



PSI Services LLC

Pennsylvania State Police

Cadet Structured Oral Interview

Candidate Preparation Guide

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DESCRIPTION OF STRUCTURED ORAL INTERVIEW

A. Eligibility:

All Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) Cadet candidates who pass the Written Examination (i.e., Law Enforcement Aptitude Battery) will be eligible to participate in the Structured Oral Interview.

B. Content:

Candidates will be asked to provide oral responses to a series of interview questions that will allow for the assessment of various abilities and personal characteristics that are important to the effective performance of PSP Cadets (hereinafter referred to as law enforcement officers). In responding to the interview questions, consider and discuss any aspect of your past experience that is relevant to the questions – school, work, home, or personal life. These questions will **NOT** require technical knowledge of law enforcement since the technical aspects of the job are learned in training. The Structured Oral Interview is designed to assess abilities and personal characteristics, not specific knowledge about policies and procedures. In general, the questions included in the Structured Oral Interview will ask you:

- about your qualifications for the position of law enforcement officer
- how you have handled specific situations in the past that are relevant to what you may do as a law enforcement officer
- how you would handle hypothetical situations that are relevant to situations you may encounter on the job as a law enforcement officer

Candidates will receive a total of approximately nine questions. The total set of interview questions will be comprised of the types of questions (i.e., qualifications, past, situational) described above. Candidates will be given a total of approximately 25 minutes to respond to all nine interview questions.

C. Administrative Logistics:

During the administration of the Structured Oral Interview, all candidates will report on a specific day at an individually scheduled time. Candidates should ensure that they arrive at the test site at their scheduled time. Upon arrival, each candidate will check in and receive some general instructions.

Upon arriving at the test site, each candidate will be provided with all materials needed to prepare for and conduct the Structured Oral Interview. Candidates are **NOT** permitted to bring materials of any kind to the test site. Furthermore, except for a standard watch or timing device, **NO** electronic equipment will be allowed at the test site, including cell phones, tablets, laptops, smartwatches, etc. Any such equipment brought into the testing site will be collected and stored in an unsecured area. The Pennsylvania State Police and PSI will **NOT** be responsible for lost or stolen property. Any unauthorized communication equipment found in a candidate's possession in restricted areas will subject the candidate to disqualification. Candidates may bring a bottle of water which may be accessed during the Structured Oral Interview.

Following the check-in procedures, candidates will be directed to a preparation room. Candidates will be given a handout containing approximately five of the nine Structured Oral Interview questions and will prepare their responses in a special preparation area where they will not be observed by the assessors. Candidates will have approximately 15 minutes in the preparation room. Candidates may divide the preparation time among the Structured Oral Interview questions however they choose.

During the preparation period, candidates will be permitted to take notes on the Structured Oral Interview question handout or on notepaper provided. Candidates may use these notes while participating in the Structured Oral Interview. Candidates should be aware, however, that any notes prepared or used during the Structured Oral Interview will **NOT** be considered by the assessors when making evaluations. The assessors will evaluate **ONLY** what you say and how you say it. However, any such notes will be collected and secured following each candidate's participation to ensure they cannot be made available to candidates who have not yet participated in the Structured Oral Interview.

Following the preparation period, candidates will be directed to a waiting area. When the assessor board is ready, an assessor will invite the candidate into an interview room. Each candidate will be directed to a separate interview room for the Structured Oral Interview. That is, although you will prepare for the interview in the same room and wait with other candidates, you will be the **ONLY** candidate in the room when the actual interview is conducted.

Candidates may bring into the preparation area and interview room **ONLY** materials provided and prepared at the test site (i.e., candidate instructions, Structured Oral Interview question handout, and notes taken during the preparation period). Before entering the preparation and interview rooms, candidates' materials will be inspected to ensure that any materials brought into these rooms conform to these guidelines. Any violation of these guidelines may be cause for disqualification from this examination.

