

BALTIMORE COUNTY
FIRE DEPARTMENT



Test Preparation Guide
Probationary Emergency Medical
Technician

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OVERVIEW

Taking the written examination is the first step in the selection process in becoming a Probationary Emergency Medical Technician. Candidates who do not pass the written exam do not go any further in the selection process.

The written examination is designed to test basic skills and aptitudes: how well you can understand what you read, perform basic math computations, understand vocabulary and grammar use, and to evaluate your common sense, judgment, and general attitudes toward people and teamwork.

The exam consists of a total of 100 multiple choice questions. The examination covers the following subject areas:

- Interpersonal Skills
- Reading Comprehension
- Vocabulary
- Grammar
- Basic Math
- Maryland Driving Laws
- Sequencing/Logical Order

Demonstrated skill in these seven areas is very important in obtaining a career in the emergency medical service.

GENERAL TEST TAKING INSTRUCTIONS

- Get to the testing site about 15 minutes early. Directions to the testing location can be found on your examination notice that was sent to you by e-mail at the email address you provided on your application. You will be asked to present your examination notice and driver's license before entering the testing room. The test will start promptly. Latecomers may be asked to take the exam at a later test session or another testing date, if available.
- Once you have been seated, place all of your personal belongings including purses, wallets, drinks, hats, keys, and any pencils you brought with you under the table. You will be provided with a No. 2 pencil, scratch paper, and an answer sheet to record your test answers. Cell phones and calculators are prohibited. They must be turned off and placed under the table with your other personal belongings.
- Listen to instructions and directions from the test administrator. Make sure that you understand the instructions. If you need assistance during the examination, raise your hand and one of the test monitors will come to you to assist you.
- Use your test time wisely. You will be given 2 ½ hours to complete the examination. Pace yourself. Skip over difficult questions and come back to them once you have completed easier questions. Make a note of the skipped test item on your scratch paper so that you may revisit it. You will not be given additional time to complete the examination. If you need special testing

accommodations, please call the Office of Human Resources at (410) 887-3135 to speak with a member of the Human Resources Employment Division.

- Mark all your answers on the answer sheet. Be sure that you darken the circle next to the number that corresponds to the number of the question being answered. Make sure your marks do not go outside the spaces outlined for them. Do not make any stray marks on the answer sheet. If you wish to change an answer, erase completely the mark in the blackened space and mark your answer under the appropriate letter on the answer sheet. Do not mark in the test booklets.
- Please note that each question has only one correct answer. Mark only one answer for each question on the answer sheet. If you mark more than one answer for a particular question, the question will be counted wrong.
- Don't be afraid to guess. No question is meant to be a trick question. Answer all the questions, since your score is based upon the total number of questions that you answer correctly. If you are not sure of an answer to a test question, you should take an educated guess.
- When you complete the examination, check your answer sheet to make certain that you have answered every question. If you complete the examination before time is called, you may go back and review your answers or hand in all of your materials including the answer sheet, the scratch paper, No. 2 pencil, test booklet, and examination notice (if applicable). You will be asked to present your driver's license again to the test monitors to ensure that you are indeed the applicant who took the examination.

SECTION 1: **READING COMPREHENSION**

Each question in the reading section consists of a paragraph explaining a topic related to emergency medical services and five statements which are related to the paragraph. Some questions instruct you to select the statement that is the main point of the paragraph. Other questions instruct you to select the statement that is best supported by the information in the paragraph.

- a. The main point of a paragraph is the most important idea in the paragraph. All of the information in a paragraph should be tied together by the main point. Incorrect statements (wrong answers) cover only a minor part of the paragraph or contain information that is not taken from the paragraph.
- b. The statement best supported by a paragraph is a statement that is based only on information provided in the paragraph. It does not include misinterpretations of the paragraph or information taken from other sources. The best supported statement does not need to be the main point of the paragraph.

Read carefully through the paragraph and all the statements. Note whether you are looking for the main point of the paragraph or the statement best supported by the paragraph. Then select the statement that is the best answer. You may think of another answer that is not given, but you are to select the best answer from among the choices given. You do not need any training or experience as an emergency medical technician to answer these questions.

