

APPLYING TO PUBLIC SERVICE PROCESSES
Interview Preparation

Resources Guide

2021

Public Service Commission Tests

[Tests and Sample Questions](#)

Work Values Inventory

Rate the degree of importance that you would assign to each of the following work values.

5- Critical 4- Very Important 3- Important 2- Somewhat Important 1- Not Important	RATING
Achievement: To accomplish important, great things.	
Advancement: To reach the top of an organization or profession.	
Adventure: To have work duties which involve frequent risk-taking.	
Aesthetics: To be involved in studying/appreciating the beauty of things, ideas, etc.	
Affiliation, Belonging: To be recognized as a member of a particular organization or team.	
Artistic Creativity: Engage in creative work in any of several art forms.	
Autonomy: To be able to schedule your own work and not have rigid working hours; to be free of organizational rules and norms.	
Being Expert: To be known as someone who has special knowledge or skills in a particular field; to achieve excellence.	
Challenge: To be involved in interesting, challenging work.	
Change and Variety: To have work responsibilities which frequently change in their content and setting.	
Competition: Pitting your skills and abilities against others for the purpose of winning.	
Community: To live in a town or city where I can get involved in community affairs.	
Contact with People: To have a lot of daily contact with the public	
Creativity: To create new ideas, programs, organizational structures or anything else not following a format previously developed by others.	
Decision Making: To be in a position to decide how things should be done.	
Excitement: To experience a high degree of (or frequent) excitement in the course of my work; to have fun.	
Family: To spend time with your family; to have strong family relationships.	
Friendship/Relationship: To develop close personal relationships with people as a result of work activities; to maintain strong friendships.	

Fast Pace: work in circumstances where work must be done rapidly.	
Growth: To develop to your full potential professionally and personally.	
Happiness: To be happy; to make others happy.	
Health/ Wellness: To be physically and psychologically healthy.	
Help Others: To be involved in helping other people in a direct way, whether individually or in small groups.	
Integrity: To act in terms of your convictions; to be honest; to stand up for your beliefs.	
Independence: To work with little direction and supervision from others.	
Influence People: To be in a position to change attitudes or opinions of other people.	
Knowledge: To engage myself in the pursuit of knowledge, truth and understanding.	
Leadership: To communicate a vision to other people and motivate them to implement it.	
Learning: To be constantly learning and developing.	
Location: To find a place to live, which is conducive to my life-style and affords me the opportunity to do the things, I enjoy the most.	
Making a Difference: To make a difference in the world; to have an impact on people's lives.	
Money: To earn a large amount of money or gain material things.	
Moral Fulfillment: To feel that my work is contributing significantly to a set of moral standards that I feel are very important.	
Passion: To care deeply about something; to be passionate.	
Physical Challenge: To have a job that makes physical demands which I would find rewarding.	
Power: To direct, influence or control the work activities of other people.	
Precise Work: To do work that requires exactness or a high degree of accuracy or where there is very little tolerance for error.	
Recognition/ Status: To have status; to earn respect and recognition/appreciation of others in some visible or public way.	
Recreation: To pursue hobbies, sports, or personal interests.	
Security: To achieve a secure and stable work and to receive a reasonable financial reward.	

Self-expression: To be yourself, and to behave in a way consistent with your ideas and values, not repressing important parts of your personality.	
Spirituality: To achieve inner harmony; to be at peace with yourself; to live by your religious beliefs.	
Stability: To have work responsibilities that follow a routine and are predictable.	
Structure: To live a well-ordered life.	
Supervision: To have a job in which I am directly responsible for the work done by others.	
Work Alone: To do projects by myself, without any significant amount of contact with others.	
Work under Pressure: To work in situations where time pressure is prevalent and /or the quality of my work is judged critically by supervisors, customers, or others.	
Work with Others: To have close working relationships with a group; work as a team toward common goals.	

For further reflection, a list of 418 values can be found at

<https://www.stevepavlina.com/blog/2004/11/list-of-values/>

(No endorsement is implied of any of the content on the blogger's website. It is simply suggested as a source of a very long list of possible values.)

Interview Questions

Question Type	Typically Assesses	Example
Job Knowledge	Knowledge	“What is TBS’s Mandate?”
Situational	Abilities, Personal Suitability, sometimes Knowledge	“What would you do if...?”
Worker Requirements	Operational Requirements, Conditions of Employment	Are you willing to work overtime?
Behaviour-Based <i>Most common as they are versatile</i>	Experience, Abilities, Personal Suitability	“Tell me about a time when...”

The SAR Model

	Behaviour-Based Question	Situational/Hypothetical Question
Situation	Where? When? Position? Task/Assignment	State assumptions: “If I was in this situation and had this position...”
Actions	What did you do? Use action verbs (<i>asterisked*</i> in the examples)	“First, I would..., then I would...” Use action verbs (<i>asterisked*</i> in the examples)
Results	How did your actions help the client or organization? What did you learn?	“I believe the result of my actions would be..., because...”

BEHAVIOUR-BASED EXAMPLE: CAN YOU GIVE ME AN EXAMPLE OF A SITUATION IN WHICH YOU EFFECTIVELY USED YOUR TIME MANAGEMENT SKILLS?

Situation: As a student, my time management skills are always being challenged. Last semester, for example, I had to submit three final papers within the span of one week. That made me quite nervous because writing papers always takes longer than studying for exams.

