

A

HOW TO PREPARE GUIDE

FOR THE

TRANSPORTATION ADMINISTRATOR –

(20484)

EXAMINATION

State of Alabama Personnel Department
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION.....	3
II.	JOB ANALYSIS RESULTS.....	3
III.	EXAMINATION DESCRIPTION.....	3
IV.	TEST SCHEDULING.....	3
V.	PREPARING FOR THE EXAMINATION.....	4
VI.	DURING THE EXAMINATION.....	5
VII.	EXERCISE DESCRIPTIONS.....	6
	Exercise One – Scheduling Exercise.....	6
	Exercise Two – Role Play/Written Communication Exercise.....	7
	Exercise Three – Interview Question Review Exercise.....	9
	Exercise Four – Employee Performance Situations Exercise.....	9
	Exercise Five – Job Application Review Exercise.....	10
	Exercise Six – Long Term Planning Exercise.....	10
VIII.	EXAMINATION TIMING.....	11
IX.	HOW TO STUDY FOR THE TA EXAMINATION.....	12
X.	WHAT TO BRING TO THE TA EXAMINATION.....	12
XI.	ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION.....	13
	Administration Contact.....	13
	Reasonable Accommodation.....	13
	Administrative Questions.....	13
	Test Results.....	13
	Reminders.....	13

I. INTRODUCTION

This booklet was provided to help you prepare for the Transportation Administrator (TA) examination. It is very important that you sit down in a quiet place and review the material in this book. You should also set aside time to practice doing the things that are suggested in this booklet to prepare for the examination. Please remember that the material in this booklet is designed to help you prepare for the exam. You will not be allowed to carry this booklet or any other study material into the exam session. Later in this booklet, we will instruct you on what you are **allowed** to bring to the exam session and what you **must** bring to the exam session.

II. JOB ANALYSIS RESULTS

An analysis of the TA job in the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) indicated that a number of knowledges, skills, and abilities (KSAs) are important and needed from the moment a person becomes a TA and before he/she receives any training. Because it is not possible to measure all of these KSAs with an examination, not all will be measured.

When reviewing the KSA statements listed in this booklet, the reader should note that the examples shown in the statements of how the KSAs are used are 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.

III. 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 measured, six exercises were developed.

The six exercises that comprise the TA examination are:

- Exercise 1: Scheduling Exercise
- Exercise 2: Role Play/Written Communication Exercise
- Exercise 3: Interview Question Review Exercise
- Exercise 4: Employee Performance Situations Exercise
- Exercise 5: Job Application Review Exercise
- Exercise 6: Long Term Planning Exercise

A description of each exercise will follow in upcoming sections of this booklet.

IV. TEST SCHEDULING

If you are interested in applying for a TA 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 and believe you meet the stated minimum qualifications, you should submit an application immediately.

Once your application is received, it will be reviewed to ensure you have the minimum qualifications required to qualify for the job. If you meet the minimum qualifications, you will be sent a scheduling letter that will contain the

examination dates, times, and location. You will need to call the number indicated on the scheduling letter in order to be scheduled for the TA exam.

V. PREPARING FOR THE EXAMINATION

Here are some suggestions regarding what to do before the exam and the items to take to the exam.

- Be well rested. Get a good night's sleep for several nights in a row before the exam.
- Allow plenty of time to get to the exam. If you are rushed and running late, you will be upset when you arrive. Plan to arrive at the scheduled time for check-in. If you are late, you will **NOT** be admitted to the examination site.
- Come to the exam dressed comfortably. You will be there for approximately six and a half hours.
- Do not bring this booklet to the exam location. You will not be permitted to bring it into the testing site.
- Do not bring any of your study materials to the exam. This includes notes and any resources that you may have used to prepare for the exam.
- You should read and study this booklet. You should practice the kinds of things that this booklet suggests that you practice.
- The State Personnel Department will mail you a SCHEDULING LETTER identifying the dates the examination will be given and a phone number to call to schedule your examination time. All tests will be given in Montgomery at the State Personnel Department/ALDOT Testing Facility located at 3738 Atlanta Highway. You **MUST** call the number provided on the scheduling letter **PRIOR TO THE DEADLINE** indicated on the scheduling letter in order to be allowed to take the examination.
- Approximately 5 to 7 days prior to the exam, the State Personnel Department will mail you a CONFIRMATION POSTCARD identifying the date, time, and location that you have scheduled to take the examination. You **must** bring this CONFIRMATION POSTCARD with you to the exam site.
- You **must** also bring a PICTURE IDENTIFICATION to the exam location. This picture identification may be a valid driver's license, a military identification card, or a passport. You only need to have one form of PICTURE IDENTIFICATION. You will **not be allowed** to enter the exam location, nor take the TA exam without your PICTURE IDENTIFICATION.
- During registration, you will be asked to verify the last four digits of your social security number. You should also remember the Confirmation Number you were given when you called to schedule the exam.
- If you want to keep track of time during the examination, you should bring a watch or a small clock to the exam.
- Do not bring your own calculator. You will be provided with a small solar powered or battery operated calculator that performs basic functions such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, and percentages. You must use the provided calculator.
- You will be provided with pencils.
- Do not bring cell phones, two-way radios, or any other noise producing devices with you to the test room. If you do bring a cell phone or two-way radio, you will not be allowed to keep it during the exam.

