

Introduction to the PPST

Pre-Professional Skills Test

The Pre-Professional Skills Test (PPST) measures your proficiency in basic academic abilities consisting of reading, mathematics, and writing. The PPST is required by most university departments of education for admission to teacher preparation programs, and many state departments of education require the PPST before teacher licensure and certification are issued. The successful passing of the PPST varies from state to state. You should contact your local state department of teacher certification to learn more about required standards.

The format of the exam is multiple-choice along with one written essay, and you have the choice to take either a paper-based version or a computer-based version.

Pre-Professional Skills Test

The PPST is composed of three multiple-choice tests and one essay:

The Reading Test. This multiple-choice test requires your ability to read, comprehend, and evaluate passages or statements and answer questions based upon the content of these passages. The reading passages are taken from a wide range of subject areas, but no prior knowledge of the topic is necessary to answer the questions. All questions are based upon the content of the passage provided.

The Mathematics Test. This multiple-choice test requires a cumulative understanding of math basics from problem solving to quantitative reasoning. Knowledge should include basic math from elementary school to at least one year of high school and possibly one year of college.

The Writing Test. This test is divided into two sections. Part A is a multiple-choice section and contains questions related to English usage and sentence correction. This section requires your ability to detect and correct errors in standard written English. Part B requires your ability to plan and write a well-organized essay on an assigned topic.

Questions Commonly Asked about the PPST

Q: Who administers the PPST?

A: Educational Testing Service (ETS) prepares and scores the PPST, but unless otherwise specified, institutions and agencies that plan to use the tests arrange for the administration with ETS. For further information regarding test administration, contact PPST Program, Educational Testing Service, Box 6051, Princeton, NJ 08541-6051 or call (609) 771-7395, www.ets.org/praxis.

Q: Is the PPST part of the Praxis Series?

A: Yes. ETS has grouped a number of its beginning teacher tests under the title “The Praxis Series.” Praxis I includes the PPST tests of reading, writing, and mathematics skills that all teachers need. Praxis II includes exams on the specific subjects prospective teachers will actually teach. Praxis III includes tests that evaluate classroom teaching performance.

Q: How long is the PPST?

A: The computer-based PPST is approximately 3 hours and 45 minutes; however, you should allow at least 4.5 hours for this version of the test since there are computer tutorials and a verification process to collect your background information. The actual testing time for the paper-based PPST is approximately 3 hours if you take the entire test in one day.

Q: How is the PPST scored?

A: Both the PPST paper-based and computer-based tests are scored on a scale ranging from 150 to 190. Separate scores are reported for each test. The Reading Test and the Mathematics Test are scored solely on the number of items answered correctly. The Writing Test score is a composite score adjusted to give approximately equal weight to the number right on the multiple-choice section and the essay score. Since each state determines passing standards, it is important to check the passing score required for certification in your state.

Q: How is the PPST score used?

A: The PPST may be used for selection, admission, evaluation, and certification in conjunction with other relevant information. Because each institution or agency may set its own minimum standards and requirements, you should contact the appropriate institution, district, department, or agency to find out if you must take the test and to learn the required standards.

Q: How long does it take to receive my score?

A: It will take approximately four weeks for you to receive your score results if you take the paper-based test. Unofficial results for the computer-based test are available immediately on the day of your test for the multiple-choice results; but your official test report, including the written essay portion of the PPST, will be sent to you by mail approximately two weeks after your test date.

Q: Should I take the PPST by paper-and-pencil or by computer?

A: There are several factors to consider when deciding if you should take the PPST as the traditional paper-based version or as the computer-based version. Since both versions have the same level of difficulty, what matters most is that you are at ease with the method of test administration. For more information about the advantages of computer-based testing, read our section on “Taking the Computer-Based PPST” on page 9.

Q: When and where is the PPST *paper-based* test administered, and how do I register?

A: The paper-based version of the PPST is administered at locations throughout each state. You will need to list your first-choice and alternative-choice locations on your registration form. To register for the PPST, find a testing site, or obtain information about registration fees, check the PPST registration bulletin available from your local university department of education or contact ETS via www.ets.org/praxis to register online. Once you submit a registration form to ETS, you will receive an admission ticket to take with you the day of the test.

Q: When and where is the PPST *computer-based* test administered, and how do I register?

A: The computer-based administration of the PPST is made by appointment through Prometric Candidate Services at (800) 853-6773. Walk-in appointments are available on a “space-available basis only.” There are over 300 test locations in the United States. You cannot take a computer-based test more than six times within one calendar year, and you may not take the computer-based test more than one time per calendar month.

Q: Are there any special arrangements for taking the PPST?

