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Entry-Level Police Officer

Oral Board Candidate Preparation Guide



ORAL BOARD CANDIDATE PREPARATION GUIDE

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SECTION I: GENERAL DESCRIPTION

A. Content

You will be asked to provide oral responses to a series of interview questions regarding various abilities that are important to the effective performance of entry-level police officers and you will be evaluated on each of these abilities. Assessors will read you approximately 6 questions and you must provide an oral response to each question. Some of the questions may be related to one another and others are not. Assessors will tell you when questions are related to one another. As you respond, you may consider and discuss any aspect of your past experience that is relevant to the questions – school, work, home, or personal life. These questions will NOT require technical knowledge of law enforcement, since the technical aspects of the job are learned in training. The exercise is designed to assess abilities, not specific knowledge about law enforcement. Because the Oral Board will be administered over a period of time, alternate forms of questions will be used. The alternate forms will be similar in difficulty.

Sample questions have been presented below.

Sample Questions

The following questions are presented for illustrative purposes and will NOT be used during the actual Oral Board Test.

Questions 1 and 2 both relate to the following statement: Police officers must be able to communicate effectively with a wide range of people.

1. In general, what steps do you feel are useful in ensuring that others clearly understand what you are saying?
2. Describe a situation that demonstrates your ability to communicate effectively.

Questions 3 and 4 both relate to the following statement: Police officers must be able to observe an event or hear a description of an event and then summarize the details in a report.

3. In general, what steps do you feel are useful in ensuring that your summaries are accurate and complete?
4. Describe a situation in which you were required to summarize information.

B. Participation

Candidates must achieve a passing score on the Law Enforcement Aptitude Battery to be eligible to participate in the Oral Board. Eligible candidates will participate in the Oral Board at individually scheduled times. Candidates should ensure that they report to the Oral Board Test location at their scheduled reporting time. Upon arrival at the Oral Board Test location, each candidate will check in and receive a set of instructions.

After you read these instructions you will be escorted to an assessment room where you will participate in the Oral Board with a panel of three assessors. Upon entering the assessment room, the assessors will provide instructions and answer any procedural questions that you may have before the exercise begins. The assessors will then ask you to provide an oral response to a series of interview questions regarding various abilities that are important to the effective performance of entry-level police officers. Assessors will read you approximately 6 questions and you must provide an oral response to each question.

After each question is read to you, you may take a little time (e.g., about 30 seconds) to make notes on the scratch paper provided and think about your response. Any notes you make will be for your use ONLY. Assessors will not consider these notes when evaluating your performance. Although you may use a little time to think about your response to each question, you must manage your time so that you are able to provide an oral response to all interview questions. Keep in mind that any time spent thinking about your responses to the questions will be included as part of your response time.

You will have a total of 12 minutes to respond to approximately six questions. You are not required to use the full 12-minute response period, but you may not exceed this time limit. To ensure that you are able to provide a response to all questions, we recommend that you spend approximately 2 minutes thinking about and responding to each question. When 12 minutes have passed, the assessors will call time and the Oral Board will be ended.

As you respond you may consider and discuss any aspect of your past experience that is relevant to the questions – school, work, home, or personal life. You may only address the questions posed. You may NOT provide additional information to the assessors about topics not addressed in the questions.

Once you have completed the Oral Board, you will be directed to the check out area and will then be free to go. In all, the Oral Board will last approximately 20 minutes. This estimate includes time for administrative procedures.

C. Evaluation

Assessors

A board of assessors will observe and evaluate your performance on a series of abilities that have been identified as critical to the job performance of entry-level police officers. Each assessor has been trained to observe, record and evaluate your behavior and advised how to avoid making evaluation errors.

Evaluation Procedures

During the Oral Board, the assessors will be observing and recording your behavior. After the exercise, the assessors will evaluate your effectiveness with regard to each of the abilities.

Abilities

The following abilities are likely to be evaluated during the Oral Board. These abilities have not been listed in any particular order and will be weighted equally when deriving your overall score.

- **Oral Expression:** This is the ability to use language orally to communicate information or ideas to other people. This ability involves organizing information or ideas and expressing them in a clear and logical manner using a tone and vocabulary that is appropriate for the audience. The audience might include suspects, victims, witnesses, other police officers, supervisors, shop owners, or any individuals with whom the police officer might come in contact. Examples might include explaining a new Department procedure or policy to a police officer or group of officers and/or explaining investigation procedures to a victim.
- **Interpersonal Interactions:** This dimension includes the ability to establish constructive working relationships with others as well as to demonstrate consideration for the feelings, needs and views of others. This dimension also includes the ability to resolve conflict among others. Examples might include interacting with community members to gather information about crimes occurring in the neighborhood, intervening between others to help resolve an argument and/or interviewing emotionally upset crime victims.
- **Comprehension and Reasoning:** This is the ability to understand written or spoken language in order to recognize the existence of a problem or issue that needs to be addressed. This also includes addressing the problem or issue by considering all information that is relevant to the problem or issue, evaluating alternative solutions and arriving at a sound decision. Examples might include recognizing that the same pattern applies to a series of burglaries or purse snatchings, sorting through information (e.g., witness descriptions, reports, evidence that is collected) to determine what occurred at a crime scene and/or asking a suspect follow-up questions to clarify vague or conflicting information.

