

Introduction

Although teaching is a rewarding profession, it is also a difficult one. Consistent re-evaluation of teaching methods and ever-changing social attitudes toward education are always affecting the education profession. If you have made it this far, you know that teaching requires you to consistently increase your knowledge of the field. The Praxis exam is just one way to ensure that you have the core subject knowledge you will be teaching as well as the professional knowledge (curriculum, instruction, and assessment) needed in this profession. Because you want to become the best teacher you can be, you have decided to study for the Praxis examinations. All good teachers prepare and do their homework.

Pat yourself on the back as you have chosen an excellent study guide that will help you prepare for the Praxis II exam and will be useful in your elementary classroom for years to come. You are in the final stage toward the acquisition of your teaching certification/license. The elementary Praxis II exams are focused on broad content knowledge, instructional theories, strategies and methods, as well as a general understanding of elementary students. Ensuring that you are successful on the Praxis II elementary exams is a positive move for your career.

Effective educators utilize content knowledge and apply principles to classroom structure, behavior management, curriculum design, and assessments. Educators should seek current information on policies, research, and strategies. Joining professional organizations, reading research studies, taking university courses, attending professional development trainings, and subscribing to professional journals will help educators to improve student programs.

Children in elementary schools possess individual strengths and specific needs. It is the educator's role to address both in an appropriate manner so that all children may learn and develop into capable citizens. Teachers must be creative, flexible, and confident as they work in educational settings providing activities to students who possess a wide range of abilities. Working with elementary students can be stimulating yet demanding.

Getting Started

Whether you are a recent college graduate or an experienced teacher, taking the Praxis II exam meets certain state certification requirements. The final score on the exam will reflect what you have gained from teacher preparation courses and from utilizing current teaching practices in the classroom. To prepare for the actual exam, you may also want to review college texts, conduct Internet research, or visit the library.

Remember that the practice exams offered in this guide will provide you with information about the format and types of questions on the Praxis II elementary exams. The content and questions in the practice exams and on the actual exams may differ in both substance and difficulty. After completing a practice exam in this guide, use the answers and detailed explanations for further study on these specific topics.

Format of the Exam

Each Praxis II exam provided in this guide is designed to help individuals evaluate general content knowledge regarding the teaching of elementary students. Each of the elementary exams included here are slightly different in composition. Two of the exams are comprised of a set of *multiple-choice questions*, although the number of questions varies. One exam includes *essay exercises* that require more detailed narrative answers. All of the exam questions are based on instructional situations, issues surrounding curriculum or assessment, or broad content knowledge pertinent to the education of elementary students.

Three general topics are related to the elementary education Praxis II exams included in this study guide, and each has an accompanying practice test. The specific code numbers and titles are listed here.

#0014	Elementary Education: Content Knowledge
#0011	Elementary Education: Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
#0012	Elementary Education: Content Area Exercises

Multiple-Choice Questions

Multiple-choice questions include a **stem** (statement) and four answer choices, the correct answer being the **key**. The stem may be written in one of these formats: *question*, *statement*, *fill-in-the-blank*, or *least/except choices*. The four answer choices that follow the stem are identified by letter selections A, B, C, and D. The three **distractors** may be related to the correct answer, but select only the best possible answer.

The multiple-choice questions are designed to test total knowledge of the subject material regarding elementary education. These questions are factually written, so think carefully when making final answer selections.

In both the practice test and the actual exam, some of the multiple-choice questions may be based on a scenario that resembles an actual classroom situation. Read the brief excerpt and think about how the posed questions should be answered in reference to the information provided. Consider what an educator should do if placed in this particular circumstance.

Multiple-Choice Format and Strategy

To answer discrete multiple-choice questions correctly, strong reading skills are necessary. Reading with care to understand the basic premise of the question while remaining confident in the knowledge of the area tested is essential. The exam questions reflect the *best practices* used in elementary education.

Prior to answering questions on the practice or actual exam, read and then reread each question. Think about your selection before looking at the list of answer options. Check to see whether your selection is listed in the four choices, which makes finding the best answer an easier task. If the information in the question is unknown, look at all of the options and use the process of elimination. Remove any choices that seem impossible or not probable, as that may help in selecting a correct answer from fewer choices.

Types of multiple-choice formats:

Fill-in-the-Blank or Complete the Statement

This type of question offers information through a partial sentence that must be completed using one of the posed options. Select the best option to complete the sentence, using facts and data about elementary education.

Question/Statement or Which of the Following?

This type of question asks a short question or delivers a statement that must be answered by selecting one of the four options provided. The most frequently used question type on multiple-choice exams is the question that begins with “Which of the following” To answer these, read the question carefully and think about all the options, choosing the one that BEST suits the question.

