Study Guide for the
Pre-Professional Skills Test: Writing

A PUBLICATION OF ETS
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Chapter 1
Introduction to the PPST: Writing Test and Suggestions for Using this Study Guide
Background on the **PPST**

The *Pre-Professional Skills Test (PPST)* in Writing is designed to be taken early in a student's college career to measure whether the student has the skills needed to prepare for a career in education. The tests are available in a paper-based or computer-based format.

**About the PPST**

The *PPST: Writing* test reflects the most current research and the professional judgment and experience of educators across the country. The test includes the following:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Test Subject</th>
<th>Test Name and Code</th>
<th>Length of Test</th>
<th>Major Content Areas Covered and Approximate Number and Percentage of Questions in Each Area</th>
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| Writing      | **Computerized Pre-Professional Skills Test: Writing** (5720) | 68 minutes (38 minutes multiple-choice, 30 minutes essay) | • Grammatical Relationships (15 questions, 17%)  
• Structural Relationships (16 questions, 18.5%)  
• Idiom/Word Choice, Mechanics, and No Error (13 questions, 14.5%)  
• Essay (1 question, 50%) |
|              | **Pre-Professional Skills Test: Writing** (0720) | 60 minutes (30 minutes multiple-choice, 30 minutes essay) | • Grammatical Relationships (13 questions, 14.5%)  
• Structural Relationships (14 questions, 18.5%)  
• Idiom/Word Choice, Mechanics, and No Error (11 questions, 14.5%)  
• Essay (1 question, 50%) |

**Note:** A pencil must be used to write the essay for the paper-based test.
How to Use This Book

This book gives you instruction, practice, and test-taking tips to help you prepare for taking the PPST: Writing test. In chapters 1, 2, and 3, you will find an overview of the test, information about getting test scores and taking the test on computer, and general test-taking suggestions. Chapters 4 and 5 provide review courses in writing so you can refresh your understanding of the important principles you'll need to know for the test. These chapters also contain sample questions to help you become familiar with the question formats that will actually appear on the test and help you understand the kinds of knowledge and reasoning you will need to apply to choose correct answers. Chapter 6 contains a complete practice test, and chapter 7 contains the answers to the questions in the practice test, along with explanations of those answers.

So where should you start? Well, all users of this book will probably want to begin with the following two steps:

**Become familiar with the test content.** Note what chapters 4 and 5 say about the topics covered in the test.

**Consider how well you know the content in each topic.** Perhaps you already know that you need to build up your skills on a particular topic. If you're not sure, skim over chapters 4 and 5 to see what topics they cover. If you encounter material that feels unfamiliar or difficult, fold down page corners or insert sticky notes to remind yourself to spend extra time in these sections.

Also, all users of this book will probably want to end with these two steps:

**Familiarize yourself with test taking.** Chapter 3 is designed to answer frequently asked questions about the PPST: Writing test, such as whether it is a good idea to guess on a test. You can simulate the experience of the test by taking the practice test in chapter 6 within the specified time limits. Choose a time and place where you will not be interrupted or distracted. Then, using chapter 7, you can score your responses. The scoring key identifies which topic each question addresses, so you can see which areas are your strongest and weakest. Look over the explanations of the questions you missed and see whether you understand them and could answer similar questions correctly. Then plan any additional studying according to what you’ve learned about your understanding of the topics.

**Register for the test and consider last-minute tips.** Consult chapter 2 about how to register for the test, and review the checklist in chapter 8 to make sure you are ready for the test.

What you do between these first steps and these last steps depends on whether you intend to use this book to prepare on your own or as part of a class or study group.
CHAPTER 1

Using this book to prepare on your own:

If you are working by yourself to prepare for a PPST test, you may find it helpful to use the following approach:

**Fill out the Study Plan Sheet in appendix A.** This worksheet will help you to focus on what topics you need to study most, identify materials that will help you study, and set a schedule for doing the studying. The last item is particularly important if you know you tend to put off work.

**Use other materials to reinforce chapters 4 and 5.** These chapters contain review courses in writing, but you may want to get additional help for the topics that give you the most trouble. For example, if you know you have a problem with punctuation, you can find lists of common punctuation errors in books and on the Internet.

Using this book as part of a study group:

People who have a lot of studying to do sometimes find it helpful to form a study group with others who are preparing toward the same goal. Study groups give members opportunities to ask questions and get detailed answers. In a group, some members usually have a better understanding of certain topics, while others in the group may be better at other topics. As members take turns explaining concepts to each other, everyone builds self-confidence. If the group encounters a question that none of the members can answer well, the members can go as a group to a teacher or other expert and get answers efficiently. Because study groups schedule regular meetings, group members study in a more disciplined fashion. They also gain emotional support. The group should be large enough so that various people can contribute various kinds of knowledge, but small enough so that it stays focused. Often, three to six people is a good size.

