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# POLICE OFFICER EXAM

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## **9TH EDITION**

Donald J. Schroeder, Ph.D., NYPD (Ret.), and  
Frank A. Lombardo, M.S., NYPD Deputy Inspector (Ret.)

- **4** practice exams, including one diagnostic and two official exams given by the New York City Police Department
- Expert advice on the best way to approach the test
- A thorough review of typical question types used on police officer exams given throughout the country
- Strategies for taking computerized exams
- Chapters on the oral interview and on report writing



# POLICE OFFICER EXAM



**9TH EDITION**

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## Preface

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Since the first edition of *Police Officer Exam* was published, hundreds of thousands of police candidates have used it to prepare for police officer examinations throughout the country. In addition we, along with others, have used this Barron's book exclusively and with great success in various courses given to help prepare candidates to take the entrance examination for both large and small police departments. Feedback from police candidates all over the country indicates that so much of the success they have experienced in taking police entrance examinations is directly attributable to this book. But you, the candidate, must understand that, while this book can be the vehicle that can help you earn your gun and shield, unless you make the required necessary effort to study and learn its contents, you are cheating yourself.

Just about every police department requires that a newly hired employee interested in working his or her way up the ladder must begin at the very bottom of the organization. We did just that and quickly ascended the civil service ranks of the New York City Police Department. This book contains many of the successful strategies we developed during our study for police examinations. However, we would like to share with you something else we learned that cannot be disputed: **SUCCESS IN THE WORLD OF CIVIL SERVICE TESTS REQUIRES DEDICATION AND HARD WORK.** If you are willing to pay that price, we are confident that this text can help you and you will be successful. Good Luck!

Donald J. Schroeder  
Frank A. Lombardo

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This eBook may look differently depending on the device it is being viewed on. Please adjust your device accordingly.

This eBook contains hyperlinks that help you navigate through content, bring you to helpful resources, and allow you to click between all practice questions and answers.

All directions for end-of-chapter review questions and practice test questions are similar to those that appear on the actual exam. Since this is an eBook, please record all answers separately.

# Introduction

# About the Police Officer Examination

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- THE POLICE OFFICER EXAM
- THE POLICE OFFICER'S JOB
- HOW TO BECOME A POLICE OFFICER
- HOW TO APPLY FOR THE EXAM

## THE PURPOSE OF THE TEST

The type of examination that is administered throughout the country to select qualified men and women for careers in the police field has been greatly modified over the past few years. As a result of a Supreme Court decision a number of years ago, test writers are not permitted to use certain kinds of questions. For example, questions cannot be asked which require prior knowledge of the law, police procedures, or the duties and responsibilities of a police officer. You are not required to know what a police officer is to do under certain circumstances such as if he or she arrives at the scene of a robbery. That is the kind of knowledge you acquire after you are admitted to a police academy.

The procedures and questions used in this book were written after a continuous and careful analysis of recent major police officer examinations and all court cases dealing with police entrance level examinations. This chapter will serve to familiarize you with the contents of this manual so that you will be able to fully utilize it in preparing for the exam. By using this book properly, you will be prepared to take, and successfully complete, the most recent types of entry level police officer examinations.

## WHAT A POLICE OFFICER DOES

You are planning to take the Police Officer Examination because you have decided to join the police force. Therefore, it seems only fitting to provide an overall view of the types of positions available and the compensation that can be expected.

As you probably already know, the basic mission of the police is to protect life and property, to find and arrest criminal offenders, to preserve the peace, to enforce laws, and to prevent and detect crime. The basic mission is the same for all police officers regardless of whether the department involved is a city, county, state or federal agency. The difference between police departments is one of degree of work and not kind of work. In other words, all police agencies perform the same kind of work and differ only in the amount of work they perform in each area of the basic mission. Also, in both large and small police departments, the activities of the police are divided into both "line" and "staff" duties. *Line duties* concern those jobs which directly deal with accomplishing the basic mission. *Staff duties* are jobs which help and support line duties.

## **Types of Police Positions**

### **LINE POSITIONS**

#### **Patrol**

In this position, uniformed police officers “patrol” through the community by foot, scooter, motorcycle, automobile, and sometimes by boat or plane. Responsible for a “beat,” “post,” or “sector,” which is an assigned, fixed geographical area, the police officer spends much time answering a wide variety of calls for assistance from the public.

#### **Traffic**

An often difficult job, police officers working in uniform on traffic duty prevent vehicular accidents and congestion by issuing summonses, directing traffic, and investigating traffic accidents.

#### **Detectives**

Working in business attire, detectives, the investigators of the police department, are called to the scene after a major crime has been committed. They follow investigatory leads and attempt to identify and arrest persons responsible for past criminal acts.

