



ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Test Information Guide for Candidates

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Personnel Board of Jefferson County

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Administrative Assistant Test Information Guide Overview

Congratulations on your eligibility for the Administrative Assistant examination! The Personnel Board of Jefferson County (PBJC) is pleased that you are interested in a job as an Administrative Assistant within the Jefferson County Merit System. The PBJC has created this information guide to familiarize you with the position of Administrative Assistant and the testing procedures for the job class. This guide is designed to provide you with an overview of the Administrative Assistant position; the competencies being measured by the Administrative Assistant examination; a description of the test components and the test administration; test scoring and report notification information; PBJC rules related to testing; what to bring and what not to bring to the exam; and how to prepare and what to expect from the Administrative Assistant examination.

The Test Information Guide provides valuable information that will allow you to be more familiar with the Administrative Assistant position and the examination process. It is strongly recommended that you thoroughly review this manual and utilize the examples and information provided. Reading the entire guide will ensure that you understand what will occur during the examination. Reviewing and understanding the descriptions provided will ensure that you are prepared for the types of questions and scenarios that you will encounter. A thorough familiarity with the examination process will eliminate uncertainty and reduce anxiety that can sometimes be experienced in testing situations.

Please remember that the material in this guide is designed to help you prepare for the Administrative Assistant examination. You will not be allowed to use this guide while you take the exam.

Overview of the Administrative Assistant Position

The following information is designed to help applicants make more accurate judgments about their interest in working as an Administrative Assistant and help you in determining whether you are able and willing to perform the job of an Administrative Assistant.

The following information was gathered through a process (known as Job Analysis) of interviews, meetings, and surveys with Administrative Assistant incumbents from various jurisdictions throughout Jefferson County. Through this effort, the PBJC explored what is typically done on the job, as well as the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics (KSAOs) that a person needs to possess in order to successfully perform the work. Although not for everyone, a career as an Administrative Assistant is both challenging and rewarding. If you decide to pursue a career in this field, you will be expected to perform the work behaviors described in this section.

Administrative Assistants provide a variety of non-routine administrative and support services requiring independent judgment and knowledge of department operations. Administrative Assistants provide more advanced clerical support to departments and perform a moderate level of financial duties compared to Administrative Clerks, such as processing accounts receivable and payable and performing payroll duties. Employees require substantial

knowledge regarding the use of computers to create and exchange correspondence, maintain databases, create graphs, and manage spreadsheets. Administrative Assistants work in an office setting and may lead or train a small group of employees as lead workers.

The major duties performed by Administrative Assistant employees that were determined to be critical during the most recent job analysis include:

- Provides service to internal and/or external customers.
- Performs various administrative activities by creating and updating files, maintaining documents, and tracking information using various forms and computer systems in order to maintain records and document organization/department activities.
- Communicates and collaborates with various parties and organizations (e.g., department heads, employees, citizens, board and council members, vendors, etc.) by responding to inquiries, tracking internal and external communications, and drafting correspondence to disseminate and receive information related to department/organization activity.
- Procures and/or manages inventory (i.e., supplies and equipment) to ensure the products and services are available to meet the operational needs of each department.
- Prepares and processes invoices by creating and sending billing statements and collecting payments to ensure customers' balance is paid for services rendered.

The Administrative Assistant job class is a Grade 16 position and is located in 15 jurisdictions within the Merit System. Please note that salary ranges for each jurisdiction are subject to change due to cost of living adjustments. You can check current salary ranges at <http://www.pbjcal.org/employment/schedules.aspx>.

Competencies Being Measured

This examination was developed as the result of an in-depth study of Administrative Assistants from various jurisdictions throughout Jefferson County. During this systematic process data is gathered from both incumbents and supervisors and analyzed in order to identify the duties and tasks critical for job success and the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) that are required to perform those duties. Next, the KSAs, are grouped into competencies. These competencies are the foundation for examination questions and exercises.

