



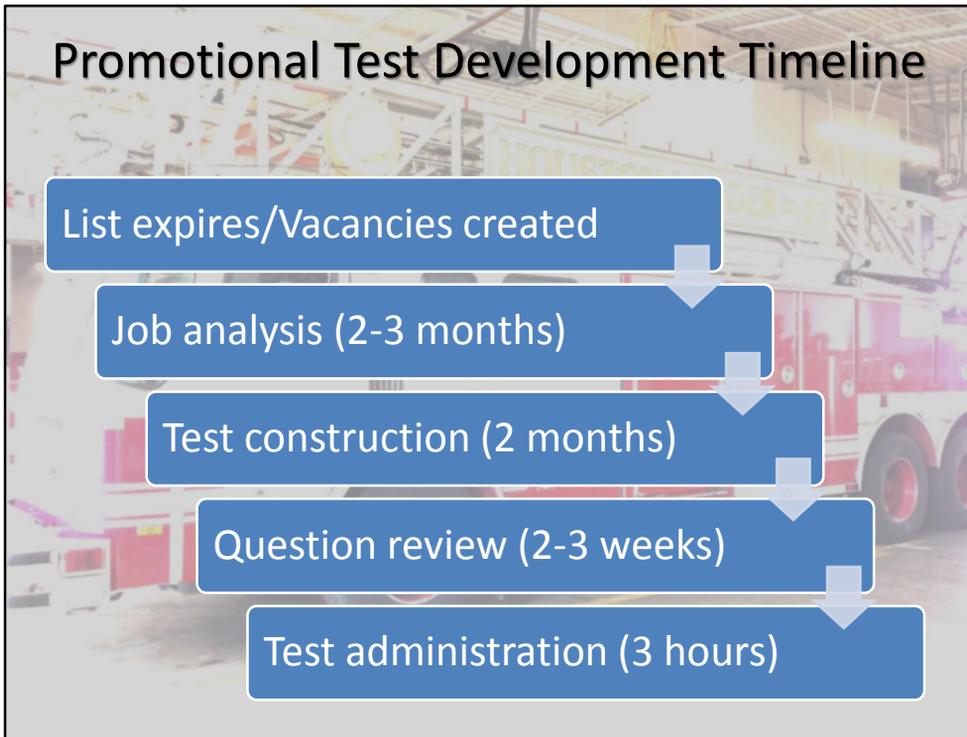
# HFD Promotional Exam Testing Process

Presented by  
Classified Testing Services

Classified Testing wants to be as transparent as possible. Members are always free to call to learn about the process or any questions regarding Chapter 143 pertaining to testing.

We are here to help HFD learn, grow, and have fair and job relevant tools to use in their selection and promotion processes.

One can look at Classified Testing as a consultant to both HPD and HFD. We are part of Human Resources' Selection Services. We are not HPD nor HFD. This is beneficial as it maintains our objectivity of the process.



Once a list expires or a vacancy occurs, the clock starts for Classified Testing and the testing construction process begins.

First, a job analysis is conducted. This entails gathering data from Senior Inspectors regarding their daily routines. The job analysis identifies the most critical job tasks, and these tasks help HFD experts choose source materials that are relevant to the job for the exam.

Once the source materials are selected, then the Test Construction phase starts. Test questions are drafted for each source and prepared for review 2-3 weeks prior to the exam administration.

During the question review period, HFD Subject Matter Experts check that the questions and answers are accurate and pick the 100 questions that are most applicable to HFD for the exam. Then Classified Testing edits, triple-checks, and prints the exam for administration.

## Promotional Test Administration Timeline



After the exam, there will be a review that lasts one hour.

A draft list will be produced and posted within 24 hours of the test completion time.

There is a review period where appeals and rebuttals can be filed. We will discuss this topic later on.

Once all the appeals have been heard and decided by the CSC, we rescore the test if necessary and double-check all scoring to prepare the final list. Then the list will be certified.

## Testing Industry Standards

- **Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures (1978)**
- **SIOP Principles for the Validation and Use of Personnel Selection Procedures (2003)**

Characteristics of good selection tests:

**Fair** \* **Reliable** \* **Job Related** \* **Valid**

The two main standards Classified Testing adheres to are:

The Federal Uniform Guidelines for Employee Selection as well as the Society for Industrial/Organizational Psychologists (SIOP) Principles for Validation and Use for Selection. These standards require Classified Testing to deliver reliable and valid tools to our customers, including HFD, so that they can make well-informed hiring and promotion decisions.

Our goal is to make each test or assessment Fair, Reliable, Job Related, and Valid.

By fair we mean that every applicant has the same opportunity to take the test. For example, the EXACT same reading materials should be available to all applicants at the, the EXACT SAME amount of time to study should be available to all applicants, and the same or equivalent tests and test settings should be provided to all applicants. Reliable means that people with the same amount of knowledge of the source materials score similarly on the exam—which means we have to make the test equally challenging for everyone with the same level of knowledge. Just as fairness is related to reliability, test validity is related to how job related the test questions are.

By valid, we mean 1) the test requires applicants to use knowledge similar to knowledge used on the job to answer questions similar to challenges encountered on the job, and 2) how well an applicant scores on the test is strongly related to how much and how well the applicant knows the source materials picked out by HFD specifically for this position.

