

DELAWARE STATE POLICE

Entry-Level Trooper Examination Oral Interview Candidate Preparation Guide

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>DESCRIPTION OF ORAL INTERVIEW EXERCISES</u>	1
A. Date, Time, and Location	1
B. Content.....	1
C. Administrative Logistics.....	2
D. Evaluation	5
<u>GENERAL TEST-TAKING SUGGESTIONS</u>	7
A. Sample Oral Interview Exercise Questions	7
B. Response Preparation	8
C. DOs and DON'Ts	9
<u>RESPONSE STRATEGIES FOR ABILITIES/CHARACTERISTICS</u>	12
A. Oral Presentation	12
B. Interpersonal Relations	15
C. Comprehension and Reasoning.....	18
D. Achievement Orientation.....	22
<u>CONCLUSION</u>	24

DESCRIPTION OF ORAL INTERVIEW EXERCISES

A. Date, Time, and Location:

All candidates who pass the Written Examination (Law Enforcement Aptitude Battery) will receive an admission notice specifying the location, date, and time that they should report to the testing site to participate in the Oral Interview.

B. Content:

Candidates will be presented with two oral exercises designed to elicit behaviors pertaining to the abilities and personal characteristics outlined in this guide. While participating in each exercise, 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 DSP Troopers. In responding to the interview questions, candidates should consider and discuss any aspect of their past experience that is relevant to the questions – school, work, home, or personal life. The oral exercises are designed to assess abilities and personal characteristics, **NOT** specific knowledge about policies and procedures.

A brief explanation of each type of Oral Board Test exercise is presented below. The order in which the exercises are listed is the same order of participation during the Oral Interview. Candidates will participate in the oral exercises consecutively with the assessors providing a short period of oral instructions before the start of the first exercise and between the first and second exercises. The assessors will inform candidates how many questions will be asked during each exercise and when to start and stop each exercise.

- 1. Oral Résumé Exercise** - You will be asked to provide oral responses to a series of interview questions regarding your interest in becoming a Delaware State Police Trooper and the abilities and characteristics that you feel qualify you to perform the job. Raters will read you a total of 7 questions and you must provide an oral response to each question. You will be given a total of 10 minutes to listen and respond to all questions. You will **NOT** receive any materials related to the Oral Résumé Exercise during the preparation period. Raters will **ONLY** repeat each question once upon request.
- 2. Structured Interview Exercise** - You will be asked to provide oral responses to a series of interview questions concerning how you have handled situations in the past that are relevant to what you may do as a trooper and how you would handle hypothetical situations that are relevant to what you may do on the job as a trooper. You will receive a handout containing a total of 4 questions. You will be given a total of 10 minutes to prepare your responses to the questions. You will have a total of 12 minutes to respond to the four questions contained on the handout. Once you have completed your responses to the four interview questions presented on the handout, or 12 minutes have passed - - whichever comes first, you will be presented with a new handout containing a fifth interview question. You will have a total of 3 minutes to read, consider and respond to this fifth question.

A summary of the advance preparation, number of questions and response time for each exercise is presented in the table below.

Exercise	Preparation	# of Questions	Response Period
Oral Résumé	No advance preparation	7 questions	10 minutes
Initial Structured Interview	10 minutes (4 questions)	4 questions	12 minutes
*New Structured Interview Question	No advance preparation	1 question	3 minutes
* The New Structured Interview Question row in the table above represents the handout containing the fifth question that candidates will receive in the interview room.			

C. Administrative Logistics:

During the administration of the Oral Interview exercises, candidates will report on a specific day at an individually scheduled time. Candidates should ensure that they arrive at the test site at the time indicated in their admission notices. Upon arrival, each candidate will check in and receive some general instructions. Candidates will be processed in groups of approximately 3 to 5 candidates during the check-in and preparation procedures.