The following are examples of the competencies and KSAs that are being measured by the Administrative Assistant examination process:

- **Adaptability & Flexibility**

- The ability to adjust to changing work demands, procedures, technology, and/or priorities.
- The ability to assess the importance of, and consequences associated with, tasks in order to set priorities in light of competing demands.
- The ability to shift attention back and forth between two or more activities or sources of information (such as speech, sounds, touch, or other sources).

- **Computer & Technology Operations**

- Skill in typing text and entering data and/or information quickly and accurately using appropriate equipment (e.g., computer, calculator).
- Skill in using Microsoft Excel or similar spreadsheet software.
- Skill in using Microsoft Outlook or other similar email software.
- Skill in using Microsoft Word or similar word processing software.
- Skill in using internet to locate information.
- Knowledge of basic office equipment (e.g., telephone, smartphone, fax machine, copier, computer, calculator).
- Knowledge of administrative and clerical procedures and systems such as word processing, managing files and records, designing forms, and other office procedures and terminology.

- **Creativity & Innovation**

- The ability to take a novel approach to work tasks or problems and generate unique or original ideas and/or solutions.

- **Customer Service**

- The ability to identify means of compromise while adhering to rules and policies in order to resolve conflicts.
- Knowledge of English language grammar, punctuation, syntax, word usage, and sentence structure.
- Knowledge of appropriate citizen interactions when dealing with the public.

- **Learning & Memory**

- The ability to learn unfamiliar material/information quickly and accurately.
- The ability to maintain mental stamina and focus over long period of work and/or during times of high stress.
- The ability to mental store and retrieve work-related information for use at a later time.
- The ability to understand the implications of new information for both current and future problem-solving and decision-making.

- **Mathematical & Statistical Skills**

- Skill in using basic mathematics (e.g., addition, subtraction, multiplication, division) to solve problems.
- The ability to perform basic mathematical operations (e.g., add, subtract, multiply, and divide).

- **Oral Communication & Comprehension**

- The ability to orally communicate information and ideas so others will understand.
- The ability to attend to information presented verbally and actively ask questions to fill identified areas of missing or unclear information.
- The ability to listen to and understand information and ideas presented through spoken words and sentences.
- The ability to speak clearly so others can understand you.
- Skill in verbally delivering information in a clear and concise manner to an audience.

- **Planning & Organizing**

- The ability to make accurate judgements about how long (in time) a particular task, or group of tasks, will take to complete.
- Skill in managing one's own time and the time of others.
- Skill in organizing information, materials, and/or documentation in a systematic and logical manner.

- **Problem Solving & Decision Making**

- The ability to combine information in order to form logical conclusions or to identify relationships between different pieces of information.
- The ability to evaluate a problem or issue from multiple perspectives in order to identify root cause(s) and generate effective solutions.

- The ability to identify new processes or improvements to existing processes that allow work to be performed more efficiently or effectively.
- The ability to use logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions, or approaches to problems.
- Skill in selecting the most appropriate course of action in situations where information is unclear or unavailable and making high quality and effective decisions.
- **Professionalism & Integrity**
 - The ability to demonstrate honest behavior in all work tasks and responsibilities.
 - The ability to follow safety procedures and practices in a variety of novel and everyday work tasks/situations.
 - The ability to maintain confidentiality of information (e.g., applicant, client, customer, patient).
 - The ability to work in an environment that requires strict adherence to instructions, standards, and/or procedures.
 - Skill in conducting oneself in a calm and professional manner in stressful situations.
- **Researching & Referencing**
 - The ability to conduct research using various sources of information (e.g., databases, internet, books) in order to identify and compile needed information.
 - Skill in maintaining records.
- **Reviewing, Inspecting & Auditing**
 - The ability to pay close attention to detail in order to ensure the completeness and accuracy of work.
- **Self-Management & Initiative**
 - The ability to accurately assess your own performance in order to identify areas of strength and areas for development.
 - The ability to manage one's time in order to accomplish objectives within given timeframes.
 - The ability to perform work in a manner that is careful, attentive and vigilant.
 - The ability to persist at a task or problem despite interruptions, obstacles, or setbacks.
 - The ability to see a need for and take constructive action at work without being prompted or urged.