Here are some ways to use this book as part of a study group:

**Plan the group’s study program.** Parts of the Study Plan Sheet in appendix A can help to structure your group’s study program. By filling out the first five columns and sharing the work sheets, everyone will learn more about your group’s mix of abilities and about the resources (such as textbooks) that members can share with the group. In the sixth column (“Dates planned for study of content”), you can create an overall schedule for your group’s study program.

**Plan individual group sessions.** At the end of each session, the group should decide what specific topics will be covered at the next meeting and who will be the presenter of each topic. Use the topic headings and subheadings in chapters 4 and 5 to select topics. Some sessions might be based on topics from the review courses contained in these chapters; other sessions might be based on the sample questions from these chapters.
CHAPTER 1

Prepare your presentation for the group. When it’s your turn to be presenter, prepare something that’s more than a lecture. If you are presenting material from the review course part of a chapter, write five to ten original questions to pose to the group. Practicing writing actual questions can help you better understand the topics covered on the test, as well as the types of questions you will encounter on the test. It will also give other members of the group extra practice at answering questions. If you are presenting material from the sample questions, use each sample question as a model for writing at least one original question.

Take the practice test together. The idea of chapter 6 is to simulate actual administrations of the test, so scheduling a test session with the group will add to the realism and will also help boost everyone’s confidence.

Learn from the results of the practice test. Use chapter 7 to score one other’s answer sheets. Then plan one or more study sessions based on the questions that group members got wrong. For example, each group member might be responsible for a question that he or she got wrong and could use it as a model to create an original question to pose to the group, together with an explanation of the correct answer modeled after the explanations in chapter 7.

Whether you decide to study alone or with a group, remember that the best way to prepare is to have an organized plan. The plan should set goals based on specific topics and skills that you need to learn, and it should commit you to a realistic set of deadlines for meeting these goals. Then you need to discipline yourself to stick with your plan and accomplish your goals on schedule.

In the next chapter, you will find information about practical matters, including how to register for the test and tips for taking the computer-based version of the test.
Chapter 2

Practical Matters: Getting Test Scores, and Tips for Taking the Computer Version
CHAPTER 2

Getting Your Scores

If you take the paper-and-pencil version of the test, your official score report will arrive in the mail approximately four weeks after your test date. Your score report will contain your overall score and four area scores.

If you are taking the computer version of a PPST test, you do not have to preregister with Educational Testing Service. To take the computer version, contact Prometric by calling 1-800-853-6773 to arrange a day and time to take the test. You can also visit http://etsis4.ets.org/tcenter/cbt_dm.cfm to locate the test center nearest you. Once you are seated at the computer, you will be asked to fill in your name, address, and other information on the registration screen. Unlike the math and reading tests, which are solely multiple-choice, you will not receive an unofficial score report at the end of the testing session because your essay response has to be scored before an overall test score can be determined. Two weeks later, you will receive an official score report in the mail that will contain your overall score and four area scores.

Taking the Test on Computer

You need only a beginner’s level of computer skill to take the computer-based version of a PPST test. If you have spent an hour surfing the Internet, you know enough about how to work the mouse and how to click on buttons. If you do not have experience with computers, the mouse, and the Internet, visit your public library and ask someone to help you get started. Surf around until you feel comfortable making choices with the mouse.
CHAPTER 2

What the computer-based version looks like

Most of the screens you will see when you take the computer-based version of a PPST test will look like this:

Note how the screen is laid out:

- In the upper right-hand corner, you can see which question you are now working on (question 27 of 45).

- In the upper left-hand corner, you can see how much time you have left (37 minutes). You can hide or display the clock by clicking (During the last few minutes of the test, the clock remains on continuously.)
The test questions appear in the middle of the screen. You simply click the oval next to your answer choice, and it becomes blacked in. You can change your answer by clicking on another oval, which then becomes blacked in, while the oval you clicked earlier changes back to white.

When you're ready to move to the next question, click Next. To move back to a previous question, click Prev.

To remind yourself of a question you want to check later, click Mark. When you return to the question, you'll see that the button has changed to Mark.

Help is always available. Just click Help to see instructions about the PPST test.

When you reach the last question, or when time runs out, you will be able to exit the test and receive your score. Once you exit a test, you CANNOT return to it.
• If you want to review questions you have seen (such as those you have marked, or those you have left unanswered), click Review. You’ll see a screen that looks like this:

![Review Screen]

- Click on the question you want to review, then click Go To Question. To resume where you left off, click Return To Where I Was.

In the next chapter, you will find some additional suggestions for minimizing anxiety about taking tests.