

# **DISABILITY SPECIALIST, TRAINEE - 50401**



## **HOW TO PREPARE GUIDE**

State of Alabama Personnel Department  
P. O. Box 304100  
64 North Union Street  
Montgomery, AL 36130-4100

Phone: (334) 242-3389  
Fax: (334) 242-1110

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## I. INTRODUCTION

A written examination is being given in order to establish a register for the classification of Disability Specialist, Trainee. The purpose of this guide is to help you prepare for the written exam. Since all the material you will need to take the exam will be provided at the test administration, you will not be allowed to bring this booklet to the exam with you.

## II. THE JOB

Disability Specialist, Trainee positions are with the Department of Education, Disability Determination Service, and they are located in Birmingham and Mobile. Employees are responsible for determining an individual's eligibility for disability benefits under the Social Security Act. Work involves analyzing initial, reconsideration, and childhood disability claims; evaluating claim documentation for sufficiency, consistency, and validity of medical and other evidence; authorizing appropriate diagnostic studies and tests; consulting with supervisors, medical, psychological, and vocational specialists to resolve issues with claims; preparing reports of findings and determination documents; and re-evaluating claims by reviewing existing documents, gathering additional evidence, and making disability determinations.

## III. THE EXAMINATION

The examination for this classification is a written, multiple-choice exam. The exam is designed to measure specific knowledges and abilities. The test is divided into five sections with each section measuring a different knowledge or ability. Applicants are presented with a test question and four possible responses to that question. Applicants then select the BEST possible response to the question.

The knowledges and abilities that will be measured by the exam are knowledge of English, ability to plan/organize, ability to communicate in writing, math, and reading comprehension. You will have 3 hours to respond to the items.

## IV. HOW THE WRITTEN EXAMINATION WAS DEVELOPED

A study of the Disability Specialist, Trainee classification was conducted before developing the examination. Employees who work in this position and their supervisors participated in this study to determine what job duties are performed by Disability Specialist, Trainees and what knowledges and abilities a Disability Specialist, Trainee must possess in order to perform the job duties of the position.

The study showed that the following knowledges and abilities are associated with the job duties of the position. A Disability Specialist, Trainee must possess the knowledges and abilities listed below their first day of work before training:

- ✓ Knowledge of computer operating systems, software programs, and databases such as Microsoft applications and DOT database to include basic functions, capabilities, and limitations as needed to adjudicate disability claims, compose correspondence, complete reports, and exchange information.
- ✓ **Knowledge of English to include grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, sentence structure, and form as needed to compose letters and memoranda, proofread information for accuracy, and complete forms.**
- ✓ Ability to operate office equipment such as copier, telephone, calculator, computer, and fax machine to include purpose, capabilities, preventive maintenance, and limitations as needed to document and access information, maximize work time, transmit information, and store and analyze information.

- ✓ **Ability to plan/organize to include prioritizing work tasks and managing case loads as needed to perform work in a timely and accurate manner.**
- ✓ **Ability to communicate in writing to include clarity, conciseness, appropriate wording, and acceptable grammar as needed to compose Social Security decision documents, letters, and contact reports.**
- ✓ Ability to communicate orally with persons such as claimants, physicians, medical consultants, teachers, counselors, social workers, office personnel, and legal representatives to include adjusting communication level as needed to gather pertinent information regarding disability issues in a timely and professional manner.
- ✓ **Ability to perform basic math to include addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, and percentages as needed to convert measurements, complete leave and overtime forms, and determine substantial gainful activity.**
- ✓ Ability to take criticism for decisions as needed to respond to claimants, legal representatives, and supervisors on disability issues.
- ✓ Ability to work independently to include being self-motivated and organized as needed to perform work in a timely and accurate manner.
- ✓ **Ability to read and comprehend narrative information such as medical reports, manuals, claimant forms, POMS, and Listing of Impairments book to include interpreting and analyzing information as needed to determine eligibility for disability benefits and exchange information.**
- ✓ Ability to identify and make appropriate decisions to include analyzing information provided and consulting with appropriate persons such as doctors and consultants as needed to determine eligibility for disability benefits in a timely and efficient manner.
- ✓ Ability to be flexible to include adapting to work changes as needed to complete work in a timely and accurate manner.
- ✓ Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with individuals and groups such as co-workers, outside agencies, and the general public as needed to adjudicate disability claims, exchange information, and achieve departmental goals.
- ✓ Ability to use discretion and good judgment to include knowing what information is classified or confidential and who is allowed access to classified or confidential information as needed to protect department/agency and employees and maintain confidentiality of records, reports, and files.