- The ability to work productively and effectively under conditions of high stress, such as tight deadlines, heavy workloads, or emergency situations.
- The ability to work without close supervision or significant amounts of direction/guidance.
- **Sensory Abilities**
 - The ability to quickly make sense of, combine, and organize information into meaningful patterns.
- **Teamwork & Interpersonal**
 - The ability to create an environment that welcomes, values, and includes perspectives from different backgrounds and/or cultures.
 - The ability to manage and resolve conflicts with coworkers and/or customers.
 - The ability to work collaboratively with a group or team in an effort to achieve a common goal.
 - Skill in maintaining a positive working relationship through comfortable and appropriate interpersonal interaction.
 - Skill in working through differences in goals or interests with an individual/group.
- **Written Communication & Comprehension**
 - The ability to communicate information and ideas in writing to a variety of audiences in a clear, concise, and organized manner, free from spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors.
 - The ability to read and understand information and ideas presented in writing.
 - The ability to review written material and identify errors with regard to spelling, grammar, punctuation, and formatting.

Description of the Administrative Assistant Test Components

This section of the guide provides you with descriptions of the test components that you will complete during the Administrative Assistant examination. The test components are designed to assess the competencies that were deemed important and needed on day one of the job by Administrative Assistant subject matter experts.

The Administrative Assistant Examination will be administered entirely through the eSkill online portal and will be broken into 3 sections described in more detail below.

Test Component Descriptions:

Section 1: General Typing

This portion of the test requires candidates to quickly and accurately type information into the text box. In the first section, you will be provided with reference text, and you must type that information into the box provided within an allotted amount of time. In the next section, information will be presented on the top portion of your computer screen in paragraph form, and you must type information into another box at the bottom of the screen. There are two (2) typing questions, and each question has a separate timer.

Competencies measured by the Typing / Data Entry include:

- **Computer & Technology Operations**
- **Written Communication & Comprehension**
- **Oral Communication & Comprehension**

Section 2: Computer-Based Simulations

The Computer Based Simulations require candidates to demonstrate their ability to perform tasks and functions in Microsoft Word, Microsoft Outlook, and Microsoft Excel that is similar to what would be expected on the job. There will be approximately 10 simulation exercises.

Competencies measured by the Computer Based simulations include:

- **Computer & Technology Operations**
- **Researching & Referencing**

Section 3: Work Sample

The work sample for the Administrative Assistant examination will consist of approximately 50 multiple-choice questions and simulation exercises. The content of these questions and exercises will vary but are similar to tasks and situations that one may encounter on the job.

Competencies measured by the Work Sample:

- **Adaptability & Flexibility**
- **Computer & Technology Operations**
- **Creativity & Innovation**
- **Customer Service**
- **Learning & Memory**
- **Mathematical & Statistical Skills**
- **Oral Communication & Comprehension**
- **Planning & Organizing**
- **Problem Solving & Decision Making**
- **Professionalism & Integrity**
- **Researching & Referencing**
- **Reviewing, Inspecting & Auditing**
- **Self-Management & Initiative**
- **Sensory Abilities**
- **Teamwork & Interpersonal**
- **Written Communication & Comprehension**

You will be given one (1) hour and forty-five (45) minutes to complete the computer-based simulations and work-sample components.

Description of the Administrative Assistant Test Administration

All three (3) components/sections of this exam will be administered via computer using an online testing platform. The examination process will take approximately one and one half (1½) to two (2) hours to complete.

You should have already registered for the exam via www.jobsquest.org and received confirmation of your exam date and time. Additionally, within three (3) days after registering for the exam, you should receive an email from ProctorExam with instructions to complete a

system check. **Please complete the system check IMMEDIATELY so any troubleshooting can occur.** After successfully completing the system check, you will receive a second email from ProctorExam with a link to access your exam. Your exam link will be active on your exam date up to 30 minutes prior to your exam time. You will be required to pass a final system check before you can access the actual exam. Ensure you allow adequate time to log in and complete the final system check. The Personnel Board will not extend the grace period, so if you are later than 15 minutes passed your scheduled time, you will not be allowed to take the exam. **If you miss your scheduled time, you will not be allowed to make up the exam.**

Prior to beginning the exam, you will be asked to present a valid government-issued photo identification (e.g., driver's license, passport) so have this available to you prior to clicking your exam link.