Upon arriving at the test site, each candidate will be provided with all materials needed to prepare for and conduct the Oral Interview exercises. **Candidates are NOT permitted to bring materials of any kind to the test site.** Furthermore, with the exception of a standard watch or timing device, **NO** electronic equipment will be allowed at the test site, including tablets, telephones, laptops, smartwatches, etc. Any such equipment brought into the testing site will be collected and stored in an unsecured area. The State of Delaware and EB Jacobs 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 preparation period, the short break between the preparation period and Oral Interview exercises, and during the Oral Interview exercises.

Following the check-in procedures, candidates will be directed to a preparation room. Once inside the preparation room, candidates will be given a handout containing 4 of the 5 Structured Interview Exercise questions and will prepare their responses in a special preparation area where they will not be observed by the assessors. Candidates will have 10 minutes in the preparation room. Candidates may divide the preparation time among the Structured Interview Exercise questions however they choose. Candidates will **NOT** receive any materials related to the fifth Structured Interview Exercise question and the Oral Résumé Exercise during the preparation period.

Candidates will be permitted to take notes on the Structured Interview Exercise question handout or on notepaper provided during the preparation period. Candidates may use these notes while participating in the Structured Interview Exercise. Candidates should be aware, however, that any notes prepared or used during the Structured Interview Exercise 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 Oral Interview exercises.

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 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 Interview Exercise question handout, and notepaper with notes taken during the preparation period). Prior to 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 Oral Interview exercises, the administrators and assessors will provide instructions and answer any procedural questions that may be raised before each exercise 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 each exercise. Otherwise, it will be the responsibility of each candidate to work within the specified time frame. Candidates may bring timekeeping devices to the 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 Oral Interview exercises begin, no interaction will occur with assessors other than that which is required to administer the exercises. The Oral Résumé Exercise will be administered first followed by the Structured Interview Exercise. The same board of assessors will administer and evaluate both exercises for each candidate. During the Oral Résumé Exercise, assessors will read each interview question and will repeat each question **ONLY** once upon request. Once the time allotted for the Oral Résumé Exercise has concluded, the assessor board will read instructions to transition to the administration of the Structured Interview Exercise. Assessors will **NOT** read the questions during the Structured Interview Exercise. When the assessors instruct candidates to begin, candidates should address the four Structured Interview Exercise questions in the order in which they are presented on the handout. As candidates begin to address each Structured Interview Exercise 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 Interview Exercise question to the next. Assessors will **NOT** prompt candidates to proceed to the next Structured Interview Exercise question. Once candidates have completed their responses to the four interview questions, or 12 minutes have passed - - whichever comes first, candidates will be presented with a new handout containing a fifth interview question. Candidates will have a total of 3 minutes to read, consider, and respond to this new question. Time will begin as soon as candidates receive the question handout. Candidates should begin their response to the fifth interview questions as soon as they are ready.

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

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

1. Oral Interview Administration Schedule

Activity	Time
Candidate Check-in and Instructions	Approximately 15 minutes
Escort to Preparation Room (Break)	Not timed
Candidate Preparation Period	10 minutes
Escort to Waiting Area (Break)	Not timed
Oral Résumé Exercise	10 minutes
Oral Instructions Provided by Assessors	Not timed
Structured Interview Exercise	15 minutes
Check-Out	Not timed