Least/Not/Except

This type of question requires the selection of an answer that is incorrect, or least likely to be correct. These questions place a negative slant on the outcome of the answer, so be careful when selecting the appropriate response. These questions require an examinee to decide which of the three options are correct answers, and then to eliminate those to determine the incorrect answer. One strategy to use is to restate the question in a positive way in order to select the three correct answers, thereby leaving the fourth choice as the answer.

For example:

Which of the following is NOT included on ...

Which is the LEAST likely ...

All of the following are true EXCEPT ...

Which choice is NOT a component of ...

The multiple-choice questions termed with “Least,” “Not,” or “Except” are included on the Praxis exams, but samples are **not** included in this guide on the practice exams, so examinees will study only the correct information in preparing for the Praxis II exam. These questions on the actual exam can be tricky, so use caution.

Essay Writing 101

An essay is defined as a short piece of writing on a specific topic or subject. In an essay, the writer must present his views clearly, concisely, and succinctly. It should contain an introduction, body, and conclusion as well as have well-supported opinions.

Essays should be well thought out in argument and content. The content provided must be supported by specific details with a clearly defined purpose. There are specific steps to use when writing an essay.

- *Analysis*—Clearly define the aims of the essay, include reasons, and give evidence/facts.
- *Main Point*—Pinpoint your main points and add supporting details.
- *Outline*—Sketch out the essay, jot down key points and map out the structure of your arguments.
- *Introduction*—Grab the reader’s attention, set up the issue, and lead into your argument. In a short essay (less than 1000 words), after grabbing the reader’s attention, begin describing a specific, concrete situation.
- *Body*—This is the crux of the essay where the writer focuses upon the argument or information in detail and presents clear ideas and opinions.
- *Conclusion*—Use wrap-up sentences to conclude the essay. Restate or summarize the main point(s) in a fresh and rephrased manner in order to leave the reader with a memorable impression.

Essay Questions

An essay exercise poses a complex problem related to elementary education in which the examinee must develop a written answer. Each of the essay questions given relates to one of the four main subject areas, or it may pertain to integrated subjects. The questions focus on instructional approaches, methods or strategies, solving problems, achieving goals, outlining curriculum, or addressing assessment.

Answers must be written in a test answer booklet provided at the testing center. The essay answers will be scored using a pre-determined, standardized grading rubric. Because the questions are not known prior to the exam, examinees must be careful to pace their writing while attending to the responses with all the necessary information.

Several strategies helpful to examinees for essay questions on the Praxis II exam follow:

- Read the question you must answer prior to reading the rest of the information given.
- Engage in reading the essay question information by taking notes to help with your answer.
- Outline the ideas and content that is important to writing an essay answer.
- Think about the necessary details and focus on the accuracy of the answer.
- Develop a clear and concise narrative response specific to the situation.
- Review the response to be sure all points were answered.

It is very important for examinees to write clear, concise, complete answers and watch for questions that have more than one part, requiring multiple responses. If an essay answer is written in too simple a format, the answer may not receive full credit. The Praxis II exam that includes essay questions in this study guide is Elementary Education: Content Area Exercises (0012).

Time Frame

The amount of time allowed for taking each elementary Praxis II exam is based on the specific format of the test. For the three exams listed in this guide, examinees are allotted 2 hours to answer between 110 and 120 multiple-choice questions and 2 hours to answer 4 essay questions.

The specific exams, the number of questions, the format, and the time limits are listed:

Content Knowledge	120 MC Questions	2 hours
Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	110 MC Questions	2 hours
Content Area Exercises	4 Essay Questions	2 hours

Examinees should practice pacing themselves prior to taking the actual exam. They should consider the time arrangement on the practice exams. When taking the actual Praxis II exam, examinees need time to read each question, to consider each answer, and to review all of the final answers before submitting the test for a score. When writing an essay answer, examinees need time to read the question, consider the formation of a narrative answer, take the time to write the answer, and finally review the answer.

When faced with multiple-choice questions, examinees must think about all of the possibilities and select the most appropriate response. If an examinee is unsure of the correct response for a multiple-choice question, she should still answer the question as there is no penalty for guessing exam answers. On the essay questions, examinees should make every attempt to develop a thorough and thoughtful response in a narrative format.

Content of the Exam

Each of the specific elementary tests in this guide are comprised of content categories, and the actual Praxis II exams assess an examinee's understanding of the concepts and the applications of the concepts related to these specific content categories.

This general list outlines the broad topics, the number of questions, and the percentage of the final score dedicated to that section for each exam.