To preserve the integrity of the examination and ensure your best personal performance, please ensure that any computer you will be using for the exam will be away from any other people, noise or distractions.

You will be video-proctored remotely by PBJC testing staff. Testing staff will have access to view you via your webcam and will monitor you as you complete the exam. Testing staff will also have access to view your computer monitor as you complete the exam. This is in an effort to assist you with troubleshooting if issues arise and to prevent cheating. You will not be allowed to open any additional, unauthorized tabs on your computer while completing this exam. You will also not be allowed to access any notes made prior to your exam time or any testing guides for use during the exam. Doing so may result in your disqualification.

You will be able to access an online calculator (link will be provided during the exam) for use during the exam, and you will also be allowed to have blank scratch paper and writing utensils. You will be asked to show your blank scratch paper prior to starting the exam, and you will be asked to rip up or shred the scratch paper at the conclusion of the exam. You may not have any additional items.

Items that are permitted to be used during your exam time:

- **A government issued, photo ID**
- **A blank piece of scratch paper**
- **Writing utensils**
- **Online calculator (link will be provided)**
- **Headphones**

Items that are prohibited from use during your exam time:

- **Cell phones or other unauthorized electronic devices (if you are caught using your cell phone, this will be grounds for disqualification.)**
- **Pre-made notes or exam guides**
- **Unauthorized tabs on your browser**
- **Additional computer programs**
- **Books or other reference materials**

REMOTE EXAM SECURITY: At the beginning of the exam, you will need to present a photo ID to the online testing platform via your webcam to verify your identity. Additionally, it is important you do not discuss the examination components or processes with anyone after completing the exam. Providing information about the examination to anyone would be unfair to yourself and to others taking the Administrative Assistant exam. In addition, revealing information about the examination could result in your disqualification from the process and further disciplinary action as an employee within the Merit System.

On-Site Testing: If you are unable to test via remote proctoring due to system or equipment issues, please contact Becky Lopez at becky.lopez@pbjcal.org or 205.279.3562 or Sarah Freed at Sarah.Freed@pbjcal.org or 205.279.3599 for accommodation.

Description of Rules Related to Testing

PROHIBITED ITEMS – You CANNOT use the following items during the test:

- Cell phones or other unauthorized electronic devices including radios, smart watches, tablets, Bluetooth devices, MP3 players, e-readers, pagers, etc.
- Pre-made notes or test guides
- Additional tabs on your browser
- Additional computer programs
- Books or other reference materials

Cheating: Again, you, as the test taker, must agree to complete this examination without assistance from outside parties or materials not provided by the Personnel Board of Jefferson County. You must also ensure all exam content remains confidential. The Personnel Board of Jefferson County reserves the right to require you to complete parallel versions of this exam in a proctored setting in order to confirm your identity as the original test taker if you are advanced to the next phase of the selection process. The Personnel Board has a strict “no cheating” rule. If you are caught cheating during any portion of the examination, you will receive a zero and be immediately disqualified. In addition, you may be barred from taking any future merit system examinations (Rule 9.14). There are no exceptions to this rule.

Grace Period: You should log on to the exam using the provided link promptly at your scheduled exam time. **Again, this link will only be active on exam day for 30 minutes** (the 15 minutes directly before and after your assigned testing time). This link will require you to pass a

final system check before you can access the actual examination; therefore, please ensure that you allow adequate time to log in and complete the system check. **If you miss your scheduled time, you will not be allowed to make up the exam.**

Make up Exams: No make-up examinations will be given. The sole exception to this rule will be for eligible candidates who are on active military duty on the day of the exam, in compliance with USERRA guidelines established by the federal government. Traffic emergencies, family emergencies, illness or other incidents, regardless of whether or not they are outside your control, do not constitute grounds for a make-up exam.

