

WRITTEN EXAMINATION STUDY GUIDE
FOR
OFFICE SERVICES SUPERVISOR I (OSS I)

The purpose of this study guide is to help you prepare for the written examination for OSS I. The written examination is divided into four tests: Spelling, Punctuation, and Grammar; Reading and Understanding Written Paragraphs; Performing Basic Arithmetical Computations; and Supervision. Each of these tests measure the knowledge and abilities that are required for success in the OSS I classification. This study guide has examples of the types of questions that will appear on the examination. In addition to reviewing the material in this study guide, you may also find it helpful to read relevant parts of the following references:

- any introductory level “English” text to review basic rules of spelling, punctuation, and grammar.
- any introductory level “Math” text to review basic steps of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. Also review calculations involving fractions, decimals, and percentages.

TEST 1 - SPELLING, PUNCTUATION, AND GRAMMAR

In order to successfully perform critical tasks of the job, an OSS I must be able to write clearly and spell correctly, as well as correct handwritten or typed letters, memoranda, etc., generated by other staff.

Test 1 measures your ability to identify errors in sentences. You will check each sentence for an error in spelling, punctuation, or grammar. Some sentences have no errors; no sentence has more than one error. You will identify the error in each sentence by following these rules:

<p>If there is <u>no error</u>, mark choice <u>(A)</u>. If the error is in <u>spelling</u>, mark choice <u>(B)</u>. If the error is in <u>punctuation</u>, mark choice <u>(C)</u>. If the error is in <u>grammar</u>, mark choice <u>(D)</u>.</p>

Spelling errors can be made in one of three ways: one letter is wrong, one letter is missing, or one extra letter has been added.

Punctuation refers to the marks that make the meanings of sentences clear. The following are punctuation marks:

The period is .	The question mark is ?
The comma is ,	The apostrophe is '
The semicolon is ;	A set of parentheses is ()
The dash is -	A set of quotation marks is " "

Grammar refers to standard word usage, syntax, tense, and subject-verb agreement.

EXAMPLE QUESTIONS	ANSWERS & EXPLANATIONS
1. What was you doing on your job yesterday?	In sentence 1, the word "was" is grammatically incorrect. That word should have been "were". Therefore, the error is in <u>grammar</u> . <u>Choice (D) is correct</u> .
2. What is your current salry?	In sentence 2, the word "salry" is misspelled. It should be spelled "salary". Therefore, the error is in <u>spelling</u> . <u>Choice (B) is correct</u> .
3. The new office is larger than the old one.	In sentence 3, there is no error. Therefore, <u>choice (A) is correct</u> .
4. I think that program will work, said Mary.	In sentence 4, the quotation marks have been left out. Therefore, the error is in <u>punctuation</u> . <u>Choice (C) is correct</u> . If sentence 4 were rewritten correctly, it would read as follows: "I think that program will work," said Mary.

TEST 2: READING AND UNDERSTANDING WRITTEN PARAGRAPHS

An OSS I must be able to read and understand written materials and instructions. Incumbents in these classifications must also be able to extract pertinent information, draw conclusions, and understand key issues in a variety of written materials.

Test 2 measures the ability to read and understand written materials. In this portion of the examination you will be asked to read a paragraph and then choose which one of four statements is correct according to the information in the paragraph. For each question you will use only the information provided in the paragraph; you will not use any other information you may have about the topic covered in the reading materials.

EXAMPLE QUESTION:

There are three branches of state government: the executive, the legislative, and the judicial. The executive branch consists of the Governor, the Governor's cabinet and appointees, and the Lieutenant Governor and his/her staff. The legislative branch of government consists of the state Assembly and the state Senate. The Legislature proposes laws and is responsible for taxation policies. The Governor signs legislation developed by the Senate and/or the Assembly, or may choose to veto the legislation. The judicial branch of government is responsible for ensuring the legality or constitutionality of enacted legislation.

1. Based only on the information in the paragraph above, which one of the following statements is correct?
 - (A) There are four branches of government.
 - (B) The state Assembly is part of the executive branch of government.
 - (C) The judicial branch of government ensures the constitutionality of laws.
 - (D) The Senate and the Assembly may veto legislation proposed by the Governor.

Response (C) is the correct answer based on the information contained in the paragraph. The other three sentences are in conflict with information in the paragraph.

TEST 3: PERFORMING BASIC ARITHMETIC COMPUTATIONS

An OSS I must have a working knowledge of basic math and be able to perform simple arithmetic computations using addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, including calculations involving fractions, decimals, and percentages.

Test 3 measures the ability to perform basic arithmetic computations. Included in this test are “word problems” that measure the ability to extract numerical information from a narrative source and perform simple arithmetic computations based on that information.

