



# Test Preparation Kit

Strategies • Samples • Further Reading

- Following Written Directions
- Language Skills
- Computation
- Coding

A Guide to taking the Yellow Battery – tests for the Clerical, Meter Reading, and Customer Contact job families

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## Welcome!

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**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

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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

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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

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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

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- ¾ **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.

### When You Begin

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- ¾ **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!
- ¾ **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*.
- ¾ **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.

## During the Test

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- ¾ **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. Complete these sections first and then move to the more difficult areas. 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!
- ¾ **Mark questions you skip for easy relocation.** 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 on your answer sheet with your pencil and return to it later. Surprisingly, this is one of the most common mistakes made by test takers. Spending valuable time on a test item that you cannot answer simply gives you less time to complete other items you may know. It is far better to mark that item and continue forward, coming back to that item if time permits at the end. Marking your answer sheet when you skip an item can help you keep track of where you are on the test - some candidates have lost valuable time when they did not mark a skipped item and got off-track on the answer sheet.
- ¾ **Read each question carefully.** After reading each question, make sure you understand it clearly.
- ¾ **Do not make RANDOM guesses, but narrow down for the correct response.** Try to eliminate at least one wrong answer before guessing. 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.
- ¾ **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.
- ¾ **Leave time for review.** If you complete the test before the time is up, don't stop working - 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. Research has shown that many people who change answers during the review change right answers to wrong ones. Changes should be made only when you are certain the original answer is 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 Various Question Types

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### True - False

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

### Multiple Choice

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- 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.

# Discussion and Samples for Tests in the Yellow Battery

## 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 alternatives.

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

**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 above to answer these problems.

	Email	Phone	Person
1. Director, Marketing, purchasing on the day of the event	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Service technician, Customer Service Field, 1 week before event	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Typist, Human Resources, 1 month before event	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Salesperson, Sales, 2 weeks before the event	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Dispatcher, Fleet Services, day of the event	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Customer Service Representative, Marketing, 4 days before event	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Manager, Accounting, 7 weeks before event	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Account Manager, Payroll, 12 days before event	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Account Executive, Sales, 3 weeks before event	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Laborer, Distributions, 28 days before the event	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Manager, Law, 6 days before the event	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Graphic Designer, Marketing, 2 days before the event	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Language Skills

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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 items from the Language Skills test.

**Read each item and mark the correct answer.**

1. Mr. Ashworth is the principle at Pershing Elementary.
  - A. principul
  - B. principol
  - C. principal
  - D. No change
2. Hopefully, the storm will pass quickly.
  - A. No change
  - B. Hopfully,
  - C. Hopefully (no comma)
  - D. Hopefuly,
3. Each employee must bring their own food to the picnic.
  - A. there
  - B. No change
  - C. thear
  - D. his or her



## 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.

Solve the problems below and circle the correct answer. If the answer is not listed, circle "x."

### Division

- |    |                   |      |      |       |     |   |
|----|-------------------|------|------|-------|-----|---|
| 1. | $1,600 \div 40 =$ | 400  | 40   | 4     | 14  | X |
| 2. | $345 \div 10 =$   | 34.5 | 3.45 | 13.45 | 9.6 | X |
| 3. | $3.5 \div 2 =$    | 1.25 | 2.25 | .75   | 1.5 | X |

### Multiplication

- |    |               |     |     |     |     |   |
|----|---------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|---|
| 4. | $25 \times 3$ | 100 | 75  | 65  | 50  | X |
| 5. | $7 \times 14$ | 108 | 88  | 78  | 68  | X |
| 6. | $35 \times 9$ | 350 | 351 | 125 | 315 | X |

### Decimals

- |    |                    |        |     |       |      |   |
|----|--------------------|--------|-----|-------|------|---|
| 7. | $2.1 + 1.2$        | 3.3    | 2.3 | 3.2   | 3.4  | X |
| 8. | $10.5 \times 10.1$ | 106.05 | 105 | 105.5 | 116  | X |
| 9. | $30.2 - 20.3$      | 10     | 9.6 | 10.1  | 11.1 | X |

### Percentages

- |     |            |     |     |     |      |   |
|-----|------------|-----|-----|-----|------|---|
| 10. | 15% of 100 | 15  | 25  | 10  | 12.5 | X |
| 11. | 75% of 300 | 175 | 225 | 250 | 245  | X |
| 12. | 5% of 600  | 80  | 60  | 50  | 25   | X |