- a) **Check-in / Instructions (Approximately 15 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 expected to remain quiet, though they will be permitted, and encouraged, to ask procedural questions of administrators at this time and to use the restroom, if needed.
- b) **Escort to Preparation Room (Break)**: After checking in, candidates will be escorted to a preparation room. Candidates will **NOT** be permitted to bring any materials into the preparation room with the exception of the materials (i.e., candidate instructions) provided at the test site in addition to approved items (e.g., timing device and bottle of water).
- c) **Preparation Period (10 minutes)**: Candidates will be directed to a work station and the work station will have writing instruments and notepaper. Once all candidates are seated, an administrator will distribute a handout containing 4 of the 5 Structured Interview Exercise questions. (The fifth question will be presented on a new handout to candidates in the interview room). Candidates will receive the Structured Interview Exercise questions at the beginning of the preparation period. Candidates will have a total of 10 minutes to review the Structured Interview Exercise questions and prepare responses. Candidates may divide the preparation time among the Structured Interview Exercise 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 with each other during the preparation period. Candidates will **NOT** receive any materials related to the Oral Résumé Exercise in the preparation room.
- d) **Escort to Waiting Area (Break)**: Upon completion of the preparation period, candidates will be escorted to a waiting area. While in the waiting area candidates may organize their paperwork and collect their thoughts. Candidates may also review their notes, but will **NOT** be permitted to generate any new notes. When the assessor board is ready, an assessor will invite the candidate into an interview room.

- e) **Oral Résumé Exercise (10 minutes):** Upon entering the interview room, the assessors will introduce themselves and provide a brief set of instructions. Candidates will then have a total of 10 minutes to respond to a total of 7 questions. The assessors will read each question, one at a time, to candidates and permit candidates to respond to each question prior to reading the next question. Upon request, assessors will repeat each question **ONLY** once. Candidates should inform assessors when they have completed their response to each question so assessors can read the next question without delay. The assessors will **NOT** time responses to each question separately. Rather the response period will be timed as a single session. Therefore, candidates will be responsible for keeping track of time so that they are able to respond to all questions in the allotted time.
- f) **Oral Instructions (Transition to the next Exercise):** The assessors will provide a brief set of instructions to transition from the Oral Résumé to the Structured Interview. Once again, the same board of assessors will administer and evaluate both exercises for each candidate. Candidates will complete the Oral Résumé Exercise first followed by the Structured Interview Exercise.
- g) **Structured Interview Exercise (15 minutes):** When the assessors issue the command to begin, candidates should start 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. Candidates will have a total of 12 minutes to respond to the 4 questions presented on the handout given to candidates at the beginning of the preparation period. 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 ensuring that they are able to respond to all interview questions in the allotted time. Once candidates have completed their responses to the four interview questions, or 12 minutes have passed - - whichever comes first, candidates will be presented with a new handout containing the fifth interview question. Candidates will have a total of 3 minutes to read, consider and respond to this fifth question.
- h) **Check-Out:** When candidates have completed both exercises, they will be directed to turn in all materials and notes and then proceed to the check-out area, where an administrator will ensure that **all test materials and notes have been collected**. Candidates will then sign out and be directed to leave the test site.

D. **Evaluation:**

1. **Assessors:** Three-member assessor boards will be trained by EB Jacobs to evaluate candidate oral responses to the Oral Interview exercises. During the training, the assessors will be familiarized with the abilities and characteristics to be assessed; trained to observe, record, classify and evaluate candidate behaviors with respect to these abilities and characteristics; and advised how to avoid making evaluation errors. Finally, assessors will be provided an opportunity to practice observing and evaluating candidate behavior by participating in "mock" Oral Interviews.
2. **Evaluation Procedures:** It is important for candidates to be aware that each assessor will listen and take notes during the Oral Interview exercises. As the exercises proceed, 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 using a 5-point scale (5 is high; 1 is low).

3. **Assessment Areas:** Based on the job analysis of the trooper position, the abilities and characteristics that will be assessed during the Oral Interview exercises are identified and 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 manner and by providing examples or details to support important points.
- b) **Interpersonal Relations:** This area involves developing cooperative 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 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.
- d) **Achievement Orientation:** This area involves taking initiative and appropriate action without the need for direction. People with this characteristic prefer to be leaders rather than followers. They set high personal goals and are focused on achieving desired outcomes.

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

GENERAL TEST-TAKING SUGGESTIONS

A. Sample Oral Interview Exercise Questions:

The purpose of the Oral Interview is to collect evidence to determine the degree to which you possess the abilities and personal characteristics that contribute to effective trooper performance. Your job during the Oral Interview exercises will be to provide the assessors with evidence that you possess these underlying abilities and personal characteristics. The underlying abilities and personal characteristics that will serve as the basis for the Oral Interview have been identified for you and are presented in the Evaluation section of this Preparation Guide.

