

I'm not a bot



Transportation security administration test

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The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material. Transportation security officers (TSOs) or TSA Inspector Managers are integral to airport security, especially when implementing basic safety protocols before people board an airplane. Without TSOs, many of the security measurements in an airport would not be possible. Becoming a TSO is a huge accomplishment that requires a rigorous hiring process. This article will go through what a TSO agent is and how to prepare for the assessments, such as the TSA Assessment Test, as well as other requirements you'll have to complete before you are hired. Am I eligible to be a TSO? What do they do? To be a TSO, you must be a U.S. citizen, 18 years or older, and have a high school diploma. Passing a background check/physical exam and having an open schedule are also important. The primary responsibilities of a TSO are: Using screening equipment to detect any hazardous materials in baggage or individuals trying to board a plane Searching passengers or bags if something is identified as dangerous Customer service Directing pedestrian traffic throughout the entry and exit points at the airport Implementing airport standard operating procedures What Does the Recruitment Process Look Like for the Transportation Security Agency? First, you will need to fill out the online application. This is where you will enter all the necessary personal information and create your USAJOBS profile. Next, you will take the required tests and airport assessments. Once you pass these, you will have your medical evaluation, drug test screening, and background check. If you successfully complete all of these requirements, you are all set to become a TSO. What Test Is Required to be a TSO? The Transportation Security Authority Computer Based Test (TSA CBT), also known as the Transportation Security Officer Computer Based Test (TSOBT), is one of the first steps you'll take in the TSO application process. Take the TSA Computer Based Practice Test What Is the Test Like? How Can I Prepare for It? In total, the test is 2.5 hours long and is administered on the computer. Because this test is considerably longer than other pre-employment assessments, it's challenging to complete it. However, you do get some relief because it is separated into sections. Overall, the goal of the test is to see if you can do the two essential job duties of a TSO: Efficiently articulating policies and procedures Identifying objects on x-ray images Let's go through each section of the test. X-Ray Test The first section of the TSA CBT test is called the Object Recognition Test (ORT). Based on the skills you will use daily on the job, you will be required to answer 100 questions. The actual test is a time test and you be given around 15 seconds to answer each one. Because this section is exceptionally fast-paced, it is known to be the most challenging part of the actual test. Each question consists of a picture of an X-ray scan with different objects on them. Your job is to determine what the items are and if they are hazardous or not. In some cases, you will be given a type of object that you need to identify. Once you have determined what the items are, you select one of the following options: Pass - no items are considered hazardous Alarm - hazardous items identified; immediate action needs to be taken Hold - potentially hazardous item is identified; further inspection is needed While the questions are not impossibly difficult, they are still challenging. Some of the items may be confusing because they are overlapped or are a blend of colors. Both of these can make it harder to identify which object you're looking for, much less determine whether or not it's considered a hazard. Thankfully, test takers have options on how to prepare for this section. There are many TSA Test Prep resources that you can use to pass your upcoming test. For example, in the Job Test Prep TSA CBT PrepPack, there are hundreds of sample questions from the x-ray section of the test. While they aren't the exact same as what you might see on the real test, they are very similar. Practicing these as much as possible will help you be able to identify objects easier and get used to the unique way the images are portrayed — especially if you've never had experience reading or looking at x-ray scans. Example Question 1 The one below is an example of a question that checks if you can recognize x-ray scans properly. In the picture given below, can you detect a weapon? How to Answer As you can see from the image, it's difficult to detect which item is which. While a phone charger and a water bottle are easy to spot, a weapon isn't. Test experts recommend practicing looking at everyday objects, along with more niche ones, to identify their shape from an obscure angle. Color also plays a significant role in determining what items are in the picture. Specific items will show up as different colors based on what they look like in reality, so this is another way to help you differentiate between what is and isn't hazardous. X-rays can depict objects in the following colors based on the item's density: Blue or Black - These indicate the heaviest items in the bag. Usually, metal or hard plastics, these items will be the darkest images on the X-ray. Some examples of what might show in these colors are guns, batteries, or potentially hazardous high-density materials. Green - These items have a lighter density than the heaviest items in the bag but aren't the lightest either. Electronics and most plastic items will show up in this color, so it will most likely be the dominant color in an average bag. Orange - Any lightweight items with a low density will show up in orange, including rubber, leather, and any type of liquid or food. Powders are also in this category, so potentially hazardous materials could show up in orange. When looking at