#### **Vice Enforcement**

Usually involved in the enforcement of laws dealing with alcohol, prostitution, narcotics, gambling, and pornography, police in vice enforcement work in street clothes or disguise, and often act in a very demanding undercover role infiltrating criminal organizations.

#### **Youth Work**

Officers in youth work are involved in investigating crimes committed by and upon children. This work, performed either in uniform or plainclothes, calls for great sensitivity.

### **STAFF POSITIONS**

#### **Communications**

These positions involve handling calls from the public, dispatching police to the scene of emergencies, inputting and retrieving crime data from computers, and maintaining surveillance equipment.

#### **Criminal Identification**

Police involved in this area must take fingerprints of victims or criminals, discover and retrieve fingerprints at the scenes of crimes, and search fingerprint files to identify criminals.

#### **Forensic**

Officers in this area use the sciences to identify the nature and origin of substances, such as blood, hair, semen, and other body fluids. They also interview witnesses, do ballistics work, induce hypnosis, and administer polygraph operations.

### **Support Services**

Police officers perform a variety of support roles, ranging from that of ambulance attendant to auto mechanic. The scope and degree of support services depends on the size of the police department and the policies of that department.

### **Intelligence Services**

In light of the aftermath of September 11, 2001, the attention given by police departments throughout the United States to the need for intelligence (screened information) increased tremendously. Consequently, Intelligence Units now typically perform the following duties:

Officers assigned to an Intelligence Unit gather comprehensive and relevant intelligence for their department by turning raw information into information that can be used to wage the war against threats such as international and domestic terror. This is a process whereby officers gather information and then further evaluate its potential to be useful in this war. After this evaluation, the information then is collated or organized according to its intended purpose—that is, providing intelligence regarding gangs, terrorism, threats against public officials, etc. Once collated, the information is further analyzed in an attempt to ensure its reliability and accuracy. Finally, the information, now seen as intelligence, is transmitted to the appropriate unit within the department involved and also shared with other municipal, federal, and state agencies.

The duties of officers assigned to an Intelligence Unit are comprised mainly of interviewing and interrogation, as well as surveillance of both people and places.

It should be noted that in some departments, officers are even assigned to positions in foreign countries when performing intelligence duties. For example, the New York City Police Department (NYPD) has officers permanently assigned to intelligence duties in foreign countries such as Great Britain and Italy. In addition, the NYPD has officers assigned as intelligence liaison officers to federal law enforcement agencies such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

### **The Work Week, Salary, and Benefits**

Police work is not a 9 A.M. to 5 P.M., Monday to Friday occupation. A police officer could be assigned to work any day of the week at any hour. The work week is an average of 40 hours. While there may be some disadvantages of working “around the clock,” it is in no way a humdrum existence.

What kind of salaries do police officers make? Many large departments begin their officers somewhere between \$35,000 and \$50,000 per year, with increments to \$90,000. Then promotions are available, often as a direct result of a civil service examination, which can bring a salary up to \$150,000 annually.

But salaries are not the only benefit. There is usually early retirement; that is, retirement with a pension after 20 to 25 years of service. Also, there are liberal sick leave, health insurance, vacation allotments (in most departments), and job security.

## **THE STEPS TO BECOMING A POLICE OFFICER**

First, visit your local Police Personnel Department, which does the testing and hiring of police employees and often publishes advertisements regarding hiring plans and examination dates. (In major cities, this department may be centralized.) You might, also, wish to either call or visit the recruiting section of your police department. Nevertheless remember to use the *non-emergency* police number if you decide to telephone.

You might also wish to call the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association, the local police union office, to find out when the next police officer test is scheduled. Other possibilities for obtaining job and testing information are to subscribe to the local civil service newspaper, or to visit the department's web site.

The bottom line is—do not be afraid to ask. Police departments *want* good people. You are taking the time to prepare yourself for the examination and, therefore, have begun to qualify as one of the candidates that police departments would want.

Then, follow the next steps geared to getting an appointment.

## **THE STEPS TO APPOINTMENT**

1. File an *application*.
2. Take the *Police Officer Examination*.
3. If you are successful on the written examination, take the *physical* examination. This test includes lifting, running, jumping, and other kinds of physical activities that a police officer is required to do, but it is designed so as not to discriminate against women.\*
4. Take the *medical exam*.
5. An *interview* often follows. This can include a battery of psychological tests.
6. Finally, a *background and character investigation* occurs.

After successfully completing these steps, your name is put on a list, and you will be notified as to when appointments will be made.

## **THE STEPS AFTER APPOINTMENT**

1. You will attend a *training school* for several months, sometimes referred to as a "Police Academy."
2. After the initial training, you will be assigned to a *police unit* for a probation period, during which you will be called a "probie" or "rookie." Most often, you will begin in a uniformed patrol assignment, the backbone of police work, to learn the basics. While on patrol, you will be evaluated for other types of assignments such as detective, youth work, etc. You then become eligible to take the civil service examination for promotion.