A: There are some special arrangements available for people with disabilities. Call or write to ETS long before your test date to inquire about special arrangements at www.ets.org/disability.

Q: What materials should I bring to the PPST?

A: Bring positive photo-bearing identification and a watch. If taking the paper-based test, you should also bring three or four sharpened No. 2 pencils and a good eraser. You may *not* bring scratch paper, calculators (including watch calculators), books, compasses, rulers, papers of any kind, or recording or photographic devices.

Q: How should I prepare for the PPST?

A: Understanding and practicing test-taking strategies will help a great deal. Subject matter review in arithmetic, simple algebra, plane geometry, and measurement, as well as in English grammar, usage, and punctuation is also very valuable.

Q: Should I guess on the PPST?

A: Yes. Since there is no penalty for wrong answers, guess if you have to. If possible, first try to eliminate some of the choices to increase your chances of guessing the correct answer. But don’t leave any questions unanswered.

Q: Where can I get more information?

A: For more information, write to Educational Testing Service, The Praxis Series, P. O. Box 6051, Princeton, NJ 08541-6051 or visit www.ets.org/praxis.

Getting Started: Five Steps to Success on the PPST

1. **Awareness** – Become familiar with the test format, test directions, test material, and scoring by visiting the PPST Website at www.ets.org/praxis.
2. **Basic Skills** – Review the basic abilities required for success on the test in reading, mathematics, and writing in Part II, “Analysis of Exam Areas.” Know what to expect on the exam. This will help you to determine your strengths and weaknesses so that you can develop a study plan unique to your individual needs.
3. **Question Types** – Become familiar with the question types of each area on the test outlined in Part II, “Analysis of Exam Areas,” so that you can practice different versions of the same question type.
4. **Strategies and Techniques** – Practice using the strategies outlined in the next section of this book and decide what works best for you. Remember that if it takes you longer to recall a strategy than to solve the problem, it’s probably not a good strategy for you to adopt. The goal in offering strategies is for you to be able to work easily, quickly, and efficiently. Remember not to get stuck on any one question. Taking time to answer the most difficult question on the test correctly, but losing valuable test time, won’t get you the score you deserve. And most importantly, remember to answer every question, even if you answer with an educated guess. There is no penalty for wrong answers, so it is to your advantage to answer all questions.
5. **Practice** – In addition to the sample practice problems in Part II, “Analysis of Exam Areas,” this book offers you four complete practice tests. Practice, practice, practice, practice is the key to your success on the PPST.

Taking the PPST: Two Successful Overall Approaches

The PPST is offered in paper-based and computer-based formats. Although the test question types are identical in both versions, there are a few considerations to think about when using general test-taking strategies. This section will present overall test-taking approaches to help you prepare for success. Keep in mind that there is no right or wrong way to answer questions, but there are general strategies that can help you get your best possible score. Following, we identify strategies that are applicable to each format of the test.

The “Plus-Minus” system

Paper-based strategy

Many who take the PPST don’t get their best-possible score because they spend too much time on difficult questions, leaving insufficient time to answer the easy questions. Don’t let this happen to you. Since every question within each section is worth the same amount, use the following system.

1. Answer easy questions immediately.
2. **Solvable (+):** When you come to a question that seems solvable but appears too time consuming, mark a large plus sign (+) next to that question in your test booklet and make an educated guess answer on your answer sheet. Then move on to the next question.
3. **Difficult (–):** When you come to a question that seems “impossible” to answer, mark a large minus sign (–) next to it on the test booklet. Then mark a “guess” answer on your answer sheet and move on to the next question.

Since your time allotment is about a minute per question or less, a “time-consuming” question is a question that you estimate will take you more than several minutes to answer. But don’t waste time deciding whether a question is a “+” or a “–.” Act quickly, as the intent of this strategy is, in fact, to save you valuable time. After you’ve worked all the easy questions, your booklet should look something like this:

- 1.
 - + 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
 - + 5.
 - etc.
4. After answering all the questions you immediately can in that section (the easy ones), go back and work on your “+” questions. Change your “guess” on your answer sheet, if necessary, for those questions you are now able to answer.
 5. If you finish your “+” questions and still have time left,
 - (a) you can attempt those “–” questions—the ones that you considered “impossible.” Sometimes a question later in that section will “trigger” your memory and you’ll be able to go back and answer one of the earlier “impossible” questions.
or
 - (b) you can not bother with those “impossible” questions. Rather, spend your time reviewing your work to be sure you didn’t make any careless mistakes on the questions you thought were easy to answer.