the different parts of the X-ray image, it's important not to judge an item by only its color. Just because something is lightweight and shows up in orange doesn't mean that it isn't hazardous, just like something blue or black isn't always hazardous. Knowing items typically brought during travel and what is on the banned or dangerous materials list can be beneficial when taking this section of the test. Example Question 2 Here's another example. Take a look at the image scanned by an X-ray machine. The suitcase contains several different colors but is predominantly orange. However, you can clearly see a camera or some sort of electronic device in green, along with some darker metal jewelry items in blue/black. Try to tell what the other objects are. Practicing questions like these can set you apart from other applicants and help you identify items. Tell you to pay close attention, which is necessary to do to pass the TSA Test with flying colors. This test section is challenging but doesn't have to be ridiculously hard if you practice image interpretation as much as possible. Take the TSA Computer Based Practice Test Tips for the X-ray Test Remember, each question will be worded differently. You will be asked to identify different objects or to pick out unique aspects of an image, but it won't be in the same category. The diversity in the questions in this section is meant to test your ability to rapidly interpret information that can differ every minute of your shift. If you have trouble doing this, it could be an indication that being a TSO isn't a great fit for you. Lastly, an essential tip for the X-ray section of the test is remembering to pace yourself. Although you only have 15 seconds to answer each question, you shouldn't be rushing through them. Remember to stay calm. Implementing the strategies you have learned by studying the PrepPack and your regulatory skills will help you focus on the pertinent information in the question rather than panicking. Also, going as slow as possible within the time frame you've given is one of the most important things you can do when trying to read the x-ray questions. English Skills Section This section of the TSA CBT test focuses on your ability to use your reading and writing skills efficiently, which is a large portion of the tasks you will do as a TSO. There are 50-60 multiple choice questions in this section. You get 90 seconds to complete each question, which is considerably longer than the X-ray test. Because of this, you will be able to focus more on the question and answer it correctly. However, the point of this section is to assess your speed when it comes to processing and understanding information. The subject matter for each section could be about anything, so you won't have to memorize specific areas of knowledge to do well on this test. However, you will have to have a basic understanding of what the question is asking. There are three subsections to the TSA Writing Skills Assessment/English Test: Reading Comprehension One of the necessary skills in being a TSO is understanding information after skimming a particular document. You will often be asked to move at a fast pace when helping people through security or assessing items, so having this skill will be useful during your daily routine. The reading comprehension section tests your English skills by providing a short passage that you need to analyze. Again, you will only have 90 seconds to figure out the correct answer for each question. Here is a sample question: In the eighteenth century, Marie Antoinette was one of the largest public figures in France. Her royal status allowed her to have many privileges, including building her own residence on the grounds of the Palace of Versailles. While costly, she ended up having this as her main residence as compared to living in the palace with her husband the King due to relationship conflicts and her own personal interests. At the time, France was in the middle of a lot of conflict with the French Revolution brewing. Citizens were becoming resentful of French royalty because of the unfair treatment of the general public. Marie Antoinette was one of the main targets. Why did Marie Antoinette build her own residence on the grounds of Versailles? a. She didn't like her husband. b. The French Revolution was starting. c. Costs were lower. d. She wanted to live on her own. Take the TSA Computer Based Practice Test Written Communication For this section, you will be given a sentence with missing words. To answer the question, you have to fill in the blanks with the most appropriate word. Similar to the reading comprehension subsection, using context clues and common sense will be essential to help you answer the question. Out of the five choices that you will be presented with, some will make sense, but others won't. Picking the one that fits best with the context of the sentence is the goal of the question. Knowing basic English grammar is also crucial for this section, as some of the words you have to choose from could be misspelled or in the wrong tense. For example, you might see a question that looks like this in this section: Being _____ for a test includes _____. a. Preparedness, studying b. Prepared, studying c. Prepared, studied d. Preparation, studying e. None of these Take Transport Security Administration Computer Based Test Now Vocabulary Like other standardized tests you may have taken, the vocabulary section of the English/Written Skills assessment looks at how many words you know. You'll have to find the synonym or antonym of the word given in the question. Other important things to know for this section are what synonyms, antonyms, and homophones are, along with the correct spelling of the words you're given. Some sample questions are: A synonym for the word "large" is: a. Narrow b. Squander c. Massive d. Small Tall is opposite of the word: a. Short b. Further c. Large d. Between What is another word for a solution? a. Problem b. Answer