While participating in the Structured Oral Interview process, the administrators and assessors will provide instructions and answer any procedural questions that may be raised before the interview begins. Candidates will be told when to begin; they will be told to stop **ONLY** if (and when) they reach the maximum time limit allotted for the Structured Oral Interview. Otherwise, it will be the responsibility of each candidate to work within the specified time frame. Candidates may bring timekeeping devices to the Structured Oral Interview. Candidates will **NOT** be permitted to use a cell phone or any other electronic communication device to keep track of time.

Once the Structured Oral Interview begins, no interaction will occur with assessors other than that which is required to administer the interview. Assessors will **NOT** read the questions during the Structured Oral Interview. When the assessors instruct candidates to begin, candidates should start by addressing the Structured Oral Interview questions received during the preparation period in the order in which they are presented on the handout. As candidates begin to address each Structured Oral Interview question, they should refer to the question by number, so that it is clear to assessors which question they are addressing. Also, candidates will be responsible for transitioning from one Structured Oral Interview question to the next. Assessors will **NOT** prompt candidates to progress to the next Structured Oral Interview question. When candidates are finished responding to the questions received during the preparation period, they should inform assessors so that the assessors can provide the remaining questions without delay.

Upon confirmation of completion of the questions received during the preparation period, the assessors will present candidates with a handout containing the remaining questions. Candidates will have the time remaining in the 25-minute response period to read, consider, and respond to approximately four questions. Candidates should follow the same procedures describe above (i.e., announcing the number of the question to which they are responding and transitioning from one question to the next). When candidates finish responding to the last question, they should inform assessors that they are finished with the interview.

The assessors will not time responses to each interview question; therefore, candidates will be responsible for managing the allotted time to ensure that they can provide responses to all Structured Oral Interview questions.

Once candidates have completed the Structured Oral Interview, candidates will be directed to the check-out area and will then be instructed to leave the testing site.

D. Administration Schedule:

A schedule and step-by-step description of the Structured Oral Interview is presented below.

Activity	Time
Candidate Check-in and Instructions	Approximately 20 minutes
Escort to Preparation Room	Not timed
Candidate Preparation Period	Approximately 15 minutes
Escort to Interview Room	Not timed
Structured Oral Interview	Approximately 25 minutes
Check-Out	Not timed

- **Check-in and Instructions (Approximately 20 minutes):** Upon arrival, candidates will check in and receive written general instructions from a test administrator. Candidates will remain in the check-in area until the preparation period begins. While in the check-in area, candidates will be permitted, and encouraged, to ask procedural questions of administrators.
- **Escort to Preparation Room:** After checking in, candidates will be escorted to a preparation room. Candidates will **NOT** be permitted to bring any materials into the preparation room except for the materials (i.e., candidate instructions) provided at the test site in addition to approved items (e.g., standard timing device and bottle of water).
- **Candidate Preparation Period (Approximately 15 minutes):** Candidates will be directed to a workstation with writing instruments and notepaper. Once all candidates are seated, an administrator will distribute a handout containing approximately five of the nine Structured Oral Interview questions. Candidates will receive the Structured Oral Interview question handout at the beginning of the preparation period. Candidates will have a total of approximately 15 minutes to review five of the nine Structured Oral Interview questions and prepare responses. Candidates may divide the preparation time among the Structured Oral Interview questions however they choose. The administrator will announce when the preparation period begins and will call time when the preparation period has ended. Candidates will **NOT** be permitted to talk to one other during the preparation period.

- **Escort to Waiting Area:** Upon completion of the preparation period, candidates will be escorted to their interview room. When the assessor board is ready, the candidate will be invited into the interview room.
- **Structured Oral Interview (Approximately 25 minutes):** Upon entering the interview room, the assessors will introduce themselves and provide a brief set of instructions. When the assessors issue the command to begin, candidates should begin by responding to the questions in sequence on the handout received during the preparation period. Candidates should start their response to each question by announcing the question number to enable the assessors to follow the candidate's responses and should transition to the next question in sequence upon completion of each question.