The examination for Disability Specialist, Trainee will measure the five knowledges and abilities that appear in **bold print** on the preceding pages. The remaining abilities and knowledges cannot be measured by a written test and must be demonstrated during the probationary period if you are hired as a Disability Specialist, Trainee.

## V. WHAT TO DO BEFORE YOU COME TO TAKE THE EXAMINATION

Here are some suggestions for what to do before the examination and for getting to the exam location on the correct day, on time, and with the proper materials that you will need to take the examination.

- ✓ **Get there early.** Give yourself plenty of extra time to get to the test center and to park. If you are rushed and late, you will be upset when you get there. Plan to get there before the scheduled exam time.
- ✓ **Do not bring this booklet or any study materials with you to the exam location.** This includes notes and any manuals and source documents that you may have used to prepare for the examination. All test materials needed for the examination will be provided.
- ✓ **You must bring the test-scheduling card** that you received from the State of Alabama Personnel Department. This card lists the examination title, location of exam, and date, day, and time of examination.
- ✓ **You must bring two sharpened #2 lead pencils.** You may also want to bring a highlighter.
- ✓ **You must also bring picture identification to the exam location.** This may be your driver's license, a military identification card, or a passport.
- ✓ You may bring a calculator to use for the examination. Small solar-powered or battery-operated calculators that perform basic functions such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, square roots, or percentages are allowed. Calculators that plug-in, utilize 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.

## TEST TAKING TIPS

- ✓ **Listen** to the test monitors and follow their instructions carefully.
- ✓ If you are not sure of an answer, **go with your first choice.**
- ✓ Work through the test **without spending too much time on any one item.**
- ✓ If you cannot decide on the best answer to a question, **skip it and go back to it later.**
- ✓ Use your watch or the clock in the room to **keep track of your time** during the test.
- ✓ It is to your advantage to **answer as many questions as possible**, even if you must guess.
- ✓ **Mark your answers on the answer sheet and NOT in the test booklet.** Only answers clearly marked on the answer sheet can be given credit.
- ✓ If at **any time before or during the exam**, you have a question, **ask the monitor for assistance.**

## VI. HOW TO PREPARE USING THIS GUIDE

This How to Prepare Guide can be used as a practice guide. The questions contained in the guide are a representation of questions that will be on the actual examination. Familiarize yourself with the sample questions that begin on page 10. You would be well-advised to read the instructions and answer each question carefully. Like the examination questions (all of which are multiple-choice), the sample items are presented in the following categories:

Section I. Knowledge of English

Section II. Planning/Organizing

Section III. Ability to communicate in writing

Section IV. Mathematics

Section V. Reading Comprehension

The sample items which follow are representative of each type of item that will appear on the exam. They are not necessarily based on the same information as the actual exam. All questions will be multiple-choice.

In addition, please review the [General Instructions to Candidates Taking Written Examinations](#) provided at the exam site on the day of the test.

## VII. BANDED SCORING

When the written exam for Disability Specialist, Trainee is graded, the scores will be grouped into bands. When you receive notification of how you performed on the exam, you will not be given a numerical score (i.e., 67 out of 80, 93 out of 100). Rather, you will be informed into which band (i.e., 1, 3, 6, 10) your score fell. The following information is provided to help you understand the banding procedure.

### **What is banding?**

Banding is one way to reduce the impact of fluctuations in test scores that do not provide meaningful information about differences in the ability to perform the job. One important purpose of testing is to identify the differences in test scores that reflect real differences among candidates. Banded scoring is a statistical procedure for grouping raw test scores that statistically are not meaningfully different from one another. In banded scoring, bands are set objectively and statistically. They are not manipulated arbitrarily.

### **Misconceptions about banding.**

There are many misconceptions about banding and the use of banded scores. Some of the most common misconceptions are listed below. Each misconception is followed by a clarification.

#### ***Misconception: Each band should have the same number of people.***

We do not force bands to be a certain size. The people in a band are similar to each other in that statistically there is no meaningful difference in their scores. Sometimes Band 1 may be very large, and at other times it

may be small. People's scores determine the size of the bands. We never know how many people will be in each band until we receive the test scores.

**Misconception: *Band numbers have no meaning. I don't have a score.***

Band numbers do have meaning. Think of a band as a group of tied scores. Consider that in school two students with average grades of 94.5 and 94.3 would both be grouped into the same band. Just because one student made a 94.5 and one student made a 94.3, the teacher cannot be sure that 0.2 of a point means that the student who scored 94.5 is smarter or is a better student. The scores are so close to each other that they are basically the same.