D. Overview of Logistics

The following schedule will likely be followed during the Oral Board. While you are participating in the Oral Board, assessors will only tell you when to start and stop. You will be responsible for keeping track of time. You may wear a watch or bring a timer with you to help keep track of time.

Time Period	Activity
10 minutes	Administrative procedures: Check-in is conducted and general instructions are provided. You will be given the opportunity to ask any procedural questions before the exercise begins.
12 minutes	Exercise procedures: Assessors ask you questions and you provide oral responses. Assessors will tell you when the exercise begins and ends, but you will be responsible for working within the 12-minute time frame.

SECTION II: PREPARATION STRATEGIES

A. General Strategies

This section is organized around some general tips and strategies for preparation. The primary focus for the Oral Board will be placed on the abilities as displayed in past situations and/or the steps you will use to ensure you are effective at displaying behaviors related to these abilities. Therefore, the following suggestions will help prepare you to answer a range of questions.

- Organize and write down examples of successful past performance (these could be from school, work, home, or personal life). Think about how these examples relate to each of the abilities to be evaluated during the Oral Board Test. What did you do well? What could you have done to be more effective?
- Organize and write down examples of areas where you have had difficulty in the past. Think about how these examples relate to each of the abilities to be evaluated during the Oral Board Test. What did you learn from these examples? What have you done to improve your performance in these areas?
- Think about your current situation in your job, in school, and/or at home. What types of behaviors have helped you be effective in these situations? How do these behaviors relate to each of the abilities to be evaluated during the Oral Board?

B. Ability Specific Strategies

We will discuss some tips and suggestions for preparation below and also will provide examples of how these strategies can be applied to the Oral Board. These suggestions are organized according to the abilities to be evaluated.

Oral Expression

This ability involves:

- organizing thoughts and ideas
- expressing these thoughts in a clear and logical manner
- using a tone and vocabulary that is appropriate for the audience

When participating in the Oral Board, it will be necessary for you to express your responses clearly and logically. One strategy you can use to express yourself effectively is the use of notes. When you appear before the board, you will be given a short period of time (e.g., 30 seconds) to think about the questions before responding and you will be permitted to take notes during this “think” period. It is more likely that your thoughts will come across clearly if you take a few seconds to organize your thoughts in your mind or on paper. Therefore, it may help to briefly jot down a few words to identify some points you would like to make during your response.

Once established, you can use your notes to provide your response. To practice jotting down some notes for the Oral Board, consider sample question 4. You might jot down notes such as:

- H.S. newspaper sports writer
- Take notes to remember
- Interview spectators to ensure complete
- Interview athletes to ensure accuracy

The strategy described above has been suggested as an aid to enhancing the effectiveness with which you express yourself and convey information to others. The question still remains as to how you will know if this strategy does, in fact, result in improved expression. This is where the assistance of friends or family can come into play. To assess whether your response is organized, clear and logical, you could provide an oral response from your notes, have another individual listen to the response, and ask that individual to identify the key points on which your response was based. You could then compare the individual's perception of the information with the information you had intended to convey. If there are areas that were not correctly identified by the individual, you should re-work those areas until they are correctly identified.

As you consider the above suggestion, you should keep in mind that you will have only a limited amount of time (i.e., 30 seconds) to think about the question before you respond. To make your practice most effective, you should be sure to take only 30 seconds to prepare your responses to the sample questions presented in this guide. To allow for additional practice, repeat this activity by having another individual prepare and provide you with some additional sample questions like those presented in this guide. The additional practice will help ensure that you can generate clear and concise oral responses when given minimal time to think about and prepare a response.