Once candidates indicate that they are finished responding to the questions received during preparation, the assessors will provide candidates with a handout containing the remaining questions. Candidates will have the time remaining to read, consider, and respond to the questions. Candidates should follow the same response procedure (i.e., announcing the number of the question to which they are responding and transitioning to the next question).

Candidates will have a total of approximately 25 minutes to respond to a total of approximately nine questions. The assessors will **NOT** time responses to each interview question separately. Rather the response period will be timed as a single session. Therefore, candidates will be responsible for keeping track of time to ensure that they are able to respond to all the interview questions in the allotted time.

- **Check-Out:** Once candidates have completed the Structured Oral Interview, they will be directed to turn in all materials and notes and then proceed to the check-out area.

E. Evaluation:

1. **Assessors:** Assessors will be comprised of sworn members from the Pennsylvania State Police. Assessors will be organized into panels of two.
2. **Evaluation Procedures:** It is important for candidates to be aware that each assessor will listen and take notes during the Structured Oral Interview. As the interview proceeds, the assessors will be observing and recording candidate behaviors of relevance to each of the abilities and characteristics assessed. After the assessors have observed, recorded, and reviewed the behavior of each candidate, they will rate candidates on each of these abilities and characteristics.
3. **Assessment Areas:** Based on a job analysis, the abilities and characteristics (i.e., dimensions) that are likely to be assessed during the Structured Oral Interview are defined below:
 - a) **Oral Presentation:** This area involves using language orally to communicate information or ideas to other people. This includes organizing information or ideas and expressing them in a clear and logical manner using a tone and vocabulary that is appropriate for the audience. This area is further enhanced by presenting information and ideas in an engaging and enthusiastic manner and by providing examples or details to support important points and opinions.

- b) **Interpersonal Relations:** This area involves developing cooperative and harmonious relationships with others. People who are effective in this area are supportive and committed to helping others resolve problems. They are sensitive to and respectful of the needs, feelings, opinions, beliefs, and values of people from all cultures/groups and maintain an open mind to better understand and more effectively interact with all people.

- c) **Comprehension and Reasoning:** This area involves demonstrating an understanding of written or spoken language, recognizing problems that need to be addressed, seeking out information from various sources, considering information that is relevant to problems, evaluating alternative solutions, and arriving at sound decisions.

A total score will be derived for the Structured Oral Interview by computing average dimension scores across assessors and adding those average dimension scores together.

GENERAL INTERVIEWING SUGGESTIONS

A. Sample Structured Oral Interview Questions:

The Structured Oral Interview questions will ask you for your qualifications and to provide examples of how you have, or how you will, handle specific situations. Although the focus of the question types is different (i.e., qualifications, past, future), the objective of each question type is the same – to evaluate your effectiveness in each of the abilities/characteristics being assessed. The most direct evidence you can provide is specific examples of past performance; so, it is appropriate for you to incorporate examples of past performance into your responses to **ALL** questions, including those that address hypothetical situations you may encounter in the future.

See below for sample Structured Oral Interview questions. These samples are meant to illustrate the kinds of questions you may receive during the Structured Oral Interview but will **NOT** be used as actual questions during the Structured Oral Interview.

Structured Oral Interview Sample Questions

1. If I were to ask someone who knows you well, how would they describe you?
2. What is your greatest accomplishment and how will what you gained from that accomplishment contribute to your ability to perform the job of law enforcement officer?
3. Law enforcement officers must be able to observe an event or hear a description of an event and then summarize the details in a report. If you were assigned the responsibility of summarizing the events of an incident in a report, what would you do to ensure you provide an accurate summary?
4. Describe an experience where you developed friendships with others when you were new to a job/team/club/group.
5. You are about to finish a work shift when you receive a call from your colleague, who is scheduled to replace you in 5 minutes, that he will be about 30 minutes late. You need to leave work on time as you have a social engagement to attend. What would you do in this situation?

Remember the handout that you will receive at the beginning of the approximately 15-minute preparation period will contain approximately five of the nine Structured Oral Interview questions. Candidates will receive the last four Structured Oral Interview questions in the interview room.