### Fractions

- |     |                             |               |                 |                 |               |   |
|-----|-----------------------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|---|
| 13. | $\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4}$ | $\frac{3}{4}$ | $\frac{2}{6}$   | $\frac{1}{6}$   | $\frac{2}{4}$ | X |
| 14. | $\frac{7}{8}$ of 50         | 40            | $43\frac{3}{4}$ | $35\frac{1}{2}$ | 45            | X |
| 15. | $100 \div 3\frac{1}{3}$     | 30            | 35              | 33              | 25            | X |

### Subtraction

- |     |               |     |     |     |     |   |
|-----|---------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|---|
| 16. | $1,350 - 785$ | 695 | 595 | 565 | 355 | X |
| 17. | $215 - 50$    | 175 | 185 | 165 | 155 | X |
| 18. | $97 - 31$     | 66  | 56  | 76  | 46  | X |

## 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 coding 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 from five alternatives for each item in the set.

Below are examples of questions from the Coding test.

Look at the sample table of codes. The sample table lists codes for Department, Department Size, and Travel Budget. Below the table are two sample problems. In the problems, mark the circles below 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 10-19 employees	B \$1,000-2,499
42 Accounting	3 20-39 employees	C \$2,500-5,999
11 Research & Development	4 40-59 employees	D \$6,000-7,999
28 Personnel	5 60 or more employees	E \$8,000-10,000

1. Accounting Dept., staff of 10, \$3,000 Travel Budget.

Department					Department Size					Travel Budget				
1	2	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	A	B	C	D	E
1	5	8	1	2										
o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

2. Marketing Dept., staff of 45, \$9,000 Travel Budget.

Department					Department Size					Travel Budget				
1	2	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	A	B	C	D	E
1	5	8	1	2										
o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

## Answers to Sample Items

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### Following Written Directions

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- |           |           |           |            |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| 1. Person | 4. Person | 7. E-mail | 10. E-mail |
| 2. Phone  | 5. Person | 8. Phone  | 11. Phone  |
| 3. E-mail | 6. Person | 9. Person | 12. Person |

### Language Skills

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1. C
2. A
3. D

### Computation

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- |         |        |           |         |                     |         |
|---------|--------|-----------|---------|---------------------|---------|
| 1. 40   | 4. 75  | 7. 3.3    | 10. 15  | 13. $\frac{3}{4}$   | 16. 565 |
| 2. 34.5 | 5. X   | 8. 106.05 | 11. 225 | 14. $43\frac{3}{4}$ | 17. 165 |
| 3. X    | 6. 315 | 9. X      | 12. X   | 15. 30              | 18. 66  |

### Coding

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1. 42; 2; C
2. 31; 4; E

## Further Resources

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**Note:** Not all of the resources on the following pages will contain information that is relevant for the test you are taking. It is suggested that you find the material in each resource relevant to your test.

### General Test Taking Strategies

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For some test takers, especially those who are anxious about testing or those who are unfamiliar with testing environments, it is helpful to develop general test taking strategies for taking tests. Below are some books that may be helpful.

- Casbarro, J. (2003). *Test Anxiety & What You Can Do About It*. National Professional Resources, Inc.
- Driscoll, R. (2003). *Tame test anxiety: Proven Anxiety Reduction Training [Abridged Audio CD]*. Frontiers Press.
- Flippo, R. F. (2000). *Testwise (2nd Edition)*. Torrance, CA: Good Apple/Frank Schaffer Publications.
- Gilbert, S. D. (1998). *How To Do Your Best on Tests*. HarperTrophy.
- Hammer, H. (1998). *ARCO General Test Practice for 101 U.S. Jobs (4th ed.)*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, Incorporated.
- Johnson, S. (1997). *Taking the Anxiety Out of Taking the Test: A Step-By-Step Guide*. New Harbinger Publications.
- Lawler, J., & Powers, R. (2003). *ASVAB for Dummies (Chapter 3: Test-taking and Study Techniques)*. New York, NY: Wiley Publishing, Inc.
- Meyers, J. N. (2000). *The Secrets of Taking Any Test: Learn the Techniques Successful Test-Takers Know*. Garden Grove, CA: LearningExpress, LLC.
- Na, G. F. (1999). *Guide to Standardized Test Preparation*. Globe Fearon.
- Newman, E. (1996). *No More Test Anxiety: Effective Steps for Taking Tests & Achieving Better Grades (1st Ed. w/ Audio CD)*. Learning Skills Publications, LLC.
- Research and Education Association Staff (1992). *REA's Math Builder for Admission and Standardized Tests*. Piscataway, NJ: Research and Educational Association.
- Rozakis, L. (2002). *Test Taking Strategies & Study Skills for the Utterly Confused*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

## Following Written Directions

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### Books

- Hammer, H. (1998). ARCO General Test Practice for 101 U.S. Jobs (4th ed.). New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, Incorporated.
- Hoyt, L. (1998). Revisit, Reflect, Retell: Strategies for Improving Reading Comprehension. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Publishing.