The Oral Interview exercise 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 determine whether you possess 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 questions for each Oral Interview exercise. These samples are meant to illustrate the kinds of questions you may receive during the Oral Interview exercises but will not be used as actual questions during the Oral Interview exercises.

Oral Résumé Exercise Sample Questions

1. If I were to ask someone who knows you well, how would they describe you to me?
2. Why have you chosen the field of law enforcement?
3. What makes you suited for a career in law enforcement?

Structured Interview Exercise Sample Questions

1. Troopers must be able to observe an event or hear a description of an event and then summarize the details in a report. What would you do to ensure you provide an accurate summary if you were assigned the responsibility of summarizing the events of an incident in a report?
2. Describe a past experience where you developed friendships with others when you were new to a job/team/club/group.
3. You are about to finish a work shift when you receive a call from a coworker, who is scheduled to replace you in 5 minutes, indicating 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 preparation period will contain 4 of the 5 questions for the Structured Interview Exercise. The fifth question will be presented to you in the interview room. Also, you will NOT receive any materials related to the Oral Résumé Exercise during the preparation period.**

B. Response Preparation:

As part of your preparation for the Oral Interview exercises, 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:

- interacting effectively with individuals and team members of all cultures/groups
- working with others who have different work habits or styles
- resolving interpersonal conflicts
- analyzing information
- making decisions and solving problems
- taking initiative
- setting and achieving goals
- dealing with ethical dilemmas

As part of your on-site preparation, you will receive a handout containing the Structured Interview Exercise 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 for Oral Résumé and Structured Interview questions, you should select examples in which you performed successfully and contributed significantly to the outcome. As previously mentioned, you should identify examples in advance of the test. This will help ensure that the example(s) you provide will provide direct evidence of the abilities and personal characteristics that the 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 fully understand the importance of your accomplishment and/or role.

Next, you could describe the actions you took to resolve 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 time limit for each exercise

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 Oral Interview exercises.

C. DOs and DON'Ts:

Below we have presented some strategies that can lead to greater success in the Oral Interview exercises. The strategies are organized by activities you should perform (“DOs”) prior to and during the Oral Interview exercises and activities that you should **NOT** perform (“DON'Ts”).

Oral Interview DOs	
Location	Do determine where the test will be held. Once you receive your admission notice, make sure you know the exact location where the Oral Interview will be held, how long it takes to get there, and where you should park. You could do a practice run to the location to check your directions and verify your time expectations. Be sure you allow some additional time in the event of traffic-related delays.
Timeliness	Do arrive early. Make sure you arrive prior to your scheduled report time. It is a good idea to arrive at least 15 minutes early.
Research	Do research on the Delaware State Police and the responsibilities of the trooper position. Although the questions will not require technical knowledge and we have identified the important abilities and characteristics that will be evaluated, it may be helpful to learn about the Department and the position you are seeking. In this way, you can identify past experiences that are relevant to activities you may perform on the job as a trooper. Resources to learn about the Department and the trooper position include the Department’s website, recruiters and general web searches for the responsibilities or job description of troopers.
Prepare	Do prepare and practice. The Oral Interview questions will target the abilities and characteristics identified in the Evaluation section of this Preparation Guide. You should identify past examples from your school, work or personal life that relate to each assessment area. The identification of past examples in advance will help you prepare responses to the questions you receive during the actual test. In addition, you should practice responding to interview questions by using the sample questions provided in this Preparation Guide. You can rely on friends or family members to listen to your responses and comment on the organization, clarity and relevance of your examples. You are also encouraged to attend the How to Succeed Seminars being offered by the Delaware State Police.
Sit or Stand	Do decide in advance if you will sit or stand. You will be given the option of sitting or standing for the Oral Interview exercises. If you decide to sit, sit upright and sit still in your seat. If you decide to stand, stand tall and remain in one location.
Address the Entire Question	Do address all parts of a question. You may be presented with two-part questions joined by an “and”. For these questions, be sure to address both parts of the question not just the first or second part.