Sample Question #1

The operator of an ambulance that is responding under emergency conditions to an incident may violate traffic laws, including speed limits. All visible and audible warning signals must be in use when responding under emergency conditions. The operator of the ambulance is responsible for operating the vehicle safely at all times. Operators of ambulances need to be aware that this authority does not make them immune from liability in the event of an accident. Studies have shown that the amount of time saved by operating “hot” (emergency conditions) is minimal.

This paragraph best supports the statement that:

- a. operators of ambulances cannot be sued if they cause an accident while operating an ambulance under emergency conditions if the ambulance’s visible and audible warning devices are being used
- b. the operator of the ambulance should drive faster when responding to a heart attack or other serious emergency, and more slowly when responding to less serious incidents
- c. the operator of an ambulance may drive above the posted speed limit and in violation of other traffic laws, but is always responsible for the safe operation of the vehicle
- d. the operator of an ambulance should consider using all visible and audible warning devices when operating under emergency conditions

The correct answer is “c”. The statement in “c” is better supported by the paragraph than any of the other statements. Choice “a” is not supported by the paragraph. The paragraph states that ambulance operators are not immune from liability in the event of an accident. This means that operators may indeed be sued if found liable in the event of an accident. Choice “b” may be true but is not taken from information in the paragraph. The paragraph does not say anything about driving speed as it relates to the seriousness of the patient’s condition or injury. Choice “d” is true and is mentioned in the paragraph but is not the most important idea in the paragraph.

Sample Question #2

Often the EMT will respond to a motor vehicle accident with multiple potential patients to assess. A refusal of services form must be signed by adults (persons 18 years of age or older) who have any obvious injury that can be observed by the EMT, or who have any complaint of pain or discomfort as a result of the accident, but who do not want to be transported to the hospital. Adults without any obvious injury, and who deny pain or discomfort, are required to sign a refusal form if they do not wish to be transported to the hospital. All children (persons under 18 years of age) involved in an accident must be transported to the hospital if there is no parent or guardian present to sign a refusal form on their behalf.

This paragraph best supports the statement that:

- a. all persons involved in an accident who do not wish to be transported to the hospital must sign a refusal form unless there are no obvious injuries that can be observed by the EMT
- b. children involved in an accident who have no complaints or obvious injuries may sign refusal forms upon the authority of their parents
- c. adults involved in an accident who do not wish to be transported to the hospital, and who have only very minor obvious injuries, do not have to sign a refusal form
- d. adults with no obvious injuries but who complain of pain must sign a refusal form if they do not wish to be transported to the hospital

The correct answer is “d”. Choice “a” is incorrect. The passage states that even persons without any obvious injury are still required to sign a refusal form if they do not want to be transported to the hospital. Choice “b” is not supported by the paragraph either. The passage does not address what children should do if they have no complaints or obvious injury. Choice “c” is incorrect. Based on the passage, adults with any (doesn’t matter if injuries are minor or not) have to sign the refusal form if they do not want to be transported to the hospital.

Test taking tips for Reading Comprehension Questions:

- Glance at the question before reading the passage. This will give you a hint as to what information you should gather from the passage. Is the question asking you to find the main point of the passage, to make an inference from the information given in the passage, or to interpret what the passage means? Reviewing the question first will help direct your attention as you read.

- Read the paragraph carefully. Concentrate exclusively on the material in the passage. You may want to take notes on your scratch sheet of paper. Be sure not to write in the test booklets.
- Answer the reading comprehension questions solely on the basis of the information provided in the reading passage. The questions are not trick questions. Do not read anything into the passage or draw from your knowledge and/or experience on a topic in this section.
- Return to the questions. Be sure you know what it asks. Misreading a question is the major cause of error on these types of questions.
- Read the corresponding answer choices carefully. Eliminate choices that are obviously wrong answers. Look for words that make the answer choice incorrect.

SECTION 2: VOCABULARY

Probationary Emergency Medical Technicians need the ability to communicate effectively with others. Using good vocabulary and correct spelling is important when writing and speaking. Emergency Medical Technicians need to be able to speak, understand, read, and write the English language efficiently. To test your vocabulary skill, the test questions could deal with synonyms, antonyms, context, or simple definitions.