How to Prepare for the Administrative Assistant Examination

✓ *Read the study materials thoroughly.*

This Test Information Guide has been provided to you to help you prepare as much as possible for the various components of the Administrative Assistant exam. This Guide can provide some insight into the testing process, what to expect when completing the exam, as well as the job duties, knowledge, skills and abilities that are important for the job(s).

✓ *Make sure you have all necessary equipment and instructions.*

Before the test begins, make sure you have everything you will need to successfully complete the examination process. Also, make sure you have read through the instructions so you understand what to do.

✓ *Make sure you have a quiet place to complete the exam and have allowed enough time.*

To preserve the integrity of the examination and ensure your best personal performance, please ensure any computer you will be using for the test will be away from any other people, noise, and distractions.

In addition, make sure you have set aside at least one and one half (1½) hours to complete the entire exam. You may not require the entire time to complete all exercises of the exam, but you will want to make sure you have ample time to finish the entire exam once you start it.

✓ *Use the restroom prior to starting the exam.*

Ensure you use the restroom before you begin. Once the exam begins, any time taken to use the restroom will count against your test time and cannot be made up.

✓ *Read all instructions and utilize the practice sessions.*

Read all instructions contained in the test. You want to make sure you are performing the tasks correctly. Also, utilize the practice sessions provided to you during the exam.

Test Scoring & Results Notification

As stated previously in this Guide, all of your responses to test questions and exercises will be collected through your testing computer. Candidate results will be downloaded for further analysis to calculate each candidate's final score. The final score of passing candidates will be placed into a rank-ordered list.

Once the analysis is complete, you will be notified of your score by email. When you receive your test score notice, it will include your final score on the exam as well as your preliminary rank. This rank is tentative and may change if there is any change to candidates' scores during the appeal period.

Four (4) business days from the date the notification of results is emailed constitutes the appeal period for this examination. If you have any questions about your test score or rank, please contact **Chanice Alexander** at **205.279.3570** or **chanice.alexander@pbjcal.org**. If after speaking with this staff member you still have concerns about your results, you may submit a written appeal to the Personnel Board Director outlining your concerns. All appeals are treated seriously and reviewed thoroughly before making a determination. Appeals related to the content of the test, however, are not considered. Procedural matters related to test administration, assessment, or calculation of results are legitimate areas for appeal. To be considered, an appeal must be received at the Personnel Board offices by the appeal end date listed in the notice. Appeals received after this date will not be considered.

If you successfully pass the exam, your name will be added to an eligible register of candidates. Your name will be placed on the list, in rank order, according to your score on the exam. Names are sent to departments with vacancies throughout Jefferson County according to rank on the test. (Keep in mind that your rank will improve as other individuals are selected and hired off of the eligible register.) The Administrative Assistant register stays active for approximately two years. If, during that period, you would like to see if your rank has changed, you may call our Applicant Services department at 205.279.3500.

The various jurisdictions for which there are openings for Administrative Assistant may wish to conduct background checks, criminal record checks, or further selection procedures to review candidates. After the eligible register has been released to these jurisdictions, you must contact them for further information about your status in the selection process. Please note that in some cases, a specific jurisdiction may require you to participate in additional interviews or other selection processes before hiring you.

Contact Information

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding this material or the examination process, please contact any of the individuals listed below.

Content-Related Questions

Chanice Alexander

Assessment & Development Specialist

Email: chanice.alexander@pbjcal.org

Phone: 205.279.3570

eSkill Technical Support

Email: support@eskill.com

Phone: 1.866.537.5455

Exam Registration and Administration Questions

Becky Lopez

Human Resources Technician

Email: becky.lopez@pbjcal.org

Phone: 205.279.3562

Sarah Freed

Test Assessment & Administration Coordinator

Email: sarah.freed@pbjcal.org

Phone: 205.279.3599

ADA Accommodations

If you would like to request special testing accommodations or have any questions concerning the test site or testing conditions, please contact Allysa Singer at 205.279.3603 or at allysa.singer@pbjcal.org.