c. Strategy d. Conclusion The Job Test Prep PrepPack for the English/Writing Skills Assessment provides more sample questions like the ones above, along with sample tests. The best way to succeed on this section of the test is to practice as much as possible, so utilizing the wealth of information with the PrepPack is recommended. The skills you are practicing for this section apply to more than just the TSA Test. Having good language skills is a necessary part of any job. English skills are particularly important in the job market. So, knowing the common sentence structures, capitalization and other grammar rules of the English language can really help you succeed. As such, you could consider studying for this test format as a general investment toward any job that you may have in the future, as well as any other education you might pursue. Because of this, performing well in this section is extremely important. Some more tips for succeeding on this section of the test are: Review basic grammar rules such as how to use punctuation or structure a sentence properly. Practice reading short passages or paragraphs by setting a timer for 30 seconds. After you've read the information, write down everything you can remember about it without going back and looking. Practice using context clues by going through a passage and determining the main idea. What Does the TSA CBT Prep Pack Include? Along with hundreds of sample questions for each section and subsection for the TSA CBT test, the Prep Pack includes: 11 X-ray drills with "new and improved X-ray images" Study guide with new X-ray tips 18 reading comprehension practice tests 21 written communication practice tests 8 vocabulary practice exam 1 complete diagnostic sample test and study guide Interview preparation tips As you can see, the PrepPack is meant to help you study throughout the entire hiring process — not just for the test. Because becoming a TSO isn't the most straightforward process, researching and being prepared for each part of the hiring journey is essential. Investing in the PrepPack is easy. All you do is visit Job Test Prep's website and pick which package you want to choose: 1 Week - \$79 1 Month - \$89 3 Months - \$99 Each of these options gives you access to all of the prep materials mentioned above, just for a different time frame. The earlier you start preparing for this test, the better. As we've mentioned before, the TSA CBT Test is extremely challenging. If you start studying two days before you're scheduled to take the TSA Test, the likelihood that you will score your best is low. There are also some free practice examinations that you can take advantage of in addition to the PrepPacks. These tests are shorter than what you get on the actual PrepPack, but they give you a chance to see what you're buying before you invest in all the Job Test Prep study materials. Take Transport Security Administration Computer Based Test Now How will my scores be interpreted? Scoring highly on the TSA CBT test is extremely important if you want to land a job as a TSO. Employers want the best of the best when it comes to this position because the job is so challenging. Your score will be calculated based on how many questions you get correct. The scoring interpretation system for the TSA CBT test is anything but traditional. Based on your score, you will be placed in one of three categories: Best qualified Highly qualified Qualified Placement in each category goes by how high your score. For example, say the highest score you can get is 100%. If a passing score was considered 70%, anyone scoring that or above would be evenly distributed between the three categories. Those with the highest scores are placed in the "best qualified" and are most likely to get hired. The middle category, "highly qualified," indicates that you scored well but did not get into the top percentage of the highest scores. Last, if you are placed in the "qualified" category, it means that while you met all the requirements to pass the test, you didn't score above and beyond the requirements. Employers for TSOs will be referred to your application based on which category you fall under. If you do not make a passing score, you do not qualify to be a TSO. Unfortunately, there is quite a long waiting period until you can take the test again. This is another reason why preparing and studying as hard as you can is a good idea. Take Transport Security Administration Computer Based Test Now How Can I prepare for the TSO Interview? If you pass all the required TSA CBT tests, you will be invited to do either a virtual or in-person interview. The type of interview depends on health/safety regulations and your location of the employer. However, despite where you go for your interview, there are a few things you can do to prepare: Dress professionally. Wear something nice and presentable. Prepare a list of questions to ask the interviewer. This shows that you are interested in the position and want to know more about it. Make eye contact throughout the interview. People want to know that you're paying attention to them. If your interview is virtual, be in a quiet environment. Put away anything that can cause distractions. Turn off or put your gadgets on silent mode. Like having good grammar and writing skills, demonstrating strong interview skills can benefit you no matter what job you're in. The interview is crucial in any hiring process. It is normal to be nervous going into a job interview. In fact, you could be too confident about your performance if you aren't having any anxiety at all. One way to help you ace your interview for a TSO position is to research the company. If you are applying at a large airport, research their mission and history in the community. Potential employers want to know that you have done your due diligence in learning about what they do and how their organization operates. Most people don't take the time to do this, so having a significant discussion about the place