Synonyms are words that share the same meaning or nearly the same meaning as other words. Antonyms are words with opposite meaning. Vocabulary in context questions ask you to determine the meanings of particular words. It is helpful for you to use the context of the sentence to help you figure out the meaning of the vocabulary word in the question.

You are to complete each sentence by choosing the answer which best completes the statement.

Sample Question #1

If a patient has been given an inadequate amount of medication, the patient has been given:

- a. too little medication
- b. too much medication
- c. the exact amount of medication
- d. the wrong type of medication

The correct answer is a.

Sample Question #2

Which word means the same as *recuperate*?

- a. mend
- b. endorse
- c. persist
- d. worsen

The correct answer is “a”. Recuperate means to heal or to mend.

Sample Question #3

Choose the word that best describes the meaning of the underlined word.

Though she was distraught over the condition of her child, the woman was calm enough to give the EMT the details of the accident.

- a. punished
- b. distracted
- c. composed
- d. anguished

The correct answer is “d”. The key words here are *though* and *condition of her child*, signaling that you are looking for an opposite of *calm* in describing how the mother spoke to the EMT. The only word strong enough to match the situation is *anguish*.

Vocabulary Test-taking Tips:

- Look for word parts that you know, such as the root, prefix, or suffix, and think of similar words that may give clues as to the meaning of the word in question.
- Pay close attention to the directions. Make sure you know when to look for opposite meaning rather than a similar one.
- Think of how the word makes sense in a sentence.
- Sound out the word inside your head to make sure you aren’t reading it wrong.
- Don’t be fooled by words that sound the same but have different meanings.
- Check back over your work if you have time remaining to make sure you haven’t made any careless mistakes. (Learning Express, 2003)

SECTION 3: MATHEMATICS

This section of the Probationary Emergency Medical Technician examination is designed to assess your proficiency in performing common operations of arithmetic. You will be asked to add, subtract, multiply and divide whole numbers, fractions, and decimals. Some of the problems will require you to apply arithmetic to practical situations.

You will be given scrap paper to compute your answers. Do not mark in your examination booklet.

Sample Question #1

Add 3.5 and 1.0.

- a. 2.5
- b. 3.5
- c. 4.0
- d. 4.5

The correct answer is “d”, 4.5.

Sample Question #2

$$\frac{1}{10} \times \frac{2}{1} =$$

- a. 0.2
- b. 0.5
- c. 2
- d. 5

The correct answer is “ a”.

Sample Question #3

The EMT is sometimes required to convert the weight of a patient from pounds (lbs.) to kilograms (kg).

The conversion rate is one (1) lb. = .454 kilograms (kg)

For example, a 33lb. child weighs 15 kilograms, when the conversion is rounded to the nearest whole number.

Convert the following weights in pounds to their equivalent weight in kilograms.
Answers should be rounded to the nearest whole number.

165 lbs.

- a. 71 kg
- b. 75 kg
- c. 89 kg
- d. 90 kg

The correct answer is “b”.

Mathematics Test-taking Tips:

- Don't do the math in your head. Use the scratch paper to take notes, draw pictures and do calculations.
- Glance at the answer choices for clues. This will give you a hint as to whether your answer should be a fraction, decimal, or percentage.
- Do not waste time on difficult questions. Come back to them after you have completed other questions.
- Check your work after you get your answer. Make sure that you perform the computations correctly and that you have actually darkened the corresponding choice for the question item on your answer sheet.
- Answer all of the questions. Your score is based upon the total number of questions that you answer correctly. If you are not sure of an answer, you may guess.

SECTION 4: INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

Once you begin your career as an emergency medical technician, you will have to interact with many people: other EMTs, firefighters, supervisors, school children, business owners, and the public in general. As an EMT, you will need to work very well in a team and have the ability to count on your fellow EMTs and firefighters for help and support.

EMTs also work within a paramilitary structure. In this environment, they treat their superiors with the utmost respect, valuing their experience and knowledge. When a superior gives an order, the EMT is expected to carry it out. You will be expected to act responsibly and seek help through the chain of command.