For example, think of the achievement tests that children take in school. The fine print on these tests always informs you not to focus on the numerical score but rather on the comparative score, which uses some type of grouping technique such as percentiles, standard deviations, grade levels, etc. These grouping techniques are considered forms of banding. Banding compares your performance on the test to the other test takers' performance and groups your score with others that are statistically the same.

**Misconception: *Band numbers are the same as letter grades.***

Band numbers are not the same as letter grades. Band 1 does not equate to an "A," Band 2 to a "B," and so on. In school, a predetermined numerical range of scores (i.e., 90-100, 80-90, 70-80) equals an alphabetical value (i.e., A, B, C). This grading system is a form of banding. In this case, unlike grade school, the width of bands is not set in advance. Scores are banded only in relation to one another, so you compete against other test takers. The scores of all test takers determine the width of the bands, and your score is set in relation to the scores of your peers.

**Misconception: *A banded score on one test has the same value as a banded score on another test.***

Banded scores are test-specific and cannot be compared from test to test. Consider that a test taker scored 88 on one test, and the highest score of all test takers was 89. It is likely for this exam that the test taker who scored 88 would be in Band 1. However, if the same person scored the same grade on another test, and the highest score of all test takers was 100, the person may be in Band 2 or Band 3. Candidates' scores vary on each test, and since candidate scores determine the width of bands and into which band test takers fall, the value of a banded score varies from test to test.

**Misconception: *People with the most seniority who have been on the job longest should be in the top bands.***

People with the most experience do not always fall into the top bands. Time spent in a job may not be the same as possessing a knowledge, skill, or ability needed to perform the job. The people with the strongest knowledges, skills, and abilities (or who did best on the exam) will be in the top bands. Some of the people in the top bands will have been in similar jobs for a long period of time, and others will have been in similar jobs for a short period of time. Years of service do not always equal proficiency. Candidates with seniority or experience do not automatically perform best on the test. Regardless of seniority, candidates who display the appropriate knowledges, skills, and abilities perform best on the test.

**Misconception: *A standing in Band 4 or below automatically indicates failure or ineligibility for jobs.***

A band number of 4 or lower is not automatically equated with failure. For one test, there may only be 4 bands, and for another test, there may be 14 bands. So, your success on the test based on your position in a band varies from test to test. Your standing in a band does not indicate whether or not you pass or fail the test. The

true test of success in your employment opportunities is whether or not you can be certified and considered for a job vacancy.

***Misconception: Banding replaced the "Rule of 10."***

Banding did not replace the "Rule of 10." The "Rule of 10" determines the number of bands to be certified. In the past, tied scores referred to an actual numerical score (e.g., two candidates with a score of 98.98 were considered tied) while now all of the scores within a band are considered tied.

***Misconception: People in a band do not differ.***

When several people are placed in the same band, it does not mean that those people do not differ at all. Instead, it means that their scores on the exam do not differ enough to be separate scores.

## **VIII. GENERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT THE DISABILITY SPECIALIST, TRAINEE JOB**

### **Are there any vacancies for the Disability Specialist, Trainee?**

You may contact the personnel office of the Department of Education to receive information on current or future vacancies.

### **How are vacancies filled for the Disability Specialist, Trainee?**

The top ten applicants on the register are sent to the Department of Education for consideration. Since the banded scoring process is used, all of the scores within a band are considered tied. Therefore, all names within a band are certified out to the agency, which may include more than 10 names. The names of people not selected stay on the register to be considered for future jobs. Persons are usually hired at the minimum of the pay range.

### **How long will I remain eligible for appointment?**

If you pass the examination, your name will remain on the employment register for two years. You will be notified by mail when to reapply.

If you have any questions about the exam or how to prepare for it, you should contact the State Personnel Department at (334) 242-3389. Exam administrators are not allowed to provide specific information about the content of the exam.

### **Test Results**

Four to six weeks after completing the exam, you will receive a Notice of Examination Results postcard in the mail. This postcard will identify your score, or Band placement, for the written exam. If you have not received your score within four to six weeks, you should call the State Personnel Department.

In addition to your Band placement, 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.

### **Rescheduling a Written Examination**

If there is a conflict in your schedule, and you are unable to attend the written exam at the time and date for which you have been scheduled, you must resubmit your Application for Examination. The State Personnel Department will schedule you for the next available administration of this written exam.

### **Reasonable Accommodation**

If you would like to request special testing accommodations or have any questions concerning the test site or testing conditions, please contact the State Personnel Department at (334) 242-3389.

### **Administrative Questions**

You may contact us if you have any other administrative questions or concerns about the exam or questions about any of the information presented in this booklet.

## IX. SAMPLE TEST QUESTIONS

### Section I. Knowledge of English



In the sentences below, an asterisk (\*) replaces a punctuation mark. On your answer sheet, mark the response that indicates the missing punctuation mark.