VI. DURING THE EXAMINATION

General Guidelines

We are now going to review some very specific guidelines that you will be expected to follow when you come to take the TA examination.

- During the entire exam, you will be seated in a private test room. At certain points, an exam monitor will enter the room and at one point a person playing the role of one of your employees will enter the room. During the remainder of the exam, no one will be in the room but you. Your exam monitor will be outside your test room and will be available to assist you if you have any problems. If you leave your test room, even to use the rest room, you **will not** be provided with any additional examination time.
- You will be given a 30-minute lunch break approximately three hours into the exam.
- You will be given a 10-minute break at some point before the lunch break and a 10-minute break at some point after the lunch break.
- Exam monitors will not interpret exam questions for you.
- You are not allowed to open any exam booklets nor begin working on the exam until you are instructed to do so.
- You may not refer to any outside materials during the exam.
- Candidates making any disturbances or caught cheating will be disqualified from the exam.
- For some of the exercises, you will be asked to write memos or other types of documents. You must write legibly so that test raters can properly evaluate your answers.
- All needed materials (e.g., pencil, calculator) will be provided.
- As indicated above, the TA examination is made up of six exercises. You will take all six exercises on the same day.
- It is important to remember that the TA job covers a wide variety of duties and responsibilities within the Department of Transportation. The test was designed to reflect that diversity without overly targeting a particular area. Candidates placed on the register for TA can be considered for any available TA job in any area of ALDOT. While it is impractical to create a test which measures every aspect of every TA job, it was the goal of this examination development project to develop a test that will measure important and necessary-at-entry aspects of a *majority* of the TA jobs.

VII. EXERCISE DESCRIPTIONS

Exercise One: Scheduling

During the Scheduling Exercise, you will schedule employees to various tasks which must be completed as soon as possible. You will be required to complete a schedule for one day which represents a typical but busy day. You will be asked to decide the most appropriate employee for each task and to prioritize the tasks so that the most important ones are completed.

The Scheduling Exercise was written to measure these targeted abilities:

A-51 - Ability to recognize relationships between facts and situations such as relating work assignments to subordinates' abilities or relating your division/bureau's mission/objectives to workload assignments as needed to ensure that division/bureau productivity is maximized and worker safety is maintained.

A-54 - Ability to organize and plan work activities as needed to accomplish division/bureau goals.

A-56 - Ability to set priorities for individual subordinates as needed to help accomplish goals and complete assignments in a timely manner.

A-57 - Ability to develop work schedules for subordinates as needed to assign appropriate personnel to meet project demands, to ensure that available personnel are utilized, and to ensure schedules are met.

A-58 - Ability to manage resources such as equipment and subordinates as needed to ensure they are sufficient to complete projects and accomplish division/bureau goals.

A-59 - Ability to develop work sequences as needed to ensure that work schedule commitments are within division/bureau time and resource capacities.

A-63 - Ability to identify alternative procedures for accomplishing goals when existing procedures are no longer possible/adequate as needed to complete projects.

A-75 - Ability to assign work to subordinates using appropriate considerations such as capitalizing on particular subordinate's strengths and deciding which responsibilities can be delegated instead of tending to personally as needed to increase work group performance and retain personal time for more important tasks.

A-77 - Ability to direct subordinates to develop plans and strategies to accomplish specific objectives as needed to meet project deadlines and accomplish division/bureau goals and objectives.

During the job analysis, these nine abilities were shown to be important and necessary upon entry into a majority of the TA jobs.