The police officer's job is both rewarding and satisfying. Pursue it. Make it your goal. Use this book to help you. Remember, all police officers were once in the same position you are in right now. They did it, and you can too.

## **HOW TO APPLY FOR THE TEST**

The most important step in the application process is to obtain a copy of the “Job Announcement.” It is available from the city, state or federal agency that is responsible for preparing and giving the examination.

Listed below are a series of items usually contained in the Job Announcement, along with helpful comments on each item. Remember that the comments are of a general nature and that requirements vary from one jurisdiction to another. Also note that most departments have web sites that contain specific information concerning future hiring intentions. (See A Final Word for additional information concerning official police department websites.)

1. **FILING INFORMATION.** Most jurisdictions require applicants to file for the examination by filling out and submitting an application by a certain date. After you file, you are notified by mail where and when to appear for the examination. The Job Announcement tells you where to get an application form. However, sometimes “walk-in exams” are held which do not require prior filing.
2. **GENERAL REQUIREMENTS.** The typical requirements to take the examination and/or to become a police officer are as follows:
  - **Age.** Because age requirements vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, this requirement should be checked with the department you are seeking to enter. However, the age range to take the exam is typically from 18 to 35, with candidates over 35 being eligible if they have served with the Armed Forces during certain time periods. Please note that upper age limits have been eliminated by court decisions in some jurisdictions.
  - **Height requirements.** The height requirement is disappearing as a factor in determining eligibility. For example, the New York City Police Department does not have a height requirement.
  - **Citizenship.** Most, if not all, departments require a person to be a citizen to be appointed to the job, but not to take the entrance examination.
  - **Eyesight.** Eyesight requirements vary considerably from city to city, but the trend is toward more relaxed standards. Some departments use uncorrected standards, while others use a corrected standard (i.e., they allow you to wear glasses when taking the eye examination).
  - **Physical agility test.** Candidates are required to pass a physical agility test either before entry to the department or after their initial training period. Consult the Job Announcement or police recruiter for more details about your physical agility test.
  - **Driver’s license.** This is usually a definite requirement to be appointed to the job, but not to take the test.
  - **Fees.** Very often, a nominal fee in the range of twenty-five dollars is required when you file to take the examination.
  - **Education.** The great majority of departments require either a high school diploma or a high school equivalency diploma to be appointed to the job, but not to take the examination. Some departments now require college credits. The individual department should be checked regarding its educational requirements.

- **When and where the examination takes place.** Usually, police entrance examinations are held on Saturday mornings at local high schools. As mentioned above, candidates are usually notified by mail where and when to appear. This notification comes after the candidate has filed for the examination. Note that if the examination is scheduled for a Saturday, a “Sabbath Observers Examination” is held on a different day of the week in most jurisdictions for those who cannot take the examination on Saturday because of religious beliefs.

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\* Many departments have now discontinued the physical examination before entrance to the department. They rely instead on a physical agility test administered after the official training period.

## How to Maximize Your Test Score

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- GOOD STUDY HABITS
- TEN STUDY RULES
- MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS
- A TIME-MANAGEMENT PLAN
- ADVANCE TEST MATERIAL
- TESTS ON VIDEO
- TEST FORMAT
- HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This section contains information you need to get the best return from your test preparation efforts so that you can achieve the highest possible score on your official police officer examination. Too many students approach test preparation in a slipshod manner. Consequently, they waste time and do not achieve their potential. The guidelines presented in this chapter are designed to help you avoid such wasted effort.

### TIP

**If you don't know how to use a computer, learn!**

The first part of this section provides guidelines to help you develop good study habits. Until you are quite familiar with the rules for effective studying contained in this section, you should review them before each study session.

The second part of this section provides a specific strategy to deal with multiple-choice questions. This strategy has been updated to reflect the recent trend in police officer examinations to utilize computer-based testing. The era of pencil-and-paper testing is coming to a close. In multiple-choice, computer-based testing, the candidate views the test on a computer monitor and uses a mouse to click on his or her selected answer choices. Although the types of questions being asked remain the same, it is imperative that the candidate use a test-taking strategy geared for computer-based tests. Unfortunately, an unsophisticated test taker can do poorly on such an examination simply because of a lack of familiarity with the computer-based program. Don't let this happen to you. The whole matter is complicated by the fact that the traditional pencil-and-paper examination is still used in some jurisdictions. You must find out which testing method is used for the examination you are taking—pencil-and-paper or computer-based—and then use the appropriate test-taking strategy.

Also included in the second part of this section are specific strategies to deal with material distributed in advance of the test and with tests that contain a video component. When applicable, understanding and mastering these strategies is vitally important.