### Other Activities

- Puzzles, games, and hobbies that involve following a set of directions or instructions
- Following recipes or more complex cooking instructions
- Following instructions for assembly of furniture, models, computer equipment, etc.
- Websites and computer software that have interactive activities and games with complex instructions

## Language Skills

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### Books

- Brett, E. (1993). Easy English: Basic Grammar and Usage. Menlo Park, CA: Crisp Publications.
- Folse, K.S., Gabriella, J., Hadeed, L., Ivone, J., Muchmore-Vokoun, A., Vestri Solomon, E., & Yoshi, M. (2000). 100 Clear Grammar Tests. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Learning Express (Ed.) (2000). 1001 Vocabulary and Spelling Questions. Garden Grove, CA: Learning Express, LLC.
- Learning Express (2002). 501 Grammar & Writing Questions 2e. New York: Learning Express, LLC.
- Stilman, A. (1997). Grammatically Correct: The Writer's Essential Guide to Punctuation, Spelling, Style, Usage and Grammar. Cincinnati, OH: F&W Publications.
- William Strunk, W., White, E.B. & Angell, R. (2002). The Elements of Style, Fourth Edition.

### Other Activities

- Reading and editing others' papers, emails, and documents
- Use flashcards with commonly misspelled words
- Websites and computer software that have interactive activities related to spelling, grammar, punctuation, and word usage
- College, trade school or adult education courses in English and grammar

## Computation

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### Books

- Berry, J., Graham, T., & Berry, E. (2003). *Schaum's A-Z Mathematics*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Carman, R., & Carman, M. (2001). *Quick Arithmetic: A Self-Teaching Guide*. Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley, John & Sons, Incorporated.
- Erdsneker, B., Erdsneker, B., & Haller, M. (1998). *ARCO Civil Service Arithmetic and Vocabulary (13th ed.)*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, Incorporated.
- Graham, A. (2002). *Teach Yourself Basic Mathematics*. New York: McGraw-Hill Companies.
- Hammer, H. (1998). *ARCO General Test Practice for 101 U.S. Jobs (4th ed.)*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, Incorporated.
- Hammer, H., & Turner, D.R. (Ed.) (1982). *ARCO Senior Clerical Series (4th ed.)*. New York: Macmillan General Reference.
- Immergt, B. & Smith, J. B. (1994). *Arithmetic and Algebra... Again*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Johnson, T. (2002). *Teach Yourself Mathematics*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Kaplan Educational Centers, Scheele, A., & Stanton, R. (1997). *Kaplan Math Power*. Kaplan Press. New York, New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Lawler, J., & Powers, R. (2003). *ASVAB for Dummies*. New York, NY: Wiley Publishing, Inc. Learning Express, & Tarbell, S. (1999). *1001 Math Problems*. Garden Grove, CA: Learning Express, LLC.
- Miller, B. (2003). *Bob Miller's Basic Math and Pre-Algebra for the Clueless*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Prindle, A., & Prindle, K. (2003). *Math the Easy Way*. Barrons Educational Series.
- Seiter, C. (1996). *Everyday Math for Dummies*. Indianapolis, IN: IDG Books Worldwide.

### Other Activities

- Puzzles and games that involve math and computation skills (e.g., number games, flash cards, etc.)
- Television shows or videos that teach math and arithmetic
- Websites and computer software that have interactive activities related to arithmetic and math (e.g., [www.math.com](http://www.math.com))
- College, trade school, or adult education courses in basic mathematics

## Coding

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### Books

- Hoffman, M. (1993). *ARCO Practice for Clerical, Typing and Stenography Tests*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, Incorporated.
- Hammer, H., & Turner, D.R. (Ed.) (1982). *ARCO Senior Clerical Series (4th ed.)*. New York: Macmillan General Reference.

### Other Activities

- Puzzles, games, and hobbies that involve speed and accuracy in classifying and coding information
- Websites and computer software that have interactive activities related to speed and accuracy