B. Response Preparation:

As part of your preparation for the Structured Oral Interview, you should identify specific examples of past performance that demonstrate that you possess the abilities and characteristics identified in the Evaluation section of this Preparation Guide. You should arrive prepared with specific examples of past performance that represent your capacity regarding the following:

- analyzing information
- making decisions and solving problems
- interacting effectively with individuals and team members of all cultures/groups
- working with others who have different work habits or styles
- resolving interpersonal conflicts

As part of your on-site preparation, you will receive a packet containing approximately five of the nine Structured Oral Interview questions that you will be asked to address. During your preparation time, you should determine how each question links to the abilities and characteristics to be evaluated.

To provide evidence to assessors that you possess a particular ability/characteristic, you should identify examples of your past performance that are relevant to the ability/characteristic to be assessed. When identifying relevant examples, you should select examples in which you performed successfully and contributed significantly to the outcome. This will help ensure that the example(s) you present will provide direct evidence of the abilities and personal characteristics that the Structured Oral Interview is designed to measure. During your responses, it may be helpful to also explain to assessors how your examples link to each ability/characteristic. This will provide assessors with insight into your thought process.

As part of your response, you could describe the situation or setting in which the example took place. This will serve to establish context for the assessors. This can be important as the assessors will be hearing your examples for the first time and may need additional information to understand the importance of your accomplishment and/or role.

Next, you could describe the actions you took to resolve or address the situation. Once again, it is important to provide sufficient detail so that the assessors can get a sense of your direct involvement in the situation. Be as specific as possible, keeping in mind the approximately 25-minute time limit for you to respond to the approximately nine questions.

Finally, describe the outcome of the situation and the role you played in the successful handling of the situation. Describe what you learned from the experience and be sure to explain how the lessons you learned contributed to your development of the abilities and characteristics being assessed as part of the Structured Oral Interview.

RESPONSE STRATEGIES FOR ABILITIES/CHARACTERISTICS

This section is organized around the abilities and characteristics that will provide the framework for the evaluation of your performance during the Structured Oral Interview. For each ability and characteristic, we provide the definition, identify the elements of the definition that provide the focus for evaluations and describe how you can incorporate these elements into your responses. Also, for each ability and characteristic, we provide a summary of how the strategies might be applied, or we identify some elements that you might consider for your response.

A. Oral Presentation:

1. **Definition:** This area involves using language orally to communicate information or ideas to other people. This involves organizing information or ideas and expressing them in a clear and logical manner using a tone and vocabulary that is appropriate for the audience. This area is further enhanced by presenting information and ideas in an engaging and enthusiastic manner and by providing examples or details to support important points and opinions.
2. **Elements of Definition:** The definition of Oral Presentation can be broken down into two general areas: Message Content and Message Delivery. The elements of each general area are presented below.

Message Content: Communicating information or ideas is critical to effective communication. Factors that can impact your effectiveness in this general area include:

- how you organize information,
- the level of detail you include,
- the conciseness of your message, and
- the use of language that is consistent with and appropriate for your intended audience.

Message Delivery: Communication can be further enhanced with effective delivery mechanisms including:

- delivery techniques, and
- engaging your audience.

3. **Response Strategies for Elements:** Response strategies pertaining to each general area and element of this ability are presented below.



MESSAGE CONTENT: RESPONSE ORGANIZATION



You are likely to be effective in communicating the intended message, if you take the time to identify and organize your thoughts **IN ADVANCE**. As part of your preparation period, you will be given access to five of the nine Structured Oral Interview questions and notepaper on which you might generate notes. During this time you should identify the information you plan to convey and then create an outline for your response to each interview question. The use of notes and outlines will allow you to develop a clear strategy for your responses. When creating an outline, it is not necessary that you identify every detail that you will convey, particularly since you will have a limited amount of time to prepare. You should, however, include enough detail to cover the critical elements in your responses.