Exercise Two: Role Play/Written Communication Exercise

During the Role Play/Written Communication Exercise, you will be tasked with conducting an actual meeting with a person playing the role of one of your employees. This will be a real person who will actually come into your test room and play the role of one of your employees. The meeting will be audio and video taped for future scoring.

During the meeting, you will question the employee about possible rule violations. Your job will be to find out exactly what has happened and to explain to the employee what, if anything, they have done wrong. You will be given a copy of the rules and will have to compare them to the actions of the employee and then explain the rules to the employee.

Your final task will be to draft a policy that covers these types of activities and to draft a memo to your supervisor explaining the outcome of your employee meeting and the actions you are taking.

During the meeting, you will be scored on the content of what you say and your oral communication skills. The memo and policy will be scored for content and your written communication skills.

The Role Play/Written Communication Exercise was written to measure these targeted abilities:

A-5 - Ability to read and comprehend written technical engineering documents and manuals as needed to obtain information necessary to perform the job.

A-9 - Ability to recommend/compose policies and procedures as needed to attempt to reach consensus on certain areas, provide standard means of handling certain problems/situations, and comply with changes in laws and regulations.

A-12 - Ability to read, comprehend, and interpret legal documents that relate to department functions as needed to ensure division/bureau functions remain within guidelines.

A-26 - Ability to write, develop, and coordinate the development of basic policies and procedural guidelines for the bureau, division, or department to include researching needed changes and gathering input from credible sources as needed to provide information to employees, ensure compliance, and standardization of work performance.

A-30 - Ability to acquire (learn) new knowledge from reading technical manuals, relevant periodicals, and textbooks as needed to stay abreast of professional standards and innovations.

A-49 - Ability to apply laws and guidelines to specific situations as needed to ensure that they are followed in the completion of various work activities.

A-52 - Ability to pick out key information that should be remembered and/or communicated to others from items such as orders, memoranda, teletypes, and technical material.

A-70 - Ability to provide guidance and feedback concerning their work performance to subordinates as needed to identify deficiencies in and improve their work performance.

A-73 - Ability to counsel employees with personal or work problems as needed to ensure subordinates recognize their weaknesses, help them make necessary adjustments, and to assist employees in maximizing job performance.

A-74 - Ability to recommend disciplinary action for a subordinate that is consistent with the severity of a violation of ALDOT policy and procedure or Federal and State statutes as needed to maximize employee performance and ensure that the violations do not occur again.

A-84 - Ability to communicate orally using correct grammar, pronunciation, etc. as needed to ensure that you can be understood by others.

A-85 - Ability to communicate orally by expressing yourself well such as speaking clearly and articulating information.

A-86 - Ability to adapt your communication style to different individuals/groups such as subordinates and superiors, citizens, government officials, contractors, and personnel in other agencies and bureaus as needed to ensure that you are being understood.

A-88 - Ability to respond to questions from people such as employees, the media, and citizens as needed to provide needed information and explain the department's position/guidelines.

A-90 - Ability to respond to questions about policies and guidelines even when the policies and guidelines may not be clear as needed to provide employees, citizens, and others with proper information.

A-91 - Ability to communicate in writing using proper grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure in order to provide information that can be understood.

A-92 - Ability to write clearly and concisely to ensure that the intended audience receives the intended information.

A-93 - Ability to compose written correspondence such as memoranda and letters as needed to provide information to other divisions/bureaus, government officials, citizens, and others.

A-94 - Ability to write legibly as needed to provide instruction to others.

A-96 - Ability to communicate technical and legal information orally and in writing at the appropriate level as needed to ensure that subordinates, citizens and others understand what is communicated.

A-98 - Ability to actively listen to others such as superiors, subordinates, government officials, and citizens to include acknowledging comprehension, rephrasing information, and using appropriate body language as needed to communicate with others.

A-100 - Ability to elicit/extract needed information as needed to determine the subject that the individual is concerned with and phrase the conversation in understandable terms.

A-108 - Ability to deliver sensitive and/or difficult information in a tactful manner.

A-110 - Ability to review a conflict situation without bias or prejudice as needed to hear both sides of the issue and render a reasonable judgment/decision.

During the job analysis, these 24 abilities were shown to be important and necessary upon entry into a majority of the TA jobs.

Exercise Three: Interview Question Review Exercise

During this task, you will review a list of potential employment interview questions/comments. You will be asked to identify the ones that should be asked, could possibly be asked, or should never be asked during an employment interview.

The Interview Question Exercise was specifically written to measure the following targeted knowledges and abilities:

A-83 - Ability to conduct interviews as needed to hire qualified personnel and evaluate prospective consultants.

