort should be made to use correct grammar, word usage, and proper spelling. You will be provided with a dictionary and allowed to use the spelling and grammar tools on the laptop computer.

- ❖ You should stick to clear sentences using simple language, avoiding wordiness, jargon, abbreviations or complex vocabulary. Be specific, use clear and concise words rather than vague words. Vague words are words that can be interpreted in more than one way.
- ❖ Sentences should be grammatically complete; avoid sentence fragments and run-on sentences. Sentences always begin with a capital letter; the first letter of a quotation is capitalized; proper nouns (nouns that name particular persons, places, or things) are capitalized; and titles that precede a proper name are capitalized.
- ❖ Proper punctuation usage matters. Punctuation shows how a sentence should be read and makes the meaning clear. Punctuation marks are used to convey the pauses and gestures that we use in speech to clarify and emphasize meaning. Punctuation marks are: periods, commas, semicolons, colons, question marks, dashes, parentheses, and quotation marks.
- ❖ Use quotation marks correctly. The primary function of quotation marks is to set off and represent exact language. Do not place quotation marks around words that are not exactly what the person said. Place commas and periods within quotation marks; and place the punctuation outside the closing quotation marks if the punctuation applies to the whole sentence.

If a direct quotation is interrupted mid-sentence, do not capitalize the second part of the quotation.

Example: "I didn't see an actual weapon," Mr. Johnson said, "but I sure wish I had."

- ❖ Write in the past tense. Everything you write in your narrative report has already happened, so use the past tense.
- Avoid:
 - Grammar errors
 - Spelling and punctuation errors
 - Using abbreviations and words incorrectly
 - Incomplete or run-on sentences
 - Awkward sentence construction or word choice

3. ACCURACY.

The narrative report must be factual, no inferences, no opinions, and no assumptions. Record all relevant facts as you hear and see them. Listen to what is said and how it is said. Your report must accurately reflect the facts of the incident.

It may not be possible to take notes of everything you'll see and hear in the video, you must use good judgment. A good report includes both sides of an incident. Your report will be effective if it includes all relevant information in as few words as possible. This does not mean, however, that you can leave out critical details. The report should give as full of an account as possible.

To avoid slanting the report, leave out inferences and your own personal conclusions. Remember to include general information, such as answers to when, where, who, what, how, and why. You must have the facts of the incident correct. To be accurate you must use specific, concrete facts and details.

- ❖ Be careful not to make judgments.

“Joe threatened Alice with a knife” is subjective (unless you heard him make the threat).

This version is much more objective
Alice told me that Joe threatened her with a knife.

- ❖ Be as clear and specific as possible.

“Contacted” is vague: Did you visit, phone, or email the individual? “Residence” is just as confusing: house, apartment, mobile home, condo? Always strive for clarity.

- ❖ Don't include unnecessary words and expressions.

At approximately 4:15 p.m. in the afternoon, I proceeded to interview the aforementioned witness with regards to the break-in occurring the previous evening.

This version is much easier to read
At about 4:15 p.m., I interviewed Janet Smith about the break-in the night before.

- ❖ Active voice shows exactly who did what.

Officer Smith searched the car. I found a Smith and Wesson revolver in the glove box. Officer Smith found a small brown paper bag full of cash in the trunk. I arrested Jones and transported him to jail.

- ❖ Do not use confusing abbreviations.

The A/O called for a backup, and I proceeded to the scene. The A/O told me that after he administered a FST, Smith began to argue about the DUI charge.

This version is much easier to read:

The arresting officer called for a backup, and I proceeded to the scene. The arresting officer told me that after he administered a field sobriety test, Smith began to argue about the driving under the influence charge.

➤ Avoid:

- Adding fictional details
- Drawing conclusions without providing factual details
- Omitting statements or direct quotes