Actions: Since I learned about the assignments at the beginning of the semester, I *developed** a work plan to complement my schedule. I *established** priorities based on the difficulty and complexity of each paper. For instance, I knew that my paper on the Romantic period for Art History class would require more in-depth research than my paper on anxiety for my Psychology class, since I knew less about that topic. As a result, I *reserved** more research time at the beginning of the semester for my Art History paper. I also *set** deadlines for myself where each month, I would have to complete certain sections of my papers by specific dates.

Results: By prioritizing my work and sticking to my deadlines, I succeeded in submitting all the reports on time and was pleased with the results.

SITUATIONAL/HYPOTHETICAL EXAMPLE: HOW WOULD YOU RESPOND TO AN ANGRY AND DISSATISFIED CLIENT?

Situation: My understanding is that this office serves internal clients and that one of my duties would be to serve these clients to the best of my ability within the organization’s mandate and operational requirements.

Actions: Clients can express anger and dissatisfaction in many ways: in person, by email or over the phone. However it was expressed, I would *listen** to or *read** their complaint with an open mind trying to fully *understand** the message. I would *consider** their tone and, if in person, their body language. I would *stay** calm and patient in response to any anger. If they became aggressive, I would follow the relevant security policies to *ensure** the work environment remained safe.

I would **ask*** clarifying questions and **restate*** the problem in my own words to ensure I fully understood the issue. If appropriate, I would **show*** empathy for the client's frustration to try to diffuse the anger. With the issue clearly defined, I would **determine*** whether I was the right person to resolve it. If needed, I would **consult*** the relevant policies, and perhaps even **discuss*** the issue with my colleagues and supervisor, to try to **find*** an appropriate way to **meet*** the client's needs.

Ideally, I would **meet*** the client's needs. If I could not, I would **explain*** why—perhaps the request was outside of our organizational mandate or against policy—and, if possible, I would **refer*** the client to someone else who could be of assistance.

Results: In this way, I would ensure that the client received the best service I could provide. Regardless of the outcome, I would **advise*** my supervisor of the incident for their awareness and so that we could **consider*** any opportunities for improvement that may arise from the incident.

Sample Interview Questions

- Tell me about a time when you faced a lot of obstacles to achieving a goal.
- Tell me about a project or role that you've taken on that is outside your job description.
- Tell me about time when you were faced with a difficult decision. What alternatives did you consider, what did you choose, and how did it turn out?
- If you were given the responsibility for planning and organizing our annual Manager's Conference, how would you go about it?
- Give me an example of a stressful situation you've experienced. What made it stressful? How did you interact with others? How did you manage your stress? How did you feel afterward?
- I'd like to hear about a time when you had trouble seeing eye-to-eye with a colleague. Walk me through the steps you took to resolve the problem.
- Tell me about a time when you guided individuals toward achieving a goal. Were you appointed leader, or did you step up to the task?
- Tell me about a time when you worked with a group or team of people to complete a project. Describe a situation in which you were able to persuade someone to see things your way.
- Describe a time when you were faced with a stressful situation that demonstrated your coping skills.
- Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
- Give me an example of a time when you set a goal and were able to meet/exceed it.
- Tell me about a time when you had to use your presentation skills to influence someone's opinion.
- Give me a specific example of a time when you had to conform to a policy with which you did not agree.
- Please discuss an important written document that you were required to prepare.
- Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
- Tell me about a time when you had too many things to do and you were required to prioritize your tasks.
- Give me an example of a time when you had to make a split-second decision.
- What is your typical way of dealing with conflict? Give me an example.
- Tell me about a time you were able to successfully deal with someone who didn't like you like you (or vice versa).
- Tell me about a difficult decision you've made in the last year.
- Give me an example of a time when something you tried to accomplish and failed.
- Give me an example of when you showed initiative and took the lead.
- Give me an example of a time when you motivated others.

- Tell me about a time when you delegated a project effectively.
- Give me an example of a time when you used your fact-finding skills to solve a problem.
- Tell me about a time when you missed an obvious solution to a problem.
- Tell me about a time when you were forced to make an unpopular decision.
- Describe a time when you set your sights too high (or too low).

Information Interview Tips

- Find someone who can give your specific knowledge of the job: supervisor, the employee who is leaving, someone doing the same or similar duties, someone else in the organization.
- Be clear and honest about your objectives
- Make an appointment for a specified period of time (for example, 15 minutes)
- In person and away from the office is better (offer to buy them coffee), can meet over the phone, if necessary
- Dress appropriately and professionally
- Arrive on time with a short list of questions you want answered
- Take notes
- Focus on gathering information—don't try to convince them to hire you
- Be prepared to answer questions about yourself—don't say anything you wouldn't say in a real interview
- Ask for names of other people in the field with whom you can speak
- Leave on time, don't keep them longer
- Be sure to thank them for taking time to providing information

Possible Questions for Information Interviews

- What are the major job duties?
- Describe a typical day in this role.
- What competencies or personal characteristics are needed to excel in this position?
- Does the organization use pre-defined competencies?
- What are the priorities of the job?
- What are the real day-to-day priorities of the organization?
- What are the main challenges of the job?
- Are different priorities foreseen in the next six months or the more distant future?
- What are the strengths of the organization?
- What is the management style? Decision-making style? Communication style?
- Which sections, departments or people would I interact with the most?
- Is it a new position? If not, what led the past employee to leave?
- Can you provide me with or recommend documents about the job or the priorities of the division/branch, etc.?