To practice organizing your thoughts, consider generating notes and an outline for the following sample question:

Sample Structured Oral Interview Question:

Law enforcement officers must be able to observe an event or hear a description of an event and then summarize the details in a report. If you were assigned the responsibility of summarizing the events of an incident in a report, what would you do to ensure you provide an accurate summary?

While preparing to participate in the Structured Oral Interview, considering an experience like that described below will help you respond to the kinds of questions that may be asked. For example, for the sample question above, the following past experience would be relevant so spending some time in advance to consider how to present this example will be helpful during the actual Interview:

(Context) Past Experience = I was a sports reporter for my high school newspaper. To provide accurate summaries of sporting events, I:

(Actions)

- made reminder notes
- interviewed spectators to ensure completeness
- interviewed athletes/coaches to ensure accuracy
- checked my article against all sources

(Outcome)

- received a high school journalism award for detail and accuracy in reporting
- was hired as a part-time sports reporter for my local newspaper

Additional detail might be added until you achieve an outline that you feel comfortable using to guide your presentation of selected examples that might be relevant to the questions asked. Remember, these outlines may be used to prepare for the Structured Oral Interview before your arrival at the test site, but no external materials, other than a timing device and water bottle, may be brought to the test site.

In sum, the more time you spend preparing **IN ADVANCE** by organizing your thoughts and comments regarding past experiences that demonstrate your effectiveness in each of the three areas to be evaluated, the better prepared you will be to respond to any question you might receive. If you can practice presenting your thoughts to a friend or family member, that will be even more helpful in preparing you to present during the Structured Oral Interview.

In general, the first thing you should do during your preparation period is to review the five Structured Oral Interview questions so that you can determine how to allocate your time. For example, you may be given a total of approximately 15 minutes to prepare for approximately five of the nine interview questions. If you assume it takes about 2.5 minutes to conduct your initial review of all questions and the remaining preparation time (i.e., 12.5 minutes) is divided evenly among the interview questions that means you would have approximately 2.5 minutes to generate notes and/or an outline for responding to each question.

However, when you read the interview questions, you are likely to find some that you anticipated and are more prepared to respond to, and others that you did not anticipate that may require more preparation time. So, you should allocate your time accordingly, perhaps taking 1.5 minutes to prepare to respond to questions you anticipated and 3 minutes for questions you feel less prepared for. The point is, it will be up to you to divide the 15 minutes of preparation time among the five interview questions you receive during preparation so as to best relate past experiences to illustrate that you possess the abilities and characteristics being evaluated.



MESSAGE CONTENT: LEVEL OF DETAIL



During your responses, you will need to provide sufficient detail to clearly convey that you possess the ability/characteristic being targeted. You should be prepared with past experiences for each ability/characteristic to be assessed. When relating past experiences, you could describe the situation or the setting of the event, describe the actions you took to resolve the situation, and describe the outcome of the situation. When you leave the interview room, you will not be given an opportunity to provide any clarification to the assessors; so, be sure to provide sufficiently detailed responses while also keeping in mind the time limit for responding to all of the interview questions.



MESSAGE CONTENT: CONCISENESS



Wordiness and/or repetition of information at different points in your responses can obscure the key points you would like to convey and waste valuable response time. You should present your responses in a concise manner and avoid restating information. The exception to the above suggestion is when repetition is used to restate critical information to provide increased emphasis.



MESSAGE CONTENT: APPROPRIATENESS FOR INTENDED AUDIENCE



Present your responses in a manner that is appropriate for the intended audience. Avoid informal expression (e.g., slang, coarse/inappropriate language, text/e-mail shorthand). Although you might be asked to talk about negative experiences, you should avoid being overly critical of others such as past employers and coworkers. Instead, be prepared to talk about mistakes you may have made in the past, but turn them into something positive by identifying what you learned from the mistakes and how that learning experience has helped you to improve.