Oral Interview DOs (Continued)	
Make Eye Contact/ Avoid Reading Directly from Notes	Do make eye contact with all assessors. While you may reference your question handout and/or notes while responding to the Structured Interview Exercise questions, you should avoid reading directly from your notes for the whole exercise response period. Try to make periodic eye contact with each of the assessors.
Volume	Do speak loud enough to be heard. Speak at a volume all assessors can hear. Your position in the interview room will be several feet away from the assessors so make sure you speak loud enough to be heard by all assessors.
Support Answers	Do back up your answers with specific past experiences. The most direct evidence you can provide that illustrates you possess the abilities and characteristics covered are specific examples of relevant past experience.
Be Thorough	Do provide complete responses. Keep in mind that the assessors will not ask you any follow-up questions; so, it will be important to provide sufficient detail in your responses. You must, however, keep in mind the time limit for responding to the questions in each exercise.
Talk About Success	Do talk about your successes. Be prepared to identify relevant past experiences in which you performed successfully and contributed significantly to the outcome.
Talk About Lessons Learned	Do talk about lessons learned. Be prepared to talk about relevant past experiences where you may have learned from mistakes or inexperience.
Attire	Do convey the right message with your attire. Although you will NOT be evaluated on what you wear you should treat this process like a formal job interview and dress appropriately. We suggest casual business attire (e.g., slacks, skirt, suit or sport coat) and discourage jeans, shorts, t-shirts, sweatshirts, sneakers, and flip-flops.

Oral Interview DON'Ts	
Pace	Don't speak too quickly. The assessors will listen and take notes while you respond. If you speak too quickly, it will be difficult for assessors to follow your responses. You can use your practice sessions to ensure the pace of your responses is appropriate. Once again, the assistance of friends or family members can be helpful in commenting on your pace.
Gum	Don't chew gum during your interview. Chewing gum may impact your ability to speak clearly and may be distracting to the assessors. In general, remove anything (e.g., gum, breath mints, hard candy, etc.) from your mouth that may impact your ability to speak clearly.

Oral Interview DON'Ts (Continued)	
Demonstrate Respect	Don't be too casual. The Oral Interview should be considered a formal interview process and as such you should act appropriately. Show respect to everyone (e.g., administrators, assessors) you meet on site.
Positive Attitude	Don't spend too much time criticizing former employers or colleagues. Being overly critical of others can give the impression that you don't get along with others. You should maintain a positive attitude throughout the Oral Interview exercises and keep any discussion of the shortcomings of others to a minimum.
Actions Speak Louder than Words	Don't just say you are effective, tell the assessors why. You are only great at something if you tell the assessors why and provide support for your effectiveness in that area with a sample of past experience.
Language Choice	Don't use inappropriate language. Slang, coarse/inappropriate language, E-text/mail shorthand are to be avoided while at the Oral Interview site to avoid the impression that you are not taking the situation seriously. You should also attempt to avoid pause words (e.g., "um" and "uh").
Physical Mannerisms	Don't engage in distracting mannerisms. You should avoid fidgeting and other distracting mannerisms, such as tapping your fingers on the desk/table, which could make it difficult for the assessors to focus on your responses.
Honesty	Don't ever lie or oversell your accomplishments. If it is discovered that you have been dishonest during the Oral Interview exercises, you will be disqualified from the examination.
Posture	Don't convey the wrong message with your body posture. Although the assessors will NOT focus on your non-verbal behavior, you should avoid postures that could detract from your performance and suggest you are not confident, not interested, or not serious (e.g., slouching in your seat, crossing your arms over your chest, or leaning back). Instead, stand or sit up straight to show your interest and enthusiasm.
Responsibility	Don't make excuses. Take responsibility for your decisions and your actions. You can turn a perceived negative experience into a positive experience by relaying what you learned from the experience.
Personal Information	Don't provide too much personal information. The assessors are not looking for you to provide your life story. Focus on your interests relating to the job and your qualifications and experiences relating to the abilities and characteristics to be measured.