Elementary Education: Content Knowledge

Language Arts	30	25%
Mathematics	30	25%
Social Studies	30	25%
Science	30	25%

Elementary Education: Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Reading and Language Arts Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	38	35%
Mathematics Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	22	20%
Science Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	11	10%
Social Studies Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	11	10%
Arts and Physical Education Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	11	10%
General Information About Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	17	15%

Elementary Education: Content Area Exercises

Reading/Language Arts	1	25%
Mathematics	1	25%
Science or Social Studies	1	25%
Interdisciplinary Instruction	1	25%

Frequently Asked Questions

Examinees generally have questions prior to taking a Praxis II exam, and the following questions are presented as those most commonly posed. However, if you need further assistance, contact the Educational Testing Services at www.ets.org/praxis or call 800-772-9476.

Q. What are the Elementary Education Praxis II exams about?

A. The Praxis II exams have been developed by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) to measure an individual's knowledge in specific topics related to elementary education. These include general education practices to measure the knowledge of prospective teachers. Many states require these examinations in order to complete the certification or licensure process for professional practice. Some professional organizations also may require the completion of a Praxis exam for membership.

Q. How should an examinee register for a Praxis II exam?

A. Most individuals find that registering online is quick and easy. Contact the Educational Testing Services on their Web site or at the telephone number listed previously. Registration may be completed any time prior to taking the test, but it is recommended that registration be completed 1–3 months ahead of the testing date.

Q. What if an examinee misses the registration period for the preferred test date?

A. Late registration is allowed, but there may be a fee added for late registration. Examinees should hurry to be situated for the correct exam and obtain a seat at the test location. Check specific information about late registration on the ETS Web site.

Q. Can the registration date be changed if needed?

A. Contact ETS as soon as possible if a conflict or problem arises with confirmed registration dates. ETS should be able to help with scheduling issues or changes to the existing registration, but remember, a fee may be incurred.

Q. Which states require the Elementary Education Praxis II exams for certification?

A. Some states use certification tests developed by the state or by a separate testing company, and these states do not require the use of the Praxis II exams. Contact the specific department of education to find out which exams are required in each state of interest. Ask about the scores considered as passing, since acceptable scores differ in each state. If an examinee has already taken the exam in one state and is moving to another state, he should ask whether the current score will be accepted. Most states will allow the transfer of a score as long as it meets the required passing score in that state and the score is recent.

On the ETS Web site (www.ets.org/praxis/states) examinees may access specific requirements by clicking on the name of that state. However, it is highly recommended to speak with someone at the state department of education, since regulations sometimes change before Web sites do.

Q. How does an examinee know which exam should be taken?

A. States mandating Praxis II exams for certification or licensure differ on the required test. Research these requirements by contacting the department of education in the particular state. The teacher certification office should have the information needed to select the correct exam or the combination of exams.

Q. What is considered a passing score for teacher certification?

A. The teacher certification office at the department of education in each state should provide the score considered acceptable for passing. Contact this office in the specific state to find out which score is adequate for teacher certification.

Q. When can examinees expect to receive the scores?

A. ETS attempts a quick return of scores, so expect the scores to be delivered in four to six weeks, pending no major holidays. A list of dates is available on the ETS Web site, as well as an informational guide to interpret the score received.

Q. For an individual with a disability, are accommodations allowed?

A. Yes. For individuals with disabilities there is a process to apply for accommodations. Information on accommodations is available in the Praxis II test registration booklet, or on the ETS Web site.

Q. What should examinees plan to bring to the exam site on the date of the test?

A. Examinees need to bring the following:

- Identification that includes name, a photo, and signature
- An alternative identification that includes the same (optional but recommended)
- Proof of registration
- Several #2 pencils and an eraser
- Ink pens for essay answers (some exams)
- Watch (optional but recommended)
- Extra clothing (optional but temperatures may vary)

Q. How can examinees best prepare to take a Praxis II Exam?

A. Using this study guide should help improve the chances of passing a Praxis II Elementary exam. Understanding the test format, taking the practice exams, and reviewing the contents of the study guide should reinforce an examinee's base of knowledge.

Using this Study Guide

CliffsNotes Praxis II: Elementary Education includes several supports to help guide examinees.

- **General Curriculum Introduction and Overview Section:** A section that includes information which supports all subject areas of elementary education. This section outlines learning theories and guidelines for developing curriculum, preparing lessons, managing the classroom, and implementing assessments.
- **Content Area Information:** A comprehensive section for each subject area should be used to study the specific content categories described in the exam (0014). The headings are a guide to select topics to study. Following the basic content portion is a section devoted to the curriculum, instruction, and assessment for the specific subject area (0011) and a content exercise (0012). These sections should be the focus of intense study. These are broken into four major subjects: language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.
- **Final Thoughts and Tips:** A review of the test-taking strategies is provided with tips for test preparation to aid in achieving exam success.
- **Practice Exams:** A sample full-length test is provided for each of the three separate topics in elementary education. These tests are offered as a guide regarding the content and format of the actual Praxis II exam. In addition to the exams are the answers with detailed justifications for the correct answer. This is an added study tool.