MESSAGE DELIVERY: DELIVERY TECHNIQUES



When responding, you should speak at an appropriate volume so that all assessors can clearly hear you. In addition, present your responses at an appropriate pace; neither rushing them nor drawing them out. Although you may use the full time allotted, it is not required in order to perform well, as the time taken to respond to the interview questions will not be evaluated in isolation. The critical factor is what you do in the time you use. Some candidates may be able to finish the Structured Oral Interview and do very well with time left to spare, while others may use the full interview period and yet not perform well.

Finally, awkward or distracting mannerisms or actions such as pacing, fidgeting with papers or pens/pencils, repeated use of “uh” or “um,” and long pauses can distract the assessors from your key points. These factors compete for assessors’ attention, and as a result, can detract from the effectiveness of your responses.



MESSAGE DELIVERY: ENGAGING YOUR AUDIENCE



When presenting information to others, there are techniques you can use to keep your audience interested and focused on your presentation. In the Structured Oral Interview setting, making periodic eye contact can help to engage your audience and can also be used to determine whether your message is being clearly conveyed. You might also change your tone of voice to emphasize key points. Repeating information can serve to add emphasis, but you need to remember the time limit for responding. In addition, supporting your points with past examples will also help to add emphasis to these points. As previously mentioned, you should identify past examples that relate to the abilities and characteristics the Structured Oral Interview is designed to measure. You should also relate past experiences in which you played a significant role in problem clarification and resolution. Finally, when you stand or sit up straight you project a message of confidence or interest in others.

4. Application of Response Strategies: When you do respond you should:

MESSAGE CONTENT:

- a) speak clearly
- b) provide information in a logical sequence
- c) provide sufficient detail
- d) use simple, precise words
- e) present information in a manner that is appropriate for your audience

MESSAGE DELIVERY:

- a) speak at an appropriate volume
- b) speak at an appropriate pace (neither rushing nor drawing out your responses)
- c) avoid displaying distracting mannerisms
- d) display appropriate/sufficient eye contact
- e) change your tone of voice to emphasize important points
- f) restate information to reinforce your message
- g) relay past experiences
- h) stand or sit up straight

B. Interpersonal Relations:

1. **Definition:** This area involves developing cooperative and harmonious relationships with others. People who are effective in this area are supportive and committed to helping others resolve problems. They are sensitive to and respectful of the needs, feelings, opinions, beliefs and values of people from all cultures/groups and maintain an open mind to better understand and more effectively interact with all people.
2. **Elements of Definition:** The definition of Interpersonal Relations can be broken down into the following elements:
 - Developing cooperative and harmonious relationships
 - Helping others resolve problems
 - Demonstrating consideration for others
3. **Response Strategies for Elements:** Response strategies pertaining to each element of this characteristic are presented below. Remember the goal of the Structured Oral Interview is to assess whether you possess the abilities and characteristics that contribute to effective performance as a law enforcement officer. The response strategies for each element are structured around the identification of relevant past experiences.



DEVELOPING COOPERATIVE AND HARMONIOUS RELATIONSHIPS



As a law enforcement officer, you will be expected to work cooperatively with other law enforcement personnel, members of the public, and members of other agencies. You may find that some of your new coworkers have approaches to work and/or attitudes about work that differ from your own approach/attitude. Regardless of these differences it will be up to you to develop cooperative working relationships with others. Despite differences, it is always important to remember that you and your coworkers are on the same team and are working towards the same goal.

When identifying a relevant past experience to address this element, you might focus on a past situation in which you were required to work with others who approached a work/school assignment differently than you did. For instance, you might describe a work assignment in which you were required to work with one or more co-workers, or a team project at school that required you to work with other students. In this situation, you may have found that there were differences of opinion about how to approach the assignment. You would want to describe the situation, the role you played, and the outcome.



HELPING OTHERS RESOLVE PROBLEMS



Being supportive of others can be demonstrated by your willingness to help others resolve problems. For this element, you should think about past examples where friends or family members have approached you for advice in dealing with a problem. When responding you might include any steps you took to gain an understanding of the problem. For instance, you may have asked your friend or family member to describe the problem and asked follow-up questions until you felt you had a thorough understanding of the problem. When offering advice, you should help guide your friend or family member to a solution to the problem.



