SoCalGas

A Sempra Energy utility®

**A guide to taking the Yellow Battery
Tests for the Clerical, Meter Reading, and Customer Contact job
families**

Test Preparation Kit

Strategies • Samples • Further Resources

- Following Written Directions
  - Language Skills
  - Computation
  - Coding

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WELCOME!

Congratulations! You are taking the first step to ensure your success on the tests and ultimately in your career at Sempra Energy utilities. The tests used at the Southern California Gas Company are designed to give you the opportunity to make the best use of your skills. This booklet will give you information about the procedures used to select employees who are qualified and likely to be successful in the job. These procedures include a series of tests which indicate how successful you are likely to be in the job for which you will apply.

This booklet gives you some tips for preparing for the tests, as well as suggestions on how to do your best. It also includes sample items so that you can practice for the actual tests. **GOOD LUCK!**

HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

This manual is divided into four sections aimed at helping you become more successful on your tests.

- General test taking strategies applicable to all tests
- A brief discussion of each test
- Sample questions
- A list of resources that will provide sample tests and study materials

If you are a *first time* test taker, take time to read through this entire manual and familiarize yourself with the tests you will be taking. Also provided are book recommendations to assist you in studying for your exams.

If you are *retaking* a test, pay attention to the general test taking strategies, work through the sample problems, identify your weaknesses, and obtain one of the practice test guides described at the back of this manual. If you feel you need to "brush-up" on a subject there are books to help you do that as well.

About Aptitude Tests

Sempra Energy utilities uses aptitude tests for people applying to certain jobs. Rather than tests that try to recreate the job, these tests measure basic aptitudes or abilities that are related to success in the job in question. Examples of aptitudes include reading comprehension, computation, visual speed and accuracy, coding ability, and understanding of basic mechanical principles.

Consider the example of someone applying for a job in the Accounting department. He or she would be tested on the ability to do math instead of the ability to create a specific report. This approach is more efficient, more resistant to changes in the job, easier to manage, and, best of all, research has shown that ability in these basic aptitudes predict success in the job.

General Test Taking Strategies

The following discussion includes tips for taking a wide variety of tests and should be practiced alongside the tips provided for each individual test (provided in the following section).

Before the Test
- Pace yourself**.** If you choose to prepare for your test, review the material (books, practice problems, or study guide) in several relatively short periods rather than a few long periods. Studying in several 30-60 minute sessions allows you to absorb the material more easily than if you were to cram large quantities of information at once.

During the Test
- Read each question carefully. After reading each question, make sure you understand it clearly.

- Complete the easiest questions or sections first. Begin the test by identifying the areas in which you are strongest, remembering to mark the questions you skip. Don't spend too much time on any one question – since any question is worth the same in scoring, it is always to your advantage to complete as many questions as you can!

- If you find yourself in a situation where you do not understand the nature of the question or simply don't know the answer, mark it and return to it later. Spending valuable time on a test item that you cannot answer simply gives you less time to complete other items you may know. Marking your answer sheet when you skip an item can help you keep track of where you are on the test.

- Be aware of being tempted to pick wrong answers**.** There are answers that test developers have created based upon simple common errors such as replacing the word "their" with "there." Take your time to work through the problem if it involves numbers and to read actively if the question involves grammar and spelling situations.

- Do not make RANDOM guesses, but narrow down for the correct response. If you are given four choices and randomly guess, you only have a 25% chance of guessing the right answer—or a 75% chance of guessing the WRONG answer. Further, if you can eliminate just one wrong answer you have boosted your chances to 33%. Obviously, if you can eliminate two wrong answers your chances have gone up to 50%. When all else fails and you must make guesses:
    - Be aware of key words: "always," "never," "all," or "none." Consider these options carefully.
    - Trust your "gut": Usually your first reaction is right.

- Leave time for review. If you complete the test before the time is up, review your answers! Don't look for patterns in the responses – the tests have been professionally developed and don't necessarily have the same number of "A," "B," or "C" answers. If you find that you have answered mostly "A," for example, trust your instincts and don't assume that it must be wrong. You can also use any extra time to make certain your answers are entered darkly and clearly. Be sure all your answer changes are erased completely and there are no stray marks on the answer sheet.

Strategies for Questions

True/False Questions

- Words such as "always," "never," "all," and "none" are often, but not always, signals that a statement is false
- If any part of the statement is false, the entire statement is false.

Multiple Choice Questions

- Read the entire question and try to answer it *before* looking at your options.
- Even if you think you know the answer be sure to read through all of your options.
- If you are uncertain, begin by eliminating answers that are wrong, increasing your chances of being right.

When You Begin

- **Be positive!** The tests are not designed to trick you or be unnecessarily difficult. In fact, if you've taken other tests in school or at work, you'll probably find these very familiar. Start with a positive attitude and don't give up. Try to remember the hints that are outlined in this booklet and don't get discouraged if there are questions for which you don't know the answer. Remember, each question counts the same as any other question. If you can't answer one, don't let that discourage you for the next items. Begin each section/test with the same positive attitude. No one is expected to get every answer right!