Remember: You don't have to erase the pluses and minuses you made on your question booklet. And be sure to fill in all your answer spaces—if necessary, with a guess. As there is no penalty for wrong answers, it makes no sense to leave an answer space blank. And, of course, remember that you may work in only one section of the test at a time.

Computer-based strategy

The abovementioned plus-minus system can be used with the computerized test as well. By using scratch paper (or dry erase board) provided by the test administrators, you can quickly identify two types of questions: solvable (+) and very difficult (-).

- **Solvable (+):** This type of question is too time consuming, but you know you can solve it.
- **Difficult (-):** This type of question appears to be “impossible to solve.” This is a question that you should come back to only if you have answered easy problems first. **Don't spend too much valuable test time deciding whether a question is solvable or not. Since you have about one minute to answer each question, you must act quickly.** Follow these steps:
 1. Answer easy questions immediately.
 2. Use a sheet of paper to list those questions that may be solvable, but will require more time.
 3. Draw two columns on a sheet of paper. Label the top of column one with a plus symbol “+” and the top of column two with a minus symbol “-.”
 4. The computer-based test allows you to move forward and backward, from question to question. Before you proceed, mark the problem on your computer screen by clicking on the “mark tool.” Note that there are two boxes on the computer screen that help you to easily identify unanswered questions. One box you can click on at any time is labeled “GO TO QUESTION ,” and the other is labeled “RETURN TO WHERE I WAS.” Take advantage of these tools to help you maneuver through the test.
 5. Quickly write down the problem number with any notes to help trigger your memory.
 6. After you have solved all problems in the “+” column, attempt to solve those impossible problems. If you cannot solve difficult problems, pick one letter answer choice (A, B, C, D, or E) and use that letter on the remaining questions. Spend no more than a few minutes to mark all difficult problems that are left unanswered. Remember that there is no penalty for wrong answers, and statistically, your chances are better if you pick one letter and use it on all unanswered questions.
 7. Work on one section at a time. Do not proceed to the next section without answering all questions within your section. **DO NOT EXIT THE TEST UNTIL YOU HAVE ANSWERED ALL QUESTIONS.** Once you exit, you cannot return.

Your scratch paper should look like this:

+	-
3. B or E	6. not D or E
11. A, not B	14. A?
15. C?	
17. not D	

The elimination strategy

Paper-based strategy

Take advantage of being allowed to mark in your testing booklet. As you eliminate an answer choice from consideration, make sure to *mark it out in your question booklet* as follows:

(~~A~~)

?(B)

(~~C~~)

(~~D~~)

?(E)

Notice that some choices are marked with question marks, signifying that they may be possible answers. This technique will help you avoid reconsidering those choices you have already eliminated. It will also help you narrow down your possible answers.

Again, these marks you make on your testing booklet do not need to be erased.

Computer-based strategy

ETS recommends that you try to eliminate as many of the answer choices as possible, and then make an educated guess. On the computer-based exam you may find it helpful to quickly write on your scratch paper the letters of the answer choices you wish to eliminate so you don't keep reconsidering them. Your scratch paper should look like the example above.

Taking the Computer-Based PPST

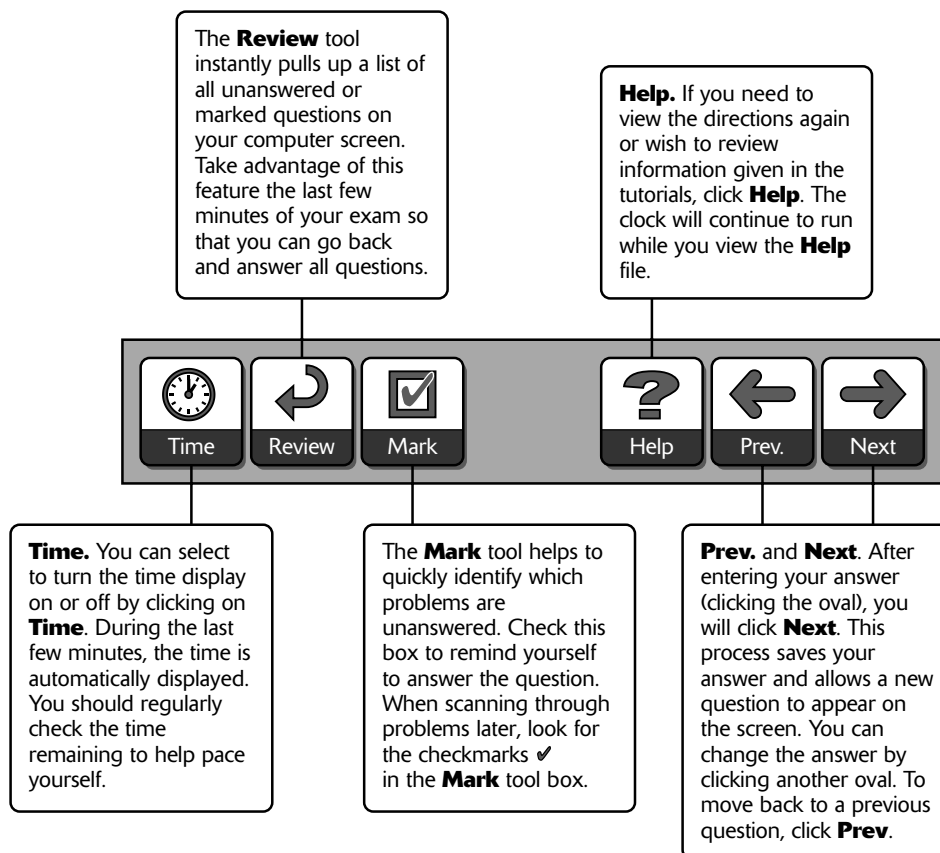
The computer-based PPST is offered at many locations throughout the United States. Like the paper-based exam, the computer-based exam contains questions that test your knowledge in reading, mathematics, and writing. All of the material covered in this book—subject matter reviews, the practice test questions and explanations, and the essay practice problems—will help prepare you for the computer-based test, as well as the paper-based test. You will notice that the format of Practice Test 4 simulates the computer-based PPST and includes extra practice problems and instructions related to computerized testing. Here are some of the benefits of taking the PPST computer-based test:

- There are numerous test dates available since appointments can be scheduled throughout the week (the paper-based test is administered about five or six times per year on specified dates).
- There is same-day testing, which means that you can sometimes test on the same day that you make the appointment.
- Even though there are more questions, you are given a little extra time on the computer-based exam, and are allowed time to practice using a tutorial program.
- Your unofficial scores are available immediately after the test (except the written portion).
- Your answers are recorded electronically, which can often reduce the chance of human error in posting your written responses.

Computer-based tutorial

Immediately before taking the computer-based test, you will be led through a tutorial in order to show you how to read and answer the questions for each section on the PPST. You do not need advanced computer skills to take the computer-based exam. Basic computer skills are sufficient to operate the mouse, keyboard, and word processor. The types of questions given on the test are used in the tutorial. Remember that you are allowed enough time to work through a tutorial, so take advantage of this excellent opportunity to learn more about what you will encounter on the test.

Computer screen layout



Sample review of answered and unanswered questions

01:09 Review

Below is a list of questions and their status. The Status column shows if a question has been answered or not, not yet seen, or marked for review. To review a specific question, first click on the question to highlight it, then click on GO TO QUESTION. To leave Review and return to where you were in the test, click on RETURN TO WHERE I WAS.

Question	Status
	Beginning
1.	Answered
2.	Answered
3.	Answered
4.	Not Answered ✓
5.	Answered
6.	Answered
7.	Answered
8.	Answered
9.	Answered
10.	Answered ✓
11.	Answered
12.	Answered
13.	Not Answered
14.	Answered
15.	Answered
16.	Answered
17.	Answered

Click on one of the icons below

Go To Question

Return To Where I Was

Time Review Mark Help Prev. Next

Sample reading passage

29:15 Section 1 21 of 46

Questions 21 to 22 Beginning

Line Woodrow Wilson won his first office in 1910 when he was elected governor of New Jersey. Two years later he was elected president in

(5) one of the most rapid political rises in our history. For a while Wilson had practiced law but found it both boring and profitable; then he became a political scientist and

(10) finally president of Princeton University. He did an outstanding job at Princeton, but when he was asked by the Democratic boss of New Jersey, Jim Smith, to run for

The author's main purpose in writing this passage is to

- argue that Wilson is one of the greatest U.S. presidents
- survey the difference between Wilson, Taft, and Roosevelt
- explain Wilson's concept of the New Freedom
- discuss some major events of Wilson's career
- suggest some reasons that Wilson's presidency may have started World War I

Time Review Mark Help Prev. Next

Sample math question

00:37 Section 2 27 of 46

Round off 0.13729 to the nearest thousandth.

- 0.1372
- 0.137
- 0.1373
- $\frac{1}{0.138}$
- $\frac{1}{0.14}$

Time Review Mark Help Prev. Next

Sample writing question

00:37 **Section 3** 5 of 44

A flock of pigeons is unexpected this time of year,
A B
and its especially surprising to see the birds winging
C
through the city amidst a snowstorm. No error.
D E

Click on your choice.

Time Review Mark Help Prev Next