DEMONSTRATING CONSIDERATION FOR OTHERS



It is important that you demonstrate sensitivity and concern for others' feelings, opinions, beliefs and values when helping them deal with problems. For this element, think about times when you may have helped a friend deal with a life-changing event that caused them to be extremely emotional. For instance, you may have helped a friend deal with a break-up with a significant other or the loss of a family member. Think about the steps you took to help your friend cope with the event. These steps may have consisted of things like being an active listener, showing genuine concern for their feelings, offering personal support (What can I do?), making yourself available, offering to help with daily responsibilities, etc.

As a law enforcement officer, you will be exposed to a great deal of diversity as you interact with coworkers, citizens, victims, and other members of the public who come from different backgrounds or cultures and may have experiences and belief systems that are different from your own. It is important to be respectful of these differences and to avoid making assumptions or judgments based on limited information.

For this element, think about past experiences in which you learned about a culture, religion, political perspective, etc. that is different from your own – perhaps from a friend, classmate or coworker. You might discuss what you learned from that individual, any challenges you faced, what you did to develop and foster that relationship, and how that relationship affected future interactions and relationships.

4. **Application of Response Strategies:** When considering examples from your past for questions that target Interpersonal Relations, you should consider examples of the following:
- a) developing constructive working relationships with others
 - b) helping others resolve problems
 - c) demonstrating sensitivity to and concern for others
 - d) respecting belief systems/cultures that are different from your own

C. Comprehension and Reasoning:

1. **Definition:** This area involves demonstrating an understanding of written or spoken language, recognizing problems that need to be addressed, seeking out information from various sources, considering information that is relevant to problems, evaluating alternative solutions, and arriving at sound decisions.
2. **Elements of Definition:** The definition of Comprehension and Reasoning can be broken down into the following elements:
 - Demonstrating an understanding of information
 - Seeking and considering information
 - Considering alternative solutions
 - Addressing the problem
3. **Response Strategies for Elements:** Response strategies pertaining to each element of this ability are presented below. Remember the goal of the Structured Oral Interview is to assess whether you possess the abilities and characteristics that contribute to effective performance as a law enforcement officer. The response strategies for each element are structured around the identification of relevant past experiences.



DEMONSTRATING AN UNDERSTANDING OF INFORMATION



This ability is used when you are reviewing the candidate instructions and interview questions. During the Structured Oral Interview, you will be responsible for demonstrating your understanding of the information provided (i.e., administrative procedures and interview questions). Your understanding of the administrative procedures might be demonstrated by responding to the interview questions in the same order in which the questions are presented on the handouts, announcing the number of the question before starting your response to each question, and transitioning from one question to the next.

To demonstrate your understanding of the interview questions you could paraphrase the question before providing your response. For example, consider how you might paraphrase the sample question presented below:

Sample Structured Oral Interview Question:

Law enforcement officers must be able to observe an event or hear a description of an event and then summarize the details in a report. If you were assigned the responsibility of summarizing the events of an incident in a report, what would you do to ensure you provide an accurate summary?

You could paraphrase by saying, “Question #3: If I were assigned to summarize an incident for a report, the steps I would take to provide an accurate summary include...” Alternatively, you could reference the details of the question when providing your response.

The second part of demonstrating understanding of the interview questions involves providing relevant information to answer the questions. The strategy of identifying the ability/characteristic the interview question is designed to target can be used to ensure that you provide relevant past experiences when responding to questions. For example, if one of the interview questions asks you to discuss an important decision you have made, you should recognize that the question is targeting the Comprehension and Reasoning assessment area. In relating your example, you could describe the situation in which the decision was made, the steps you took to collect information to make an informed decision, the alternate solutions you considered, and the final decision and the reason for the selection.