K-90 - Knowledge of Federal and State personnel laws and related court orders such as Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, ADA, Davis-Bacon act, DBE, FMLA, and FLSA as needed to locate and interpret information, apply information to specific situations, and to comply with federal guidelines.

During the job analysis, the above knowledge and ability were shown to be important and necessary upon entry into a majority of the TA jobs.

Exercise Four: Employee Performance Situations Exercise

During this exercise, you will be asked to read three employee performance scenarios and deliver an oral response explaining how you would handle the situations presented in the scenarios. You will be given a preparation period in which you will read the scenarios and make notes for reference during your oral responses.

At a set time, your room monitor will enter the room, read each scenario aloud, and ask you to begin your oral response. You will respond to these three situations by speaking into audio recorders. You will have ten (10) minutes to give your oral response to each of the scenarios. During the oral response, you may use the scenario or any notes you took during your preparation period.

The Employee Performance Situations Exercise was specifically written to measure the following targeted knowledge and abilities:

A-69 - Ability to recognize strategies for dealing with different types of individuals as needed to maintain or increase employee morale, maximize the output of employees, and garner support for various activities.

A-80 - Ability to determine corrective actions and training experiences needed by a subordinate as needed to improve their work performance.

A-101 - Ability to remain impartial and flexible in conflicting and tense situations as needed to solve problems and give direction in crises.

A-109 - Ability to mediate disputes such as between employees, between contractor/consultant personnel, and property owners as needed to come to a workable solution and obtain an acceptable outcome for the parties involved.

K-92 - Knowledge of positive discipline/performance appraisal procedures as needed to accurately evaluate subordinates performance, to provide feedback to improve subordinates performance, ensure compliance, and provide required documentation.

During the job analysis, this knowledge and these abilities were shown to be important and necessary upon entry into a majority of the TA jobs.

Exercise Five: Job Application Review Exercise

This exercise will require you to review four clerical job applications and rank the four applicants from most qualified to least qualified. You will also be asked to give your rationale as to why you ranked each person as you did.

The Job Application Review Exercise was specifically written to measure the following targeted knowledge and ability:

A-37 - Ability to make decisions/recommendations and defend one's position as needed to obtain resources for division/bureau, ensure safety requirements are met, and ensure specifications are followed.

K-91 - Knowledge of State Personnel Department rules and procedures such as hiring, termination, compensatory time, leave procedures, and employee work rules as found in the Rules of the State Personnel Board and the Merit System Law as needed to complete forms, advise employees, and ensure division/bureau employees abide by these rules and procedures.

During the job analysis, the above knowledge and ability were shown to be important and necessary upon entry into a majority of the TA jobs.

Exercise Six: Long Term Planning Exercise

The Long Term Planning Exercise will require you to analyze the way an organization is functioning and recommend changes which will improve and enhance its operations. You will be asked to write to the head of this organization and detail your recommendations as well as your rationale for each recommendation. To do this, you will be provided with a list of tasks which represent a typical day, a budget allowance, as well as a table of financial data. You will use this data to make recommendations which you feel would best enhance the operation of this organization.

The Long Term Planning Exercise was specifically written to measure these targeted knowledges and abilities:

A-14 - Ability to perform basic mathematics functions such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, and calculation of percentages as needed to compute quantities, analyze budget requirements, compute overhead budgets and analyze personnel needs.

A-19 - Ability to interpret numerical and statistical information such as percentages, ratios, and standard deviations as needed to review subordinate's work and use historic data to make design predictions.

A-33 - Ability to use a calculator as needed to perform basic mathematical functions.

A-40 - Ability to interpret directions received from others as needed to determine appropriate actions to take.

A-61 - Ability to assess a current situation and projected changes as needed to determine future staffing or project needs, to ensure that projects are completed in a timely manner, and to ensure that other commitments are met.

A-65 - Ability to develop and implement contingency plans for performing work as needed to address work issues during serious incidents and natural disasters.

A-111 - Ability to estimate project costs and resources as needed to prepare or review a project budget.

K-63 - Knowledge of basic mathematics such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, percentages, and fractions as needed to compute quantities, convert metric and standard units, monitor expenditures, and verify the accuracy of information contained on plans.

K-87 - Knowledge of planning techniques for both long and short term planning of the division/bureau functions such as forecasting resource needs and assessing project requirements as needed to assess workloads, anticipate problems, and accommodate resource needs.