1. I do not know the answer to your question (\*)
  - A. semicolon (;)
  - B. period (.)
  - C. hyphen (-)
  - D. comma (,)
  
2. She said Mary's file cannot be completed today (\*) therefore, Mary asked for an extension.
  - A. period (.)
  - B. colon (:)
  - C. semicolon (;)
  - D. comma (,)
  
3. A copy of Mr. Harrison (\*) s file should be mailed to the Central Office.
  - A. quotation mark (")
  - B. comma (,)
  - C. apostrophe (')
  - D. hyphen (-)

## Section II. Planning/Organizing



Read the situation and answer the following question based on the information provided.

Your supervisor will be out of the office today. You arrived at work at 7:55 am. You have an appointment today at 11:00 am with your family doctor who has advised you that the appointment should not be rescheduled. You need to leave by 10:30 am and will not return to the office later today. Sue Beck, a clerical aide and office receptionist, is the only other employee in the office today. However, she does not type. Your supervisor left a note listing the following tasks that must be completed today:

1. Type the Zicker report (2 hours to complete).
  2. Sort and distribute the mail (30 minutes to complete).
  3. Call Virginia Hall about the Zicker report (10 minutes to complete).
  4. Post the new dividend rates by 12 noon today (20 minutes to complete).
  5. Set up the conference room for the next day's 8:00 am meeting (20 minutes to complete).
  6. File dividend reports (2 hours to complete).
- 
1. Which of the following tasks would you be forced to perform yourself?
    - A. File dividend reports
    - B. Set up the conference room
    - C. Type the Zicker report
    - D. Sort and distribute the day's mail

### Section III. Ability to communicate in writing



**Determine which of the following options best describes the grammatical error in the sentences below.**

1. You was sitting down there when I lay the radio down.
- A. The subject and the verb do not agree.
  - B. The sentence is confusing due to a misplaced modifying word or phrase.
  - C. The sentence mixes present and past tense.
  - D. There is no error.



**You will be given four versions of the same sentence. Read each version of the sentence and select the one sentence in the group of four that best approximates standard English usage.**

- 2.
- A. Last week, Michael walks every day for an hour.
  - B. Last week, Michael walked every day for an hour.
  - C. Last week, Michael is walking every day for an hour.
  - D. Last week, Michael walk every day for an hour.



**The sentences in the following paragraph may or may not be in the proper order. Choose the answer that lists the sentences in the most logical order.**

- 3.
- 1) I have a son named John.
  - 2) He will start tomorrow.
  - 3) That means he is old enough to start school.
  - 4) He is five years old.
- A. 1-2-3-4
  - B. 2-4-3-1
  - C. 1-4-3-2
  - D. 4-3-2-1

#### Section IV. Math

Calculate the following:

1. 90% of 82 is what number?
  - A. 80.7
  - B. 73.8
  - C. 75.4
  - D. 88.3
  
2. Thirty-seven percent of \$82,600 is equal to \_\_\_\_\_.
  - A. \$27,560
  - B. \$28,075
  - C. \$29,550
  - D. \$30,562
  
3. 200 applicants have applied for disability benefits. 112 of these applicants are female, and the rest are male. 37 female applicants and 28 male applicants qualify for disability benefits. What percentage of female applicants qualified for disability benefits?
  - A. 14%
  - B. 18%
  - C. 25%
  - D. 33%

## Section V. Reading Comprehension



You are given a short paragraph. Read the paragraph and then select from the four options the statement that best summarizes the main idea of the paragraph.

To produce effective business letters, a correspondent should always formulate in his or her mind, or on paper, a simple but definite plan of what to say and how to say it.

1. According to the passage, which statement is true?
  - A. Some preparation for writing a letter is necessary.
  - B. There should be no direct dictation.
  - C. More attention should be given to the proper form than to content.
  - D. The writer should first outline his letter on paper in longhand.

Each child's file must include sufficiently detailed reports on history, physical examinations, laboratory studies, and prescribed therapy in order to allow an independent reviewer to assess the severity and duration of the impairment. Data should be obtained preferably from an office or center experienced in pediatric assessment.

2. According to the passage, which of the following is NOT included in the child's file?
  - A. Physical examination
  - B. Medication information
  - C. Prescribed therapy
  - D. Laboratory studies

## Answers to Sample Questions

### Section I. Knowledge of English

1. B
2. C
3. C

### Section II. Planning/Organizing

1. C

### Section III. Ability to communicate in writing

1. A
2. B
3. C

### Section IV. Mathematics

1. B
2. D
3. D

### Section V. Reading Comprehension

1. A
2. B