you're applying to can set you apart from the crowd. Final Thoughts Overall, the TSO hiring process can be highly stressful. There are many obstacles that you might face and many hoops you have to jump through in order to succeed. However, with the right motivation and study materials, you can do it! You can buy a TSA Test PrepPack, which will help you immerse yourself into a simulation of the actual TSA Test, rather than grasp at straws to try and study concepts you don't fully understand. Take Transport Security Administration Computer Based Test Now TSA CBT Test FAQs 1. Is there a practice test for TSA? To prepare for the TSA X-ray test, you can use the free questions and correct answers TSA practice test from the link provided above. The written section of the exam consists of roughly 60 questions, and the X-ray section consists of approximately 100 X-ray images, which are broken up into five or six sessions. 2. How hard is the TSA computer-based test? The TSA computer-based test is not hard, but it is important to prepare for it. The test covers basic information about aviation and airport security. It is important to review the material before taking the test. 3. What does the TSA Computer-Based Test consist of? X-ray interpretation and English language competency are the two components of the TSA Computer-Based Test (TSA CBT Test). A 2.5-hour time restriction is set for the test, but many students complete the exam in less than half that time. 4. How long is the TSA Test? The TSO computer-based test has a time limit of two and a half hours. The TSA evaluation is critical because it provides TSA with a more complete picture of your abilities. In order to sit for the exam, candidates must go to a certain TSA testing center. 5. How many times can you take the TSA test? You can take the test twice. On the first attempt, it's critical to attempt to pass the TSA CBT exam. You must wait six months before applying for any TSO employment if you fail the test. The TSA CBT test cannot be retaken after a second failure. Written by Bailee Boggess McCoy Bailee, MSW, is a freelance writer and editor. She specializes in career, social work, tech, B2B, marketing, and medical, health, and wellness content. She has experience as a job coach, DEI consultant for companies, community project manager, and clinical researcher. She received her Bachelor's degree in Psychology from Georgetown College in 2018, and studied neurolinguistics and developmental psychology at the University of Oxford. She earned her Master's in Social Work at the University of Kentucky in 2021. Her scientific research has been presented at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference and published in the Journal of Alzheimer's Disease and Associated Disorders. Related Prep Guides Sarah is an accomplished educator, researcher and author in the field of testing and assessment. She has worked with various educational institutions and organisations to develop innovative evaluation methods and enhance student learning. Sarah has published numerous articles and books on assessment and learning. Her passion for promoting equity and fairness in the education system fuels her commitment to sharing insights and best practices with educators and policymakers around the world. Photo credit: Carolina K. Smith MD / Shutterstock.comSecurity screeners at the Transportation Security Administration post some of the lowest satisfaction scores and have the highest attrition rates of any government employees. These issues were exacerbated during the 35-day government shutdown that saw TSA employees working without pay. At a May 21 hearing of the House Homeland Security Committee, witnesses and lawmakers agreed that the problem was stressing the transportation system. Rep. Bennie Thompson (D-Miss.) pointed to the consistently low morale, as reported through the annual Federal Employee Viewpoint Surveys, among TSA employees as a consequence of the low pay, lack of workplace rights and turnover. John Kelly, the acting inspector general for the Department of Homeland Security, testified that "smaller airports have the highest attrition rates" and that "retention and training challenges contribute to airport security weaknesses." That level of turnover means that TSA ends up spending money on training for employees who leave shortly after being hired, Kelly said. In fiscal year 2017, TSA spent \$75 million on training more than 9,000 new security officers, about 20 percent of whom left within six months of being hired. To provide more security to employees, American Federation of Government Employees President J. David Cox advocated extending title 5 rights, which cover protections such as collective bargaining and due process, to TSA screeners, as well as bringing them under the general schedule to improve and make their pay more consistent. "Put them on the general schedule until we figure out something better," he said. Former DHS Chief Human Capital Officer Jeff Neal said that while pay was the "most significant" issue among TSA employees, bringing them under the general schedule would not adequately address the morale problems. "The problem with the general schedule is that it's a very inflexible system," Neal said. "Pay raises are not really necessary in some places, and in others, pay raises are desperately needed.... It's too blunt an instrument to actually be effective." The hearing comes on the heels of the findings of a panel of public- and private-sector advisors, including Neal, on the challenges facing the TSA workforce. In its report, the panel said that while TSA employees identified pay as the "key" driver of turnover, problems with the hiring and promotion process, IT and concerns over favoritism "will continue to affect morale and turnover." Earlier this year, Thompson introduced a bill that would extend federal civil service protections to TSA screeners and put them under the general schedule for pay, but it has not received a House vote.