During the job analysis, these knowledges and abilities were shown to be important and necessary upon entry into a majority of the TA jobs.

VIII. EXAMINATION TIMING

On your test day, you will be at the test center for approximately six and a half hours. Of this time, 30 minutes will be a mandatory lunch break and you will also receive two breaks of approximately 10 minutes each. The remainder of the time you will be participating in the six examination exercises.

During your test time, you will have considerable freedom in determining what to work on and how long you spend working on each exercise. However, there will be times when you must stop what you are doing and participate in certain exercises. These are as follows: 1) Exactly one hour after the exam begins, the monitor will enter your room and collect your completed Scheduling Exercise; 2) Exactly two hours after the exam begins the role player will enter your room and you must conduct the role play; 3) Exactly four hours after the exam begins, the room monitor will enter your room and you must participate in the Employee Performance Situations Exercise.

Obviously, you must prepare for these three exercises before the times listed so that you will be prepared for them. The remainder of the test time can be spent as you see fit in the completion of the remainder of the exercises. Five hours and thirty minutes after the exam begins, the test monitor will enter your test room and stop the examination. At that time, you must stop working even if you have not finished completely. If you finish completely before the five and a half hours, you may notify the monitor and leave. However, you cannot leave earlier than four hours as that is the time of the Employee Performance Situations Exercise.

IX. HOW TO STUDY FOR THE TA EXAMINATION

You should study whatever material you believe will assist you in gaining or improving the KSAs listed in each section. You should practice speaking one-on-one and practice writing letters and memorandums. Have someone critique you as you speak or write. You may also wish to review material concerning employment interviewing and general supervision techniques.

Some specific ways to study for the exam are given below:

- Set aside certain times when you will be able to study/practice.
- When you do study, keep your mind on what you are doing. Do not try to read where it is noisy or when you are doing something else like watching a child or the television.
- The more you practice the better off you will be. Practicing all at once right before the exam does not work well. You should space your practice over the time you have until you take the exam.

We have presented these study guidelines to help you prepare to take the TA Qualifying Examination. The more you prepare by reading, studying, and practicing, the better you should do.

X. WHAT TO BRING TO THE TA EXAMINATION

Allow plenty of time to get to the examination site. Plan to get there at least 15 minutes before the exam is scheduled to begin.

Bring your PICTURE IDENTIFICATION and CONFIRMATION POSTCARD when you come to take the exam. No photocopied IDs will be accepted. Examples of accepted picture IDs are a valid driver's license, a military identification card, or a student identification card.

Bring your lunch, snacks, and drinks. You will be at the test building for approximately six and a half hours and will not be allowed to leave the building. There are no vending machines in the test facility so you will need to bring your own food.

Bring a wristwatch or small clock if you want to keep track of time. Please turn off any alarm before you get to the testing facility.

Do not bring your own calculator. Calculators will be provided at the testing facility.

You will be provided with pencils so you do not need to bring pencils or pens with you.

Do not bring any personal notes or study material that you used to prepare for the exam.

Do not bring cell phones, two-way radios, or any other noise producing devices with you to the examination. You will not be allowed to use them.

Do not bring children or any other visitors to the exam. They will not be admitted to the test site.

XI. ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

Administration Contact

The contact for the TA examination administration is Bill Summerlin at (334) 242-3389.

Reasonable Accommodation

If you would like to request special testing accommodations or have any questions concerning the examination site or examination 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. Exam administrators are not allowed to divulge specific information about the content of the exam.

Test Results

It is not necessary for you to contact us in order to receive your grade; you should receive notification of your score on the exam by postcard when it is available.

Once the register is established, you may obtain your standing on the register online at www.personnel.alabama.gov. From the homepage, you should click on “Applicants” and then “Register Standings”, and follow the instructions. For security purposes, you must create an online profile in order to access your standings.

Reminders

It is the applicant’s responsibility to ensure their application arrives at State Personnel. Tests are given periodically throughout the year and there are internal deadlines for the receipt of applications for each test. If you would like to know the deadline for a particular test, please call State Personnel. State Personnel does not report or provide these internal deadlines in any information sent out to departments so you should 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 believe you meet the stated minimum qualifications.

You will not need OR be allowed to bring anything to the exam other than the items previously mentioned.

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.

THIS CONCLUDES THE INSTRUCTIONS AND NOTES ON “HOW TO PREPARE” AND TAKE THE TRANSPORTATION ADMINISTRATOR EXAMINATION.