SEEKING AND CONSIDERING INFORMATION



If one of the interview questions directs you to discuss your decision-making process, to be more effective in this element you should identify an example from your past experience that includes evidence that you sought relevant and important information so that you could make an informed decision. For example, if you were describing how you selected a previous job, you might start by discussing what is important to you in a job and then identify the information needed to evaluate the important factors. For instance, you might include such things as the driving distance, location, opportunity to receive additional training, opportunity for promotion, salary, schedule or hours, benefits, etc. This process might assist you in determining if additional information is needed to make a well informed decision.

Identifying additional information needed is one step in the information gathering process. The next step involves determining how you will obtain the additional information. Using the same example, you might obtain some of the information online. Other information might be obtained from on-site visits and conversations with current or former employees.



CONSIDERING ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS



To be more effective in this element, responses to questions targeting Comprehension and Reasoning should also include a past experience demonstrating your ability to consider alternative solutions as part of your decision-making process. Once you have gained a complete understanding of the situation by seeking additional information, the next step involves generating potential solutions to address the key issues of concern. Not all solutions will be equally effective so you need to evaluate each potential solution to determine which solution might best resolve the situation. To ensure that you are making relevant comparisons, the same criteria should be applied to evaluate all potential solutions.

For example, if you were purchasing a used car and deciding between two cars of the same make and model, you might evaluate the two options using the following criteria

Criteria	Car #1	Car #2
Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Higher ▪ lower financing rate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ lower ▪ higher financing rate
Year/Mileage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ newer ▪ higher mileage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ older ▪ lower mileage
Gas Mileage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ same highway ▪ slightly better in city 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ same highway ▪ slightly worse in city
Accessories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ heated front seats ▪ LED headlights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ heated front seats ▪ Regular halogen headlights
Trade-in Value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ offering less for trade-in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ offering more for trade-in

Although you may not normally verbalize your thought process when making decisions, it may be beneficial to “think aloud,” that is, to convey the various options you considered and your evaluation process so that the assessors can take that information into account when evaluating the effectiveness of this element of Comprehension and Reasoning.



ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM



Effective decision-making also depends on the manner in which decisions are made. To be more effective in this element you might relate an example where you took responsibility for decision-making and arrived at your solution in a decisive and timely manner. In general, second guessing decisions should be limited to those instances where new information comes to light and strongly suggests that you need to revisit your original solution. In returning to the used car shopping scenario described above, you may have initially decided to purchase car #1. Before making your purchase, however, you may have discovered that the previous owner was involved in an accident resulting in structural/frame damage to the car. Based on the new information regarding the accident, you might change your mind and purchase car #2.

Decisions should also be made in a timely manner. Making timely decisions requires that you determine how much time you will devote to the analytical process before committing to a decision. To assist in making a timely decision, you should focus on identifying and collecting the information that is essential to gaining a complete and accurate understanding of the key issues presented. There may be additional information you could gather to feel more confident in your decision but that may not be important enough to risk any further delay. This is where describing the setting of your examples can assist the assessors in determining whether your decision was made in a timely manner.

While the use of intuition is acceptable for making decisions of a simple nature or on-the-spot decisions, complicated decisions tend to require a formal, structured approach as described above. Using examples of complicated decisions is more appropriate than decisions made through intuition when relating past examples for interview question responses.

4. **Application of Response Strategies:** When considering examples from your past for questions that target Comprehension and Reasoning, you should consider examples in which you displayed the following:

- a) identifying critical information and additional information needed
- b) identifying sources to obtain additional information
- c) considering alternate solutions
- d) evaluating alternate solutions to identify the optimal solution
- e) taking ownership of the decision
- f) making the decision in a timely manner
- g) making the decision in a decisive manner

CONCLUSION

This Preparation Guide is intended to familiarize you with the Structured Oral Interview, including the content, logistics, and evaluation procedures; as well as to provide suggestions for preparation. The suggestions provided here are not exhaustive -- we encourage you to engage in whatever additional preparation strategies you believe will enhance your chances of performing effectively during the Structured Oral Interview.

GOOD LUCK!