Make sure that you review the strategies appearing later in this text dealing with the

handling of multiple-choice questions before taking each of the full-length examinations included in this book. Finally, be sure to practice these strategies while taking these examinations. In time, the strategies will become second nature and your organized approach to answering multiple-choice questions will serve you well.

Please note that some of the practice questions in this book are based on laws, rules, policies, and procedures that are similar to those that might be found in a typical police department. Do not assume, however, that they are the exact laws, rules, policies, and procedures that are actually in use in any specific police department.

Also note that the difficulty level of the practice questions appearing in this book is, in most cases, higher than what you may encounter on your official examination. *This is a very important point for you to understand.*

If you can learn to master the questions in this book, you should have great success on your official examination. We caution you again, however, that if you are taking a computer-based multiple-choice question test, you must understand the specific strategy required to do well on such an examination. Also, remember not to get discouraged if you miss some questions when tackling the questions in this book. Instead, study the explained answers provided for every question to learn why you got them wrong, and avoid such errors in the future.

## **GOOD STUDY HABITS—THE KEY TO SUCCESS**

Many students incorrectly believe that the amount of time spent studying is the most important factor in test preparation. Of course, all else being equal, the amount of time you devote to your studies is a critical factor. But spending time reading is not necessarily studying. If you want to learn what you read, you must develop a system. For example, a student who devotes 60 minutes a day to uninterrupted study in a quiet, private setting will generally learn more than someone who puts in twice that time by studying five or six times a day for 15 to 20 minutes at a time.

## **TEN RULES FOR STUDYING MORE EFFECTIVELY**

We have listed a number of rules for you to follow to increase study time efficiency. If you abide by these rules, you will get the most out of this book.

- 1. MAKE SURE YOU UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF EVERY WORD YOU READ.** Your ability to understand what you read is the most important skill needed to pass any test. Therefore, starting now, every time you see a word that you don't fully understand, make certain that you write it down and make note of where you saw it. Then, when you have a chance, look up the meaning of the word in the dictionary. When you think you know what the word means, go back to the reading material which contained the word, and make certain that you fully understand the meaning of the word.

Keep a list of all words you don't know, and periodically review them. Also, try to use these words whenever you can in conversation. If you do this faithfully, you will quickly build an extensive vocabulary which will be helpful to you not only when you take the police officer examination, but for the rest of your life.

2. **STUDY UNINTERRUPTED FOR AT LEAST 30 MINUTES.** Unless you can study for at least an uninterrupted period of 30 minutes, you should not bother to study at all. It is essential that you concentrate for extended periods of time. Remember, the actual examination takes anywhere from 3 to 5 hours to complete, with the average being 3½ hours. You must concentrate just as hard in the third hour of the test as you did in the first hour. Therefore, as the examination approaches, study for more extended periods of time without interruption. And, when you take the practice examinations, do a complete examination in one sitting, just as you must do at the actual examination.
3. **SIMULATE EXAMINATION CONDITIONS WHEN STUDYING.** Study under the same conditions as those of the examination, as much as possible. Eliminate as many outside interferences as you can. And if you are a smoker, refrain from smoking while studying since you will not be allowed to smoke in the classroom on the day of your examination!
4. **STUDY ALONE. IF POSSIBLE, ALSO FORM A STUDY GROUP TO MEET PERIODICALLY.** Studying alone is the best way to prepare for the police officer test. However, if possible, form a group of from three to five serious students and meet with them for 2 to 3 hours on a periodic basis, perhaps every other week. Prior to each meeting, the group should come prepared to discuss one area which will probably appear on the examination. In addition, everyone in the group should keep a list of items they are confused about; these items should be discussed at the study group meetings. Items that no one is certain of should be referred to an outside source, such as a teacher, parent, librarian, etc. Arguing in a study group defeats the purpose of the group, and must be avoided at all costs.

**TIP**

**Make friends with your dictionary.**

5. **MAKE SURE YOU UNDERSTAND THE ANSWERS TO EVERY QUESTION IN THIS BOOK.** Every answer is accompanied by an explanation. Whenever you get a question *wrong*, be sure that you understand why you missed it so you won't make the same mistake again. However, it is equally important to make certain that you have answered a question *correctly* for the right reason. Therefore, study the answer explanation to every question in this book as carefully as you study the question itself.
6. **ALWAYS FOLLOW THE RECOMMENDED TECHNIQUE FOR ANSWERING MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS.** Before the advent of computer-based testing, this was a relatively easy rule to follow. There was only one strategy to learn and follow. In the next section of this chapter we provide the time-tested, invaluable strategy for answering multiple-choice questions on a traditional pencil-and-paper examination. Because this traditional pencil-and-paper testing process is still used in some jurisdictions, you must learn and practice this strategy. We also include a recommended strategy to follow when taking a computer-based multiple-choice question examination. You must learn and apply this strategy if