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 Oral Interview exercises. 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 manner and by providing examples or details to support important points.
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 4 of the 5 Structured Interview Exercise 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 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 generating notes and an outline, consider the sample question presented below:

Sample Structured Interview Exercise Question:

3. Troopers must be able to observe an event or hear a description of an event and then summarize the details in a report. What would you do to ensure you provide an accurate summary if you were assigned the responsibility of summarizing the events of an incident in a report?

You might jot down notes such as:

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

- watched the entire game
- attempted to eliminate distractions
- jotted down reminder notes
- interviewed spectators to ensure completeness
- interviewed athletes/coaches to ensure accuracy
- checked my article against the sources previously listed

Additional detail might be added until you achieve an outline that you feel comfortable using to guide your response to the question.

In general, the first thing you should do during your preparation period is to review all Structured Interview Exercise questions so that you can determine how to allocate your time. For example, you will be given a total of 10 minutes to prepare for four interview questions. If you assume it takes about 2 minutes to conduct your initial review of all questions and the remaining preparation time (i.e., 8 minutes) is divided evenly among the four interview questions, you would have approximately 2 minutes to generate notes and/or an outline for responding to each question.

Activity	Approximate Time Commitment
Initial Review of all questions	2 minutes
Generate notes and/or outline Question 1	2 minutes
Generate notes and/or outline Question 2	2 minutes
Generate notes and/or outline Question 3	2 minutes
Generate notes and/or outline Question 4	2 minutes
TOTAL (all activities)	10 minutes

However, when you read the Structured Interview Exercise 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 2.5 minutes for questions you feel less prepared for. The point is, it will be up to you to divide the preparation time among the Structured Interview Exercise questions 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 questions in each exercise.

 **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. The outlining strategy described above can be used to increase the likelihood that you are providing unique information at different points throughout your responses.

 **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, E-text/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, such is not required in order to perform well, as the time taken to respond to the questions in each exercise 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 each exercise and do very well with time left to spare, while others may use the full allotted time for each exercise 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 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 Oral Interview exercises are 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 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:

- Displaying confidence in social situations
- 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 Oral Interview exercises is to assess whether you possess the abilities and characteristics that contribute to effective performance as a trooper. The response strategies for each element are structured around the identification of relevant past experiences.



DISPLAYING CONFIDENCE IN SOCIAL SITUATIONS



Your confidence in social situations might be displayed by providing an example of a time when you joined an academic club, athletic team or social group. In relating this sample, you could focus on the steps you took to meet and get to know individuals with whom you previously had no relationship. When focusing on meeting new people, you might discuss how you approached new individuals, engaged those individuals in conversation and the steps you took to build upon your new friendships.



DEVELOPING COOPERATIVE AND HARMONIOUS RELATIONSHIPS



As a trooper, you will be expected to work cooperatively with other police 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 school project in which you were required to work with one or more students. In this situation, you may have found that some of the students may have preferred to work on the project continuously in order to space out the work, while other students may have preferred to condense the timeframe (or “cram”) and work on the project closer in time to the due date. When faced with competing approaches, it can be best to seek common ground or to compromise so that all participants are happy and remain productive in completing the project. Establishing common ground might involve taking elements of both preferred approaches and combining them to come up with a work plan that everyone is willing to adopt.



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. While there is no time-table for getting over an event such as the loss of a loved one or a breakup with a significant other, there are certainly things that others can do to assist with the coping process and these are the types of actions you should be prepared to discuss at the Oral Interview.