EXAMPLE #1 - WORD PROBLEM

1. If 400 employees were asked to answer the questions on a survey and 75 percent returned the completed surveys, how many employees did not complete the survey?
- (A) 50
(B) 100
(C) 150
(D) 200

The correct answer is (B). Using basic arithmetic principles, 75 percent of 400 is 300. If 300 employees out of a total of 400 completed the survey, then 100 employees did not complete the survey. Here are the computations necessary to solve the problem:

$$\begin{array}{r} 400 \\ \times .75 \\ \hline 2000 \\ \underline{2800} \\ 300.00 \end{array} \qquad \begin{array}{r} 400 \\ \underline{-300} \\ 100 \end{array}$$

EXAMPLE #2 - BASIC MULTIPLICATION

2. 200 multiplied by 15 is equal to

- (A) 2150
- (B) 2500
- (C) 3000
- (D) 3500

The correct answer is (C). Here is the computation necessary to solve the problem:

$$\begin{array}{r} 200 \\ \times 15 \\ \hline 1000 \\ \underline{200} \\ 3000 \end{array}$$

EXAMPLE #3 - FRACTIONS

3. The sum of $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{3}{8}$ and $\frac{3}{4}$ is equal to

- (A) $1 \frac{1}{8}$
- (B) $1 \frac{1}{4}$
- (C) $1 \frac{3}{8}$
- (D) $1 \frac{5}{8}$

The correct answer is (D). In order to add them, the fractions need to be converted to the lowest common denominator as shown below:

$$\begin{array}{l} \frac{1}{2} = \frac{4}{8} \\ \frac{3}{8} = \frac{3}{8} \\ \frac{3}{4} = \frac{6}{8} \end{array}$$

After converting each fraction to eighths, they can be added. The sum is $\frac{13}{8}$, which is equal to $1 \frac{5}{8}$.

TEST 4: SUPERVISION

An OSS I must be able to supervise clerical staff. Incumbents in this classification must also be able to train, plan, organize, and direct a staff of clerical employees who perform a variety of general office and related clerical support tasks.

Test 4 measures the ability to supervise by presenting situations an OSS I may encounter. In this portion of the examination you will be presented with a fictional scenario and then choose which one of four statements is most correct.

POINTS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN ANSWERING SUPERVISORY QUESTIONS:

1. Don't criticize employees in front of others, or talk down to them.
2. When criticism is needed, be specific.
3. Always be patient, and don't argue.
4. Always give your employees a chance to explain their actions before taking disciplinary action.
5. Don't become involved in an employee's personal problems unless appropriate.
6. Always be fair, impartial and open-minded to promote mutual respect.
7. Never ask an employee to discipline someone else for you.
8. Keep your promises.
9. Be consistent.
10. Keep loyal to the interests of your employees.
11. Own your mistakes. Don't place blame, or make excuses.
12. Complaints from your employees, even if unjustified, should be taken seriously.
13. Have reasonable expectations, and give complete instructions.
14. Keep in mind that asking employees for input can be helpful in decision making, and promote morale.
15. To be approachable as a supervisor avoid being too tight or too loose.
16. Wisely delegate responsibility.

EXAMPLE QUESTIONS:

EXAMPLE #1

1. An employee you supervise is extremely competitive and very abrasive. The other employees in your unit are very resentful of this employee, who often "shows them up" with the very high quality of their work. Of the following, it would be best if you:
- (A) let the employee know that, while you appreciate their attempts to produce high quality work, the ability to get along with others and work as a team is just as important as technical ability.
 - (B) ignore the situation, since the work is of such high quality.
 - (C) let the employee know that, although you appreciate the high quality of their work, you can't help but get irritated by some of their behavior.
 - (D) try to understand why the employee is acting the way they are.

The correct answer is (A). Choice (B) is incorrect because the employee's behavior is having a negative effect on the other employees. Choice (C) is incorrect because just expressing your irritation doesn't offer a positive reinforcement for different behavior, like the importance of working together as a team. Choice (D) is incorrect because, while it is important to try to understand why an employee is behaving a certain way, not acting on the situation doesn't accomplish anything. Of the four choices given, (A) gives the most appropriate action.

EXAMPLE #2

2. You have the responsibility of making a big decision, and you would like to get some group input. Of the following, it is most important that you:
- (A) make sure everyone in the group has a chance to speak.
 - (B) make it clear whether you will abide by their suggestions, or whether you just want to hear these suggestions to help you arrive at a possible solution.
 - (C) wait until everyone has spoken before silently deciding whether to consider their ideas.
 - (D) use good problem-solving techniques during the meeting.

The correct answer is (B). You need to pick the choice that is most important. While all of the choices listed are important, you need to make it clear that you want their input in making what will ultimately be your decision. This will greatly reduce the chance for misunderstandings and resentment.

EXAMPLE #3

3. You have found it necessary to return an assignment completed by one of your employees so that several changes can be made. The employee objects to making these changes. The most appropriate action for you to take first is to:
- (A) inform the employee that they are free to object to your supervisor.
 - (B) ask if the employee has carefully read your proposed changes.
 - (C) calmly state that your decision is final, and further discussion will most likely be useless.
 - (D) allow the employee to present their objections against making the changes.

The correct answer is (D). Choice (A) is incorrect because it is too heavy handed an approach. Choice (B) is a possibility, although it seems a little insulting. It shouldn't be ruled out completely, however, until you've read the others. Choice (C) is also very heavy handed. Choice (D) is correct because it illustrates an important supervisory principle - that employees should always first be given a chance to explain their actions.