## Characteristics of Good Selection Tests:

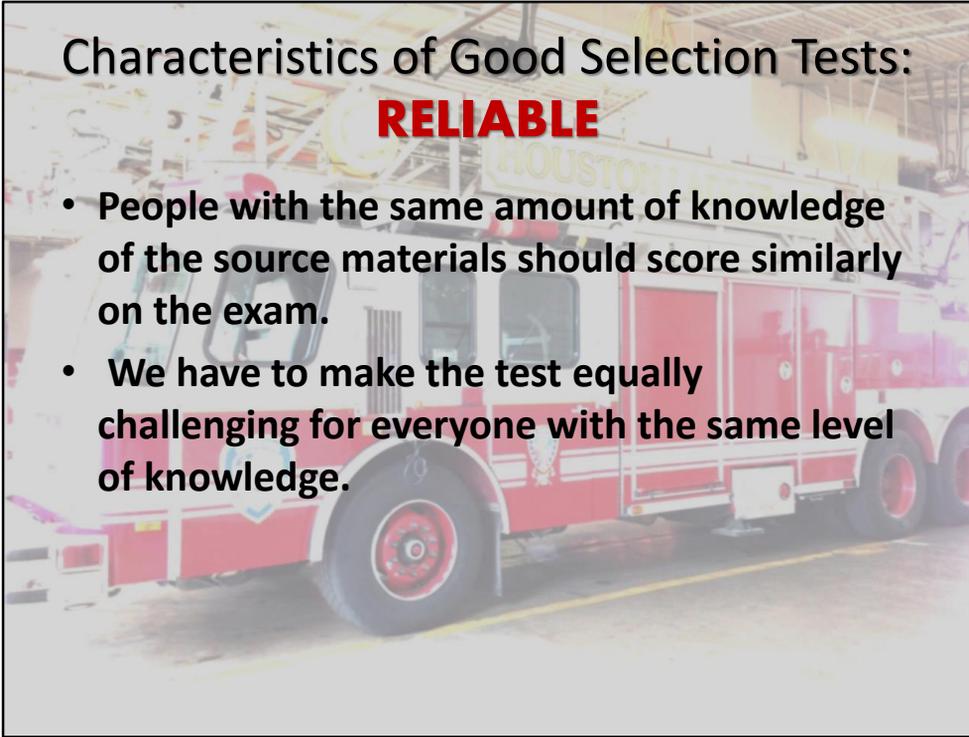
### **FAIR**

- Every applicant has an **EQUAL** opportunity to take the test.
- The **EXACT** same reading materials should be available to all applicants.
- All applicants are given the **EXACT SAME** amount of time to study.
- The **SAME** or equivalent tests and test settings should be provided to all applicants.

## Characteristics of Good Selection Tests:

### **RELIABLE**

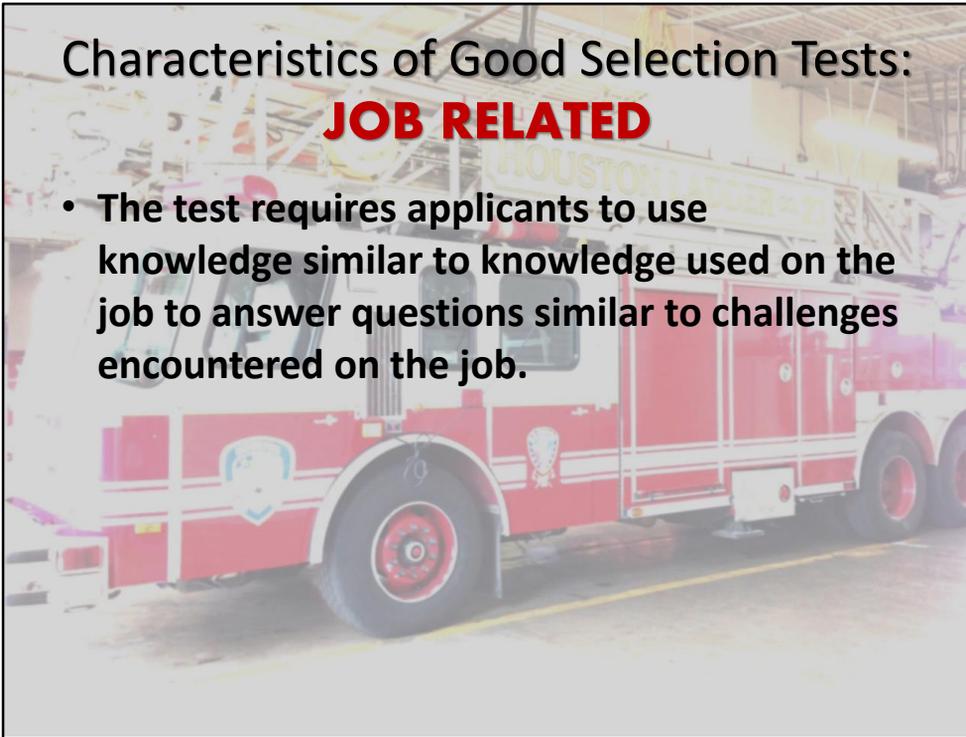
- People with the same amount of knowledge of the source materials should score similarly on the exam.
- We have to make the test equally challenging for everyone with the same level of knowledge.



## Characteristics of Good Selection Tests:

### **JOB RELATED**