As a trooper, you will be exposed to a great deal of diversity as you interact with coworkers, citizens, victims, witnesses and suspects who have belief systems/cultures that are different from your own. Although you may not fully understand or agree with all of these belief systems/cultures, it is important to keep an open mind and respect belief systems/cultures different from your own. In addition, you should avoid assigning belief systems/cultures a value - positive or negative, right or wrong, better or worse. Most important you should avoid making assumptions about other individuals or their beliefs. If the situation allows, you should ask questions to clarify cultural practices in a professional and thoughtful manner.

For this element, think about past experiences in which you learned about a belief system/culture that is different from your own. You might discuss why you decided to learn about a different belief system/culture, how you obtained information about the different belief system/culture, whether your interactions with individuals who hold those beliefs have changed since you learned about their culture and, if so, how these interactions have changed. Alternatively, you might also think about past experiences where you have interacted with a member of another culture. You could describe the setting (reason for the interaction), identify any communication barriers, describe how you dealt with those barriers, indicate what you learned from the interaction and what, if anything, you would do differently in interacting with members of this culture in the future.

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) displaying social confidence by meeting new people
 - b) developing constructive working relationships with others
 - c) helping others resolve problems
 - d) demonstrating sensitivity and concern for others
 - e) 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 Oral Interview exercises is to assess whether you possess the abilities and characteristics that contribute to effective performance as a trooper. 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 Oral Interview exercises, you will be responsible for demonstrating your understanding of the information provided (i.e., administrative procedures and questions). Your understanding of the administrative procedures might be demonstrated by responding to the Structured Interview Exercise questions in the same order in which the questions are presented on the handout, announcing the number of the question prior to starting your response to each question and transitioning from one question to the next.

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

Sample Oral Interview Question:

3. Police officers must be able to observe an event or hear a description of an event and then summarize the details in a report. What would you do to ensure you provide an accurate summary if you were assigned the responsibility of summarizing the events of an incident in a report?

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 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 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 the college you attended you might start by discussing what is important to you in a college and then identify the information needed to evaluate the important factors. For instance, you might include such things as the cost of tuition, financial aid packages, majors offered, campus size, campus setting (rural, suburban, urban), class sizes, quality of instruction, etc. This process might assist you in determining if there are omissions in the information needed to make an informed decision.

Identifying missing information is one step in the information gathering process. The next step involves determining how you will obtain the missing information. Using the same college decision example, you might obtain some of the information online. Other information might be obtained from on-site visits and meetings with current administrators/professors. You might also speak with current or former students.



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 price ▪ lower financing rate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ lower price ▪ higher financing rate
Year/Mileage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 2013 (newer) ▪ higher mileage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 2011 (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"> ▪ Pandora compatibility ▪ chrome door handles ▪ no fog lights ▪ standard floor mats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ no compatibility with Pandora ▪ chrome door handles ▪ fog lights ▪ all weather floor mats
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. Prior to 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 to the assessors 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 responses to questions targeting Comprehension and Reasoning.

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

D. Achievement Orientation:

1. **Definition**: This area involves taking initiative and appropriate action without the need for direction. People with this characteristic prefer to be leaders rather than followers. They set high personal goals and are focused on achieving desired outcomes.
2. **Elements of Definition**: The definition of Achievement Orientation can be broken down into the following elements:
 - Taking Initiative
 - Setting high personal goals
 - Focusing on Achieving Desired Outcomes
3. **Response Strategies for Elements**: Response strategies pertaining to each element of this characteristic are presented below. Remember that the goal of the Oral Interview is to assess whether you possess the abilities and characteristics that contribute to effective performance as a trooper. The response strategies for each element are structured around the identification of relevant past experiences.



TAKING INITIATIVE



As a trooper, you will be expected to take action without waiting for someone to tell you what to do. As an example, there may be times when you are not busy responding to calls for service and you will be expected to be proactive and monitor traffic for violations or patrol high crime areas to prevent crimes from occurring.