When interacting with the public, it is very important for an EMT to remember the heightened emotional state of the people experiencing the emergency. People could be very withdrawn, defensive, excited, angry, or experiencing shock. An EMT must be able to do their jobs with a high degree of professionalism, have and show concern for the public, and treat all people with courtesy and respect.

Each question in this section describes a situation in which the EMT is to act in a courteous and professional manner, while exercising good judgment and common sense in dealing with the public. Questions that deal with interpersonal relations are focused on respect for authority, concern and respect to patients, and responsibility for one's actions. Use the information given in each situation to select the best answer for that particular question.

Sample Question #1

An emergency medical technician (EMT) is at the hospital restocking the ambulance and getting ready for the next call while the paramedic is writing the patient care report. A nurse approaches the EMT and complains because the ambulances keep bringing patients even though the emergency department already is overcrowded with more patients than they can handle.

Which of the following responses from the EMT to the nurse is best?

- a. "We're just doing our job. People call us, and we have to take them to the hospital. Maybe you need to hire more staff."
- b. "We know you're busy, but every other hospital in the area is also very busy today. We are trying to bring each of the hospitals the same number of patients. Would you like to talk to my supervisor?"
- c. "What are we supposed to do? If someone calls for an ambulance and wants to go to the hospital, we have to take them. We do not like this any more than you do."
- d. "We are following our protocols and doing the best we can. If you don't like it you should file a complaint."

The correct answer is "b".

Sample Question #2

The ambulance crew is called to the scene of a possible drug overdose. The patient is an approximately 25-year old man. The emergency medical technician (EMT) believes that the patient needs to go to the hospital, although his condition is not life threatening and no immediate treatment by the EMT is necessary. The EMT needs to ask the man about possible drug use as part of the patient assessment. Several concerned members of the patient's family are standing next to the patient, and the EMT believes that the patient may be reluctant to talk about drugs when the family is able to listen to the conversation.

Which of the following actions by the EMT is best?

- a. tell the family that you have to ask the patient some "sensitive questions" and ask them to leave the room for a few minutes
- b. call the police and have them remove the family members from the area so that you can talk to your patient in private
- c. get any information you may need from the family, and then take the patient out to the ambulance where you can continue your conversation with him in private
- d. go ahead and ask the patient the necessary questions about drug use in front of the family since they appear concerned about the patient and they probably already know about any illegal drugs the patient uses

The correct answer is "c".

Test taking tips to answer Interpersonal Skills questions:

- Put yourself in the "shoes" of other people. Picture the situation happening to you. How would you expect to be treated? What do you expect from a firefighter who might come to your rescue during an emergency? How do you treat your co-workers and superiors/supervisors? How would you like to be treated in the workplace? These questions will help you focus on appropriate and inappropriate behavior.
- Use only the information provided in the situation to answer the question. You may think of other ways the situation may or could be handled. Do not read more into the situation than is presented. Begin to eliminate answers that are obviously incorrect. This will help you focus in on the behavior or action that should be taken as a result of the public relations/ interpersonal skill situation.

Section 5: **GRAMMAR**

There is plenty of writing involved in EMT work. The grammar section of the written exam helps the department determine whether or not applicants are capable of this aspect of the job. Probationary Emergency Medical Technicians must be able to write correctly and have a good grasp of the English language. You should review grammar rules including complete sentences, capitalization, punctuation, subject-verb agreement, verb tenses, pronouns, and confusing word pairs. The tips and exercises below will help you improve your skills in this area. This test prep guide will not cover all the information you may need to review in this area. You should visit your local library for more sources of information on this topic.

Complete Sentences and Sentence Fragments

A sentence expresses a complete thought, while a fragment is missing something – it could be a verb or it could be a subject, but the sentence does not express a complete thought. When you are writing for the workplace, complete sentences are the correct and expected format for most pieces of information.

