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**HOW-TO-PREPARE GUIDE**

**FOR THE**

**RIGHT OF WAY SPECIALIST (20310)**

**EXAMINATION**

State Personnel Department  
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# Right of Way Specialist (20310)

## *How to Prepare Manual*

As a candidate for the Right of Way Specialist (ROWS) position within the Alabama State Merit System, you have indicated your interest in participating in the ROWS selection procedure. As a candidate for ROWS, you will be required to participate in a written examination. This guide is provided to acquaint you with the ROWS job and to help you prepare for the written exam. Read this information very carefully. This guide contains information which you should find very helpful as you prepare for the written exam.

### **The Right of Way Specialist Testing Procedure**

A careful analysis of the Right of Way Specialist job revealed the knowledges, skills and abilities (KSAs) that were necessary for successful job performance. This same job analysis revealed that these KSAs were also required on the first day of work as a ROWS. In other words, these KSAs should be possessed by a ROWS job candidate before they are hired and before any on-the-job training they may receive. Several of these KSAs will be measured on the written test.

### **Test Scheduling**

If you are interested in applying for a ROWS position, you must **first file an application with the State Personnel Department**. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure the application arrives at State Personnel. Tests are given periodically throughout the year. Do not wait for an official announcement from State Personnel or ALDOT about test dates or application cutoff dates. Instead, if you are interested in applying, you should do so immediately.

### **The Right of Way Specialist Job**

Right of Way Specialist positions are available statewide. This is technical and professional work in relocation assistance, property management, and securing title to property needed for departmental purposes. Employees in this class are responsible for assisting others in providing relocation assistance and property management and handling other right-of-way functions such as serving as a negotiator. Work involves performing a variety of specialized duties related to relocation assistance and negotiating for right-of-way needed for roadway construction.

### **Job Analysis Results**

As stated earlier, the Right of Way Specialist job analysis revealed that several knowledges, skills and abilities (KSAs) were necessary for successful job performance. These KSAs were both important to successful job performance and were required upon entry into the job. Listed below are the KSAs that meet these requirements. Because it is not possible to measure all of

these KSAs with a written examination, not all will be measured by the written exam. The KSAs that will be measured by the exam are listed in an upcoming section of this booklet.

When reviewing these KSAs and preparing for the written test, the reader should note that the examples shown in each statement of how the KSA is used is not always intended to be completely inclusive. In other words, there may be questions on the exam which cover areas not directly mentioned as an example in the KSA.

- K1 Knowledge of grammar and composition to include proper sentence structure and spelling as needed to compose reports, write correspondence and letters, and prepare documentation for files.
- A3 Ability to perform math calculations as needed to calculate various payments.
- A4 Ability to perform basic math calculations such as addition, subtraction, division, and multiplication as needed to calculate Replacement Housing Payments, invoice figures, and total costs of property values based on current interest rates and interest differential payments.
- A15 Ability to operate computers as needed to complete forms, input ROW data, perform word processing and spreadsheet operations, and compose, send, and receive emails.
- A24 Ability to adapt to different kinds of people (i.e., different personalities, different cultures) as needed to communicate effectively with them.
- A25 Ability to adapt your level of verbal communication to fit a situation as needed to exchange information with people on different levels of knowledge regarding ROW such as property owners, judges, attorneys, Central Office personnel, and co-workers.
- A26 Ability to verbally communicate on ROW issue as needed to discuss ROW acquisitions with various important parties such as other ROW employees, attorneys, and property owners.
- A27 Ability to build rapport with others very quickly in confrontational and tense negotiation situations as needed to negotiate with property owners and obtain cooperation.
- A28 Ability to verbally communicate with property owners and real estate personnel as needed to exchange information, obtain tax information, and/or explain right of way acquisitions to property owners.
- A29 Ability to verbally communicate one-on-one with others such as attorneys, other ALDOT personnel, appraisers, and property owners as needed to exchange information.
- A30 Ability to verbally communicate with groups of people such as property owners, real estate personnel or attorneys as needed to inform them of Right of Way activities such as planned acquisitions.
- A31 Ability to communicate ALDOT's position on the ROW acquisition process to others such as property owners in a tactful manner without appearing defensive or aggressive.
- A38 Ability to communicate in writing with others through the preparation of letters and memos to include correct sentence structure and spelling as needed to exchange and document information regarding right of way acquisition or relocation projects, record properties, and exchange information with property owners and other ROW and Central Office personnel.