You can demonstrate initiative by providing an example of a time when you recognized a problem and took action without being prompted to resolve the problem. For example, you might describe a job you previously held working in clothing retail. As part of your job responsibilities, you may have been required to fold and organize clothing racks before the store closed. You may have found, however, that the clothing racks were often in disarray around closing time which often led to you staying much beyond closing time to organize the racks. To resolve this issue, you may have decided to organize the clothing racks throughout your shift, when time permitted, so that the clothing racks were fairly neat and organized and only required minimal attention at closing time.

You might also describe examples where you invested considerable effort in performing your responsibilities extremely well or took extra steps to exceed normal expectations. For instance, you may have been a captain on a sports team and you might have encountered a situation where backup players were not giving full effort at practice. As the team captain, you may have taken it upon yourself to confront these individuals and remind them of the benefits of giving effort in practice. To change behavior, you may have attempted to sell these individuals on the benefits of giving full effort such as overall team improvement and individual improvement. In addition, you might have reminded these individuals that by displaying extra effort and improving they may find that they could be named starters either later in the current season or next season.



SETTING HIGH PERSONAL GOALS



For this element, think about past experiences in which you set a goal that you had desired to achieve. When identifying relevant past experiences, you might describe what you wanted to achieve by setting the goal. In addition, you could also discuss the outcome of achieving the goal. For example, you may have encountered a situation in which you had trouble finding the appropriate balance between academics and social life in your first semester of college. Following your first semester, you may have decided to set academic goals for your second semester to get better grades and raise your overall GPA. In this situation, it is possible to determine whether you achieved your goal by comparing your second and first semester grades. In this way, you can determine what, if any, improvements you made.

Alternatively, you might also consider your goal of becoming a trooper. Think about what you have done to help prepare yourself for the job of trooper. You could describe the steps that you have taken to learn about the job responsibilities. You can demonstrate what you have learned by linking your educational, professional and social experiences to the responsibilities of the trooper position. In addition, you could describe any steps you have taken to strengthen your abilities and characteristics emphasizing those that link to the responsibilities of the position of trooper. Through our job analysis work with the trooper position, we have already identified the critical abilities and personal characteristics that contribute to successful trooper performance. These are the same abilities and characteristics identified in the Evaluation section of this Preparation Guide. Once again, be sure to emphasize those experiences that illustrate how you have sharpened your skills in the areas to be evaluated. Furthermore, you should be prepared to sell your experiences and to illustrate how these experiences will make you a better trooper.



FOCUSING ON ACHIEVING DESIRED OUTCOMES



Most people have the best intentions when attempting to achieve goals, but many obstacles often get in the way of goal achievement. When individuals encounter obstacles, it can be difficult to maintain momentum in making progress in achieving goals. For example, you may decide that you would like to go back to school to obtain additional educational. When attempting to achieve this goal, you may encounter obstacles such as work, family, time, monetary funding, etc. In order to make progress in achieving your goal of returning to school, you may create smaller milestones. For instance, you may set a deadline for registering for courses, or talk to your current employer about the possibility of working alternate hours when attending college or finding a new part-time job. The milestones can help you stay on track so that you can ultimately meet your overall goal. Other strategies to help you stay on track can include informing family and/or friends of your intentions. Making others aware of your intentions may make these individuals active participants as they may encourage you to stay focused on your goals. Furthermore, you could also introduce means to measure your progress or success against your milestones and overall goal. In preparation for the Oral Interview, identify goals that you set for yourself and discuss the specific steps that you took to achieve these goals despite obstacles that you may have encountered.

4. **Application of Response Strategies:** When considering examples from your past for questions that target Achievement Orientation, you should consider examples like those above in which you demonstrated that you:

- a) took initiative
- b) set high personal goals
- c) focused on achieving desired outcomes

CONCLUSION

This Preparation Guide represents an effort to familiarize you with all aspects of the Oral Interview, including the content of the exercises, 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 Oral Interview.

GOOD LUCK!