Examples:

| | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| The assistant filing folders. | SENTENCE FRAGMENT |
| The assistant was filing folders. | COMPLETE SENTENCE |
| Leaving messages for me. | SENTENCE FRAGMENT |
| Janet was leaving messages for me. | COMPLETE SENTENCE |

The first fragment in this pair of sentences is an example of a sentence that is missing part of its verb. It needs the helping verb *was* before *filing* to make a complete thought. The second fragment has neither a subject nor a verb (Learning Express, 2008).

Sample Question #1

Choose the option that is a complete sentence.

- a. We saw the tornado approaching.
- b. When we saw the tornado approaching.

“a” is the correct answer.

Capitalization

The written exam may have questions that test your ability to use capital letters correctly. If you familiarize yourself with the most common capitalization rules, you will be better prepared to correct these errors.

- Capitalize the first word of a sentence. If the first word is a number, write it as a word.
- Capitalize the pronoun I.

- Capitalize the first word of a complete quotation: “*What is the address?*” she asked. However, do not capitalize the first word of a partial quotation: He called me “*the best employee*” and nominated me for an award.
- Capitalize proper nouns and proper adjectives. Proper nouns are names of people, places, or things like *Bill Clinton; Houston, Texas, or Mississippi River*. They are different from common nouns like *president, city, state, or river*.
- Capitalize proper adjectives which are adjectives formed from proper nouns. For instance, if the proper noun is *Japan*, the proper adjective would be *Japanese language*. If the proper noun is *South America*, the proper adjective would be *South American* climate. (Learning Express, 2008).

Sample Question #2

Choose the option that is capitalized correctly.

- This year we will celebrate christmas on Tuesday, December 25 in Manchester, Ohio.
- This year we will celebrate Christmas on Tuesday, December 25 in mancheser, Ohio.
- This year we will celebrate Christmas on Tuesday, December 25 in Manchester, Ohio.
- This year we will celebrate Christmas on tuesday, December 25 in Manchester, Ohio.

The correct answer is “c”. The first word of the sentence is capitalized. Christmas is capitalized because it is a proper noun. Days of the week and months of the year are also capitalized. Manchester, Ohio is a city and state name. These are also proper nouns that should always be capitalized in a sentence.

Punctuation

The written exam may test your punctuation skills. Make sure you know how to use periods, commas, and apostrophes correctly.

Periods

Here is a quick review of the rules regarding the use of a period.

- Use a period at the end of a sentence that is not a question or an exclamation.
- Use a period after an initial in a name: Millard K. Furham.
- Use a period after an abbreviation, unless the abbreviation is an acronym. Abbreviations: Mr., Ms., Dr., A.M., General Motors Corp., Allied Inc. Acronyms: NASA, AIDS
- If a sentence ends with an abbreviation, use only one period (We brought food, tents, sleeping bags, etc.) (Learning Express, 2003).

Commas

Commas are more important than many people realize. The correct use of commas helps present ideas and information clearly to readers. Missing or misplaced commas, on the other hand, can confuse readers and convey a message quite different from what was intended.

Here is a quick review of the most basic rules regarding the use of commas.

- Use a comma before and, but, so, or, for, nor, and yet when they separate two groups of words that could be complete sentences. **Example:** the coaches laid out the game plan, and the team executed it to perfection.
- Use a comma to separate items in a series. **Example:** the student driver stopped, looked, and listened when she got to the railroad tracks.
- Use a comma to separate two or more adjectives modifying the same noun. **Example:** The hot, black, rich coffee tasted great after an hour in below-zero weather.
- Use a comma after introductory words, phrases, or clauses in a sentence. **Example:** Usually, the class begins with a short writing assignment.
- Use a comma after a name followed by Jr., Sr., or some other abbreviation. **Example:** The class was inspired by the speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Use a comma to separate items in an address. **Example:** The car stopped at 1433 West G Avenue, Orlando, Florida 36890.
- Use a comma to separate a day and a year, as well as after the year. **Example:** I was born on July 21, 1954, during a thunderstorm.
- Use a comma after the greeting of a friendly letter and after the closing of any letter. **Example:** Dear Uncle Jon, Sincerely yours,
- Use a comma to separate contrasting elements in a sentence. **Example:** Your essay needs strong arguments, not strong opinions, to convince me.
- Use commas to set off appositives (words or phrases that explain or identify a noun). **Example:** My cat, a Siamese, is named Ron. (Learning Express, 2008).