- Read the directions and listen carefully to all test instructions! Sometimes we assume we know what type of question we are answering, but many times test takers get answers wrong because they did not read the directions. An example of this would be the difference between mark all that apply, answer only one, and mark the one that does not belong.

- **Relax.** Feeling high amounts of stress or tension will cause you to forget what you know or think irrationally. Ways to reduce feelings of stress include preparing in advance, not talking with others who are stressed about the test immediately beforehand, making sure you understand the directions, and reviewing this guide.

Samples for Tests in the Yellow Battery

Sample 1: Following Written Directions

This test is designed to measure the ability to read and follow a set of rules. You will be given 5 minutes to answer as many questions as possible up to 24 items. This is a speeded test. The test taker will read a set of rules and then determine what action to take in various situations by applying the rules. The test taker will then select the correct answer from three or four choices.

Below are examples of questions from the Following Written Directions test.

Directions: Read the passage below and fill in the correct response based upon the given set of rules and instructions.

Rules for Buying Discount Employee Tickets
Employees may purchase tickets to sporting events for a discounted price through a company sponsored plan. Employees may purchase tickets by email, telephone, or in person. Listed below are the rules for deciding how employees can buy tickets.

• All employees in marketing and sales must purchase tickets in person regardless of time of purchase.
• Any tickets purchased more than 3 weeks before the event should be done by email.
• Any tickets purchased on the day of the event needs to be done in person.
• All other tickets should be purchased by phone.

Follow the directions listed on the previous page to answer these problems.

	Email	Phone	Person
1. Director, Marketing, purchasing on the day of the event	☐	☐	☐
2. Service technician, Customer Service Field, 1 week before event	☐	☐	☐
3. Typist, Human Resources, 1 month before event	☐	☐	☐
4. Salesperson, Sales, 2 weeks before the event	☐	☐	☐
5. Dispatcher, Fleet Services, day of the event	☐	☐	☐
6. Customer Service Representative, Marketing, 4 days before event	☐	☐	☐
7. Manager, Accounting, 7 weeks before event	☐	☐	☐
8. Account Manager, Payroll, 12 days before event	☐	☐	☐
9. Account Executive, Sales, 3 weeks before event	☐	☐	☐
10. Laborer, Distributions, 28 days before the event	☐	☐	☐

Sample 2: Language Skills

This test is designed to measure the ability to recognize correct spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, and usage. You will be given 5 minutes to complete as many as 25 items. This is a speeded test. The test taker will read a sentence, part of which is underlined, and then determine whether the underlined section contains errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, or usage. The test taker then selects from three possible changes or else indicates that no change is needed.

Below are examples of questions from the Language Skills test.

Directions: Read each item and mark the correct answer.

1. **Mr. Ashworth is the <u>principle</u> at Pershing Elementary.**

A. principul   *B. principol*
C. principal   *D. No change*

2. **<u>Hopefully,</u> the storm will pass quickly.**

A. No change   *B. Hopfully,*
C. Hopefully (no comma)   *D. Hopefuly,*

3. **Each employee must bring <u>their</u> own food to the picnic.**

A. there   *B. No change*
C. thear   *D. his or her*

Sample 3: Computation

This test is designed to measure the ability to solve arithmetic problems involving operations with whole numbers, decimals, percents, and simple fractions. The test taker will read an arithmetic expression and select the correct answer from four choices or indicate that the correct answer is not listed. You will be given 5 minutes to solve as many problems as possible. This is a speeded test.

Below are examples of questions from the Computation test.

Directions: Solve the problems below and bubble in the correct answer.