Finally, to do your best in this area, when you do respond, be sure to:

- Speak clearly
- Speak loudly enough to be heard
- Speak at a good pace – not too fast for others to understand but not too slow
- Be complete and organized
- Be sure you address all questions posed
- Make eye contact with the assessors
- Avoid any slang or inappropriate words
- Take a breath if you find yourself getting nervous

Comprehension and Reasoning

This area involves:

- understanding written or oral information
- identifying important issues or problems that need to be addressed
- generating alternative solutions and deciding on the best one

Just as it is necessary for you to express yourself effectively, it is also important for you to understand information presented to you. This comes into play during the Oral Board when you are reviewing the instructions and listening to the assessors read the interview questions. You will need to pay careful attention to the questions and to the instructions regarding the procedures you are to follow when you appear before the Oral Board assessors. This also comes into play whenever you are reviewing or receiving information related to a problem or issue you must address. A notetaking or outlining strategy can be used to practice and assess your ability to understand information. As an example, you could listen to another individual speak about a particular topic at a lecture, on an educational videotape or on an educational television program. After listening to the presentation, orally summarize the information presented, identifying what you perceive to be the central points. If you have another individual independently listen to the presentation and orally present a summary too, you can check your understanding by comparing your oral summaries. If you both identified the same points, you can confirm that you understood the information being presented. Preparing only an oral summary from information presented orally will be particularly good practice for responding to the interview questions from the assessors. As you prepare for the Oral Board, think about and be prepared to discuss what you have done and/or will do to ensure that you correctly and completely understand information that is provided to you in oral or written form.

Whenever you are faced with an important issue or problem, in addition to understanding information about the problem that is presented to you, it is important to identify key elements of the problem and evaluate their relevance and importance. This requires you to avoid taking information at face value and to thoroughly review available information to determine what details are missing or needed. Once you have identified relevant/important issues and have sought additional information, you need to consider alternative ways to resolve these issues and decide on the best solution. One way that you can develop this skill is to consider, discuss, and resolve an issue of current concern. When doing so, you should:

- Generate and consider alternative courses of action or solutions to a problem or issue. When evaluating potential solutions to problems, you should consider the impact of each solution on all individuals who could be affected by the solution. This would include those individuals who decide on the solution, as well as those individuals who must implement, abide by and/or enforce the solution.
- Choose the best option – commit to a decision and course of action.
- Anticipate any obstacles that might be encountered and develop contingency plans to overcome anticipated obstacles.
- Consider the short and long-range implications of decisions that are made since some solutions may be beneficial only on a short or long-term basis.
- Take steps to minimize any potentially troublesome “side-effects” of the chosen solution.

During the Oral Board, you may be asked to discuss the steps you have taken, or would take, to identify and fully understand important issues or problems and to resolve them. Be prepared to describe past situations of relevance to the area of comprehension and reasoning and the steps you have and will take to ensure you are able to effectively resolve problems.

Interpersonal Interactions

This area involves:

- establishing constructive working relationships
- demonstrating consideration for others' feelings and opinions
- resolving conflicts with and among others

Listed below are some examples of behaviors that contribute to constructive and effective interpersonal interactions with others.

- eliciting the input of others, particularly those individuals who are directly affected by decisions
- giving others your full attention when they speak and avoiding interruptions
- complimenting or giving credit to others for good ideas or performance
- disagreeing with others in a non-threatening manner
- offering support and assistance to others experiencing problems

You should think about situations where you have displayed effective interpersonal interactions and be prepared to describe these situations. Be prepared to describe the steps you will take to ensure future interactions with others will be constructive. Also consider situations where you have had to deal with difficult working relationships and be prepared to discuss what you have done and/or will do to handle them in an effective manner.

In summary, you can prepare for the Oral Board Test by engaging in the following practice exercises:

- Quickly jot down some notes and give a response for the sample questions included in this guide to one or more observers. Have observers report on the organization/key points of your response to see if you logically and clearly expressed your thoughts. Think of additional questions related to the abilities to be evaluated and provide more practice responses.
- Listen to another individual speak about a particular topic at a lecture, on an educational videotape or on an educational television program. After listening to the presentation, orally summarize the information presented, identifying what you perceive to be the central points.
- Set up a discussion with one or more individuals concerning a complex issue (i.e., think of ways to promote the use of seatbelts or come up with ideas for stopping drug use among teenagers) with the goal of outlining a series of recommendations. Set a time limit for the discussion. When the discussion is over, evaluate what you did to ensure you addressed all of the relevant issues in the allotted time frame, came up with a reasonable set of recommendations, and worked together effectively as a group. Consider what else you may have done to be more effective.
- Think about and be prepared to describe specific situations where you have displayed effectiveness in each of the abilities to be evaluated.
- Be prepared to discuss the steps you will take to ensure your effectiveness in each of the abilities to be evaluated.
- Perform all of the above practice activities under time constraints.

CONCLUSION

This preparation guide represents an attempt to familiarize you with all aspects of the Oral Board, including the content, logistics, and evaluation procedures; as well as to provide some suggestions for preparation. The suggestions provided here are not exhaustive -- we encourage you to engage in whatever additional preparation strategies you believe will enhance your chances of performing effectively on the Oral Board and on the job.

GOOD LUCK!