Apostrophes

There are two very important rules regarding the use of apostrophes.

Use an apostrophe to show that the letters have been omitted from a word to form a contraction. Examples: do not = don't; I will = I'll; it is = it's

Use an apostrophe to show possession. Examples: Juan's dog; Nikia's house. See chart below.

| Singular nouns (add 's) | Plural nouns ending in s (add ') | Plural nouns not ending in s |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| boy's | boys' | men's |
| child's | kids' | children's |
| lady's | ladies' | women's |

Sample Question #3

For each question, you are to select the answer which is expressed most correctly, and then blacken the proper space on your answer sheet. Be aware that there may be errors in word order or usage, punctuation, and verb tenses. Some sentences have more than one error. Only ONE answer for each question is written correctly.

- a. Mrs. Jones is already unresponsive and wasn't unable to not provide information.
- b. The EMT immediately conduct a rapid physical exam and vital signs.
- c. The patient's breathing was in the normal range, with adequate movement of air in and out.
- d. The patient's circulation check was showed to be strong and regular.

The correct answer is "c".

Section 6: **MARYLAND DRIVING LAWS**

One of the job requirements of a Probationary EMT is a non-provisional, non-commercial class C driver's license. It is essential that employees are experienced drivers since one of the basic duties of an EMT is to drive an ambulance in a safe manner, observing Maryland driving laws. If you are not a Maryland resident, it may be a good idea to request a copy of Maryland's driving manual from the Motor Vehicle Administration (www.mva.maryland.gov).

Sample Question #1

What is the meaning of a flashing yellow traffic signal?

- a. cautiously enter the intersection
- b. yield the right-of-way
- c. proceed with caution
- d. make a full stop

The correct answer is "c".

Sample Question #2

The color of a roadway sign can tell the driver at first glance what kind of information it has to offer. What is indicated by a yellow sign?

- a. guide information, such as distance or direction
- b. regulatory information, such as speed limits
- c. general warning information of what to expect ahead
- d. construction and maintenance work area information

The correct answer is "c".

Section 7: LOGICAL ORDERING/SEQUENCING

Each question in this section consists of a numbered list of sentences. Arrange the sentences in the logical order of their occurrence. You will be given scrap paper to jot down any notes. Do not write in the test booklet.

Sample Question

Please arrange the following numbered list of sentences in the logical order of their occurrence (chronological order).

1. The applicant sets the alarm clock.
2. The applicant arrives at the test site.
3. The applicant's alarm clock rings and wakes the applicant.
4. The applicant starts the car.
5. The applicant gets dressed and eats breakfast.
6. While the car is running, the applicant scrapes the ice off the windshield.

Which of the events most logically occurred first?

- a. 1
- b. 2
- c. 3
- d. 5

Which of the events most logically occurred fourth?

- a. 2
- b. 4
- c. 5
- d. 6

Which of the events most logically occurred last?

- a. 2
- b. 4
- c. 5
- d. 6

Logically, the applicant must set the alarm clock and go to sleep before the alarm can ring and wake him up. The applicant must get dressed before he can go outside. The applicant must start the car before he can scrape the windshield while the car is running. The applicant must have gotten up, dressed and driven the car to arrive at the test site.

The correct order of the events is 1, 3, 5, 4, 6, 2. Therefore, the answer to question number 1 is "A", the answer to question number 2 is "B", and the answer to question number 3 is "A".

It is easiest to answer the chronological order of questions if you arrange the events in the proper order (sequence) first. Carefully note to which portion of the sequence the question refers (i.e., first, second, last, etc).

NEXT STEPS

You will be notified of your test results by e-mail at the email address you provided on your application between 4-6 weeks after the last examination date.

Based upon your test score on the written examination, you may be invited to participate in the physical ability test later on in the process. Personnel from the Fire Department will e-mail you information about the physical ability test including the date, time, and location of this test.

Thank you for choosing a career in the fire service with Baltimore County Government.

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