Division

1.   1,600 ÷ 40 =

    ○ *400*   ○ *40*   ○ *4*   ○ *14*   ○ *Answer not listed*

2.   **345 ÷ 10 =**

    ○ *34.5*   ○ *3.45*   ○ *13.45*   ○ *9.6*   ○ *Answer not listed*

3.   **3.5 ÷ 2 =**

    ○ *1.25*   ○ *2.25*   ○ *.75*   ○ *1.5*   ○ *Answer not listed*

Multiplication

4.   **25 × 3 =**

    ○ *100*   ○ *75*   ○ *65*   ○ *50*   ○ *Answer not listed*

5.   **7 × 14 =**

    ○ *108*   ○ *88*   ○ *78*   ○ *68*   ○ *Answer not listed*

6.   **35 × 9 =**

    ○ *350*   ○ *351*   ○ *125*   ○ *315*   ○ *Answer not listed*

Decimals

7. **2.1 + 1.2 =**

○ *3.3*   ○ *2.3*   ○ *3.2*   ○ *3.4*   ○ *Answer not listed*

8. **10.5 × 10.1 =**

○ *106.05*   ○ *105*   ○ *105.5*   ○ *116*   ○ *Answer not listed*

9. **30.2 – 20.3 =**

○ *10*   ○ *9.6*   ○ *10.1*   ○ *11.1*   ○ *Answer not listed*

Percentages

10. **15% of 100 =**

○ *15*   ○ *25*   ○ *10*   ○ *12.5*   ○ *Answer not listed*

11. **75% of 300 =**

○ *175*   ○ *225*   ○ *250*   ○ *245*   ○ *Answer not listed*

12. **5% of 600 =**

○ *80*   ○ *60*   ○ *50*   ○ *25*   ○ *Answer not listed*

Fractions

13. **½ + ¼ =**

○ *¾*   ○ *3*   ○ *⅛*   ○ *2*   ○ *Answer not listed*

14. **⅞ of 50 =**

○ *40*   ○ *43 ¾*   ○ *35 ½*   ○ *45*   ○ *Answer not listed*

15. **100 ÷ 3 ⅓ =**

○ *30*   ○ *35*   ○ *33*   ○ *25*   ○ *Answer not listed*

Subtraction

16. **1,350 – 785 =**

○ *695*   ○ *595*   ○ *565*   ○ *355*   ○ *Answer not listed*

17. **215 – 50 =**

○ *175*   ○ *185*   ○ *165*   ○ *155*   ○ *Answer not listed*

18. **97 – 31 =**

○ *66*   ○ *56*   ○ *76*   ○ *46*   ○ *Answer not listed*

Sample 4: Coding

This test is designed to measure the ability to code information according to a prescribed system. You will be given 5 minutes to answer as many as 72 problems. This is a speeded test. The test taker will read a table containing a list of items which are classified into three or four categories; each item has a unique code. The test taker then reads a new set of information and selects the correct code for each item in the set.

Below are examples of questions from the Coding test.

Directions: Look at the table of codes. The table lists codes for Department, Department Size, and Travel Budget. In problems #1 and #2 on the next page, please bubble in the codes that correspond to the information found in the table.

Department	Department Size	Travel Budget
31= Marketing	1= 1-9 employees	A= $500 - $999
25= Operations	2= 10-29 employees	B= $1,000 - $2,499
42= Accounting	3= 30-39 employees	C= $2,500 - $5,999
11= Research and Development	4= 40-59 employees	D= $6,000 - $7,999
28= Personnel	5= 60 or more employees	E= $ 8,000 - $10,000

1. Accounting department, department size of 10, travel budget of $3,000.

Department					Department Size					Travel Budget				
11	25	28	31	42	1	2	3	4	5	A	B	C	D	E
O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

2. Marketing department, department size of 35, travel budget of $9,000.

Department					Department Size					Travel Budget				
11	25	28	31	42	1	2	3	4	5	A	B	C	D	E
O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

Answers

1. Following Written Directions

1. Person
2. Phone
3. E-mail
4. Person
5. Person
6. Person
7. E-mail
8. Phone
9. Person
10. E-mail

2. Language Skills

1. C
2. A
3. D

3. Computation

1. 40
2. 34.5
3. Answer not listed
4. 75
5. Answer not listed
6. 315
7. 3.3
8. 106.05
9. Answer not listed
10. 15
11. 225
12. Answer not listed
13. ¾
14. 43 ¾
15. 30
16. 565
17. 165
18. 66

4. Coding

1. Department = 42
   Size = 2
   Travel Budget = C
2. Department = 31
   Size = 3
   Travel Budget = E

Further Resources

Note: Not all of the resources listed below will contain information that is relevant to the test that you are taking. It is suggested that you find the material in each resource relevant to your test.

Following Written Directions Further Resources

- Hoyt, L. (1998). Revisit, Reflect, Retell: Strategies for Improving Reading Comprehension. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Publishing.
- http://amby.com/tests/clerical/fol-dir_.html
- Try to engage in activities such as:
  - Following recipes or more complex cooking instructions.
  - Following instructions for assembly for furniture and/or computer equipment.
  - Visiting websites that have interactive activities and games with complex instructions.

Language Skills Further Resources

- Learning Express (Ed.) (2000). 1001 Vocabulary and Spelling Questions. Garden Grove, CA: Learning Express, LLC.
- http://www.transparent.com/learn-english/proficiency-test.html
- Try to engage in activities such as:
  - Reading and editing others' papers, emails, and documents.
  - Using flashcards to study commonly misspelled words.
  - Visiting websites or using software that have interactive activities related to spelling, grammar, punctuation, and word usage.

Computation Further Resources

- Graham, A. (2002). Teach Yourself Basic Mathematics. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Johnson, T. (2002). Teach Yourself Mathematics. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- http://admissions.ucc.edu/Media/Website%20Resources/documents/ALC/math/011/review/index011.htm

- Try to engage in activities such as:
  - Puzzles and games that involve math and computation skills (e.g. number games, flash cards, etc.)
  - Visiting websites and using software that has interactive activities related to arithmetic and math.

Coding Further Resources

- Reed (2010). Master the Clerical Exams. Peterson's.
- http://www.co.yuba.ca.us/departments/personnel/documents/Misc/Toolbox/Study%20Guides/Clerical%20Skills%20Study%20Guide%20November%202009.pdf
- Try to engage in activities such as:
  - Puzzles, games, and hobbies that involve speed and accuracy in classifying and coding information.
  - Visiting websites and utilizing software that has interactive activities related to speed and accuracy.