- A52 Ability to identify when correct information is given and to admit mistakes and reconcile the misinformation.
- A53 Ability to know when to leave a situation that cannot be defused or solved with the current approach taken as needed to acquire ROW property.
- A54 Ability to use tact in calming others down when discussing difficult issues such as property owners who are required to give up ROW.
- A55 Ability to establish working relationships with co-workers as needed to coordinate work activities and ensure ROW acquisition deadlines are met.
- A60 Ability to maintain a filing system of various projects to include keeping up with tract files, project numbers, and projects books or electronic files as needed to know the status of each project at all times.
- A62 Ability to work on multiple tasks at one time as needed to maintain progress of projects and maintain record of their current status.
- A63 Ability to handle changing priorities of various projects as needed to continue working on the most important projects and meet ROW acquisition deadlines.
- A66 Ability to work differing hours as needed to meet with property owners or business personnel who may not be available during normal work hours.
- A67 Ability to prioritize work activities as needed to ensure work is correct and is completed in a timely manner.

## **Examination Description**

In an attempt to provide an opportunity for each candidate to demonstrate his/her possession of the knowledges and abilities that will be listed in the upcoming section, a multiple-choice, written examination was developed. This exam is referred to as the Written Test. The written examination will consist of approximately 100 questions and you will be allowed three hours in which to complete the exam. Your answers will be marked on a Scantron sheet using a #2 pencil.

The written test is divided into six sections: 1) Math Calculations, 2) Reconciling Information, 3) Sentence Structure, Grammar, and Spelling, 4) Alphabetical and Numerical Filing, 5) Interpersonal Skills, and 6) Project Management.

Each section is comprised of questions which measure similar knowledges or abilities. Listed below are the names of each section, the knowledges and/or abilities being measured in the section, and some important information you will need to know in order to do well on the exam.

## SECTION 1. Math Calculations

The math calculations section of the written examination will be composed of approximately 40 multiple-choice questions. These questions are designed to measure the following KSAs:

- A3 Ability to perform math calculations as needed to calculate various payments.
- A4 Ability to perform basic math calculations such as addition, subtraction, division, and multiplication as needed to calculate Replacement Housing Payments, invoice figures, and total costs of property values based on current interest rates and interest differential payments.

As demonstrated by these two abilities, the ability to perform math calculations is important in the Right of Way Specialist job. The 40 questions are designed to measure your ability to perform math calculations that are important and needed upon entry into ROWS job.

This section of the examination will test your ability to perform math calculations. Examples of calculations you will be required to perform on this exam include:

- Addition -----For example:  $75 + 210 + 132 = 417$
- Subtraction ----- For example:  $40.09 - 34.85 = 5.24$
- Multiplication -- For example:  $362 \times 4 = 1448$
- Division -----For example:  $755 \div 5 = 151$

Many of the questions in Section 1 of the written exam are in sentence format as shown in the two examples below:

Example 1:

The height of a fence is 160 inches and the width of the fence is 72 inches. What is the square footage of the fence?

- (A) 80 square feet
- (B) 88 square feet
- (C) 320 square feet
- (D) 960 square feet

The correct answer is "A." Therefore, A should be marked as the correct answer.

Example2:

What would be the value of a \$2,300 deposit in a bank account if it earned simple interest for six years at an interest rate of 6%?

- (A) \$1,548.00
- (B) \$3,128.00
- (C) \$4,748.00
- (D) \$7,828.00

The correct answer is "B". Therefore, B should be marked as the correct answer.

Another area that will be tested on the written examination is your ability to calculate various units of measurements. The chart below contains some conversions and measurements which might be helpful to you on the math calculations section of the written exam. Note: This chart will **not** be provided in the written examination.

<b>MEASUREMENT</b>	
12 inches	1 foot
3 feet	1 yard
<b>AREA</b>	
1 square mile	640 acres
1 acre	4,840 square yards
1 acre	43,560 square feet
Area of a Square	Multiply the length of the two sides
Area of a Rectangle	Length times Width
Area of a Triangle	$\frac{1}{2}$ of the Base times the Height

## SECTION 2. Reconciling Information

The reconciling information section of the written test will be composed of approximately 10 multiple-choice questions. These questions are designed to measure the following ability:

- A52 Ability to identify when correct information is given and to admit mistakes and reconcile the misinformation.

As described in the above ability, this section of the written examination is designed to measure your ability to reconcile information which is important and necessary upon entry in the Right of Way Specialist job.

Here is an example of one type of question you will encounter in Section 2 of the written test:

### REQUISITION

Quantity Ordered	Unit	Description	Estimated Costs	Unit Price	Total Costs
4	Cases	Computer Paper		\$112.46	\$449.84
7	Boxes	Legal Pads	\$12.53		
12	Boxes	Black Pens		\$13.27	

### INVOICE

Quantity Received	Quantity Ordered	Unit	Description	Unit Price	Total Costs
4	4	Cases	Computer Paper	\$112.46	\$449.84
6	7	Boxes	Legal Pads		\$76.74
12	12	Boxes	Black Pens		

On the invoice, the actual unit price of the legal pads should be:

- (A) \$10.96
- (B) \$12.53
- (C) \$12.79
- (D) \$14.76

The correct answer is "C". Therefore, C should be marked as the correct answer.

### SECTION 3. Sentence Structure, Grammar, and Spelling

The sentence structure, grammar, and spelling section of the written test will be composed of approximately 30 multiple-choice questions. These questions are designed to measure the following KSAs:

- K1 Knowledge of grammar and composition to include proper sentence structure and spelling as needed to compose reports, write correspondence and letters, and prepare documentation for files.
- A38 Ability to communicate in writing with others through the preparation of letters and memos to include correct sentence structure and spelling as needed to exchange and document information regarding right of way acquisition or relocation projects, record properties, and exchange information with property owners and other ROW and Central Office personnel.

As demonstrated by these two KSAs, the knowledge of grammar and composition and the ability to communicate in writing is important in the Right of Way Specialist job. The 30 questions are designed to measure your ability to communicate in writing which is important and needed upon entry into the ROWS job.

Below are four examples of the types of question you will encounter in Section 3 of the written test:

Example 1:

What correction should be made to thIS sentence?

Gerald's Great – Grandmother has lived in that neighborhood for more than 60 years. Her family is concerned that the new highway will be too close to her house.

- (A) change Great – Grandmother to great - grandmother
- (B) change Gerald's' to Gerald's
- (C) change highway to Highway
- (D) no correction is necessary

The correct answer is “A”. Therefore, A should be marked as the correct answer.

Example 2:

Choose the sentence that is written correctly.

- (A) Did they know that Labor Day always came on the first Monday in September?
- (B) Did they know that Labor Day always had come on the first Monday in September?
- (C) Did they know that Labor Day always has come on the first Monday in September?
- (D) Did they know that Labor Day always does come on the first Monday in September?

The correct answer is “C”. Therefore, C should be marked as the correct answer.

Example 3:

Which sentence represents the best English usage for business letters and reports?

- (A) He worked hard, however to no avail.
- (B) He worked hard but his effort was of no avail.
- (C) He worked hard, but of no avail.
- (D) Although to no avail, he worked hard.

The correct answer is “B”. Therefore, B should be marked as the correct answer.

Example 4:

Choose the answer that lists the sentences in the proper order.

- (1) There is also good reason to give careful attention to internal communication.
  - (2) Harmony within the department also carries over into public relations with outsiders. Good communication is one of the keys to success in any organization.
  - (3) Effective communication with those inside the organization makes for fewer misunderstandings and fewer disgruntled employees.
  - (4) Communication is very important in an organization, especially for those who come in contact with many people. Primary attention is usually centered upon relations with outsiders, property owners, fee appraisers, and others.
- (A) 4, 1, 3, 2
  - (B) 2, 3, 1, 4
  - (C) 3, 2, 1, 4
  - (D) 4, 1, 2, 3

The correct answer is “A”. Therefore, A should be marked as the correct answer.

## **SECTION 4. Alphabetical and Numerical Filing**

The alphabetical and numerical Filing section of the written test will be composed of approximately 10 multiple-choice questions. These questions are designed to measure the following ability:

A60 Ability to maintain a filing system of various projects to include keeping up with tract files, project numbers, and projects books or electronic files as needed to know the status of each project at all times.

As described in the above ability, this section of the written examination is designed to measure your ability to file and maintain a filing system which is important and necessary upon entry in the Right of Way Specialist job.

Here is an example of the type of question you will encounter in Section 4 of the written test:

Arrange the following items in alphabetical order for filing.

1. Kenmore – Strauss Co.
2. Kennedy & Sons
3. Ken's Deli
4. Kenney Bros.

- (A) 1, 3, 2, 4  
(B) 1, 2, 4, 3  
(C) 2, 1, 4, 3  
(D) 1, 4, 2, 3

The correct answer is "B". Therefore, B should be marked as the correct answer.

## SECTION 5. Interpersonal Skills

The interpersonal skills section of the written test will be composed of approximately 5 multiple-choice questions. These questions are designed to measure the following abilities:

- A27 Ability to build rapport with others very quickly in confrontational and tense negotiation situations as needed to negotiate with property owners and obtain cooperation.
- A53 Ability to know when to leave a situation that cannot be defused or solved with the current approach taken as needed to acquire ROW property.
- A54 Ability to use tact in calming others down when discussing difficult issues such as property owners who are required to give up ROW.
- A55 Ability to establish working relationships with co-workers as needed to coordinate work activities and ensure ROW acquisition deadlines are met.

As described in the above abilities, this section of the written examination is designed to measure your ability to know when to leave a difficult situation or when to use tact to calm others in difficult situations which is important and necessary upon entry in the Right of Way Specialist job.

Here is an example of the type of question you will encounter in Section 5 of the written test:

You are a Right of Way Specialist at ALDOT. As the negotiator, you present an offer to purchase a tract of right of way which includes the purchase of a family's home. The owners of the property feel your offer is unfair because the offer is not enough to re-build their home in a new location. After an hour of negotiation, the property owners are no longer willing to listen or negotiate. What would you do?

Which response do you believe is the best action to take?

- (A) Give the property owners your phone number and ask them to call you in a few days.
- (B) Tell the property owners to write the Director of ALDOT and inform him of the situation.
- (C) Tell the property owners that they should accept the offer because the state may start eminent domain proceedings.
- (D) Tell the property owners that you will discuss the situation with your supervisor and then leave the property.

The correct answer is "D". Therefore, D should be marked as the correct answer.

## **SECTION 6. Project Management**

The project management section of the written test will be composed of approximately 5 multiple-choice questions. These questions are designed to measure the following abilities:

A63 Ability to handle changing priorities of various projects as needed to continue working on the most important projects and meet ROW acquisition deadlines.

A67 Ability to prioritize work activities as needed to ensure work is correct and is completed in a timely manner.

As described in the above abilities, this section of the written examination is designed to measure your ability to establish working relationship with co-workers, prioritize work activities, and handle multiple tasks/changing priorities at the same time which is important and necessary upon entry in the Right of Way Specialist job.

The questions contained in section 6 are the same type of questions that are in section 5 of the written test. Please see the example in section 5 of this How to Prepare booklet in order to become familiar with the type of questions asked in section 6 of the exam.

## Preparing for the Written Selection Procedure

Candidates often ask how they should study for an exam like this one. It is important to focus on what will be measured and how it will be measured. You should carefully review the knowledges and abilities contained in this booklet as well as the information provided about the questions in each section.

The three most important things you can do to help prepare for the Right of Way Specialist examination are to (1) review the knowledge and abilities, (2) read this manual to become familiar with the testing process so that you will be more relaxed and not confused during the administration, and (3) **thoroughly** review the information provided about each section and be familiar with the things you will need to know in order to answer the questions.

## Tips for Taking the Written Examination

- Use your time wisely. You will have **three** hours to take the written exam. You may want to bring a watch with you to keep up with your time. Please turn off any alarm before you get to the test facility. While taking the examination, if you do not know the answer to a question, do not spend too much time thinking about it. Instead, move on to another question and return to the questions you have skipped if you have time.
- **Carefully** review each written test question before you attempt to answer it. The written test questions are not intended to be “**tricky**” but you will need to read the question **very carefully** to make sure you understand what it is asking. Also, if the written test question asks you to determine which one of the following statements is correct, many of the incorrect alternatives may appear to be plausible so read carefully. If any part of a statement is incorrect then the statement is incorrect.
- Darken the circles completely on the Scantron sheet so there is no doubt which answer you are giving. If you change your mind, make sure you erase completely.
- You will be allowed to mark or take notes in your written test booklet; however the only information that will be scored is the answers you give on your Scantron sheet. You will be provided with two pieces of scratch paper. These will be collected at the end of the written test.
- **You will need to bring a basic function calculator.**
- **You will also need to bring two #2 pencils** in order to mark your answers on a Scantron sheet.
- **DON'T PANIC.** In a test like this one, some parts may seem more difficult to you than other parts. Don't give up. It is unlikely that anyone will obtain a perfect score. If it is hard for you to figure out an answer, it is probably hard for other people, too.

## What to Expect On the Written Exam Day

1. Do **NOT** bring this Guide to the exam location. You will not be permitted to bring it in the testing room.
2. Do **NOT** any study materials to the written test site. You will not be permitted to bring them in the testing room. You will not be allowed to use any notes, manuals or other study materials during the exam.
3. Do **NOT** bring cell phones, two-way radios, beepers, pagers or any other noise producing devices with you to the exam. You will not be allowed to have these items in the testing room.
4. **You must bring your PICTURE IDENTIFICATION to the exam location.** This may be your driver's license, a military identification card or a passport.
5. **You must also bring the TEST SCHEDULING CARD that you will receive from the State Personnel Department to the exam.** This letter lists the examination title, location of exam, and date, day, and time of examination.
6. **YOU WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO ENTER THE EXAM LOCATION OR TAKE THE EXAM WITHOUT YOUR PICTURE IDENTIFICATION AND TEST SCHEDULING CARD.**
7. **Bring several NUMBER 2 PENCILS with erasers to the exam.** It is also recommended that you bring a **highlighter**.
8. **You must bring a CALCULATOR to use for the Right of Way Specialist examination.** Small solar powered or battery operated calculator that performs basic functions such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, square roots, and percentages are allowed. Calculators that plug-in, use tape, have word processing, spelling, thesauruses or other storage and retrieval capabilities (except basic memory functions) are not allowed. **Calculators that are a feature on a cell phone are not permitted.** Calculators are subject to inspection by exam monitors. Applicants may not borrow or share calculators at the exam site.
9. Test monitors can answer questions concerning administration issues only. They will not be able to interpret the written test questions for you.
10. Candidates making any disturbance or caught cheating will be disqualified from the exam.
11. Allow plenty of time to get to the written test site. Plan to get there at least 15 minutes before the written test is scheduled to begin to ensure you arrive on time.
12. Come dressed comfortably. The total time provided for completion of the written exam will be three hours.

## **Administration Contact**

The contact for the Right of Way Specialist examination is Karen Walkley at (334) 353-8120.

## **Reasonable Accommodation**

If you would like to request special testing accommodations or have any questions concerning the written test site or written testing conditions, please contact us at the phone number above.

## **Administrative Questions**

You may contact us if you have any administrative questions or concerns about information presented in this booklet. It is not necessary for you to contact us in order to receive your final grade; you should receive notification of your score on the exam by postcard after the scoring of the written test is completed and your final score is calculated. You can expect your scores back in four to six weeks after the completion of scoring the written test. If you have not received your score within six weeks, you may call the State Personnel Department.

In addition to your score, you may also obtain your standing, or rank on the register, online at [www.personnel.alabama.gov](http://www.personnel.alabama.gov). From the home page, you should click on “Applicants” and then “Register Standings”, and follow the instructions. For security purposes, you must now create an online profile in order to access your standing.

Please remember that you will not need OR be allowed to bring anything other than the items previously mentioned to the written test site.

If you are unable to schedule for this examination or fail to appear at the examination on your scheduled day and time, you will need to submit a new application to State Personnel in order to be scheduled for future administrations.

## **Reminders**

It is the applicant’s responsibility to ensure the application arrives at State Personnel. Tests are given periodically throughout the year. Do not wait for an official announcement from State Personnel or ALDOT about test dates or application cutoff dates. Instead, if you are interested in applying, you should do so as soon as you meet the minimum qualifications.

If you fail to appear for this exam, you must submit a new application to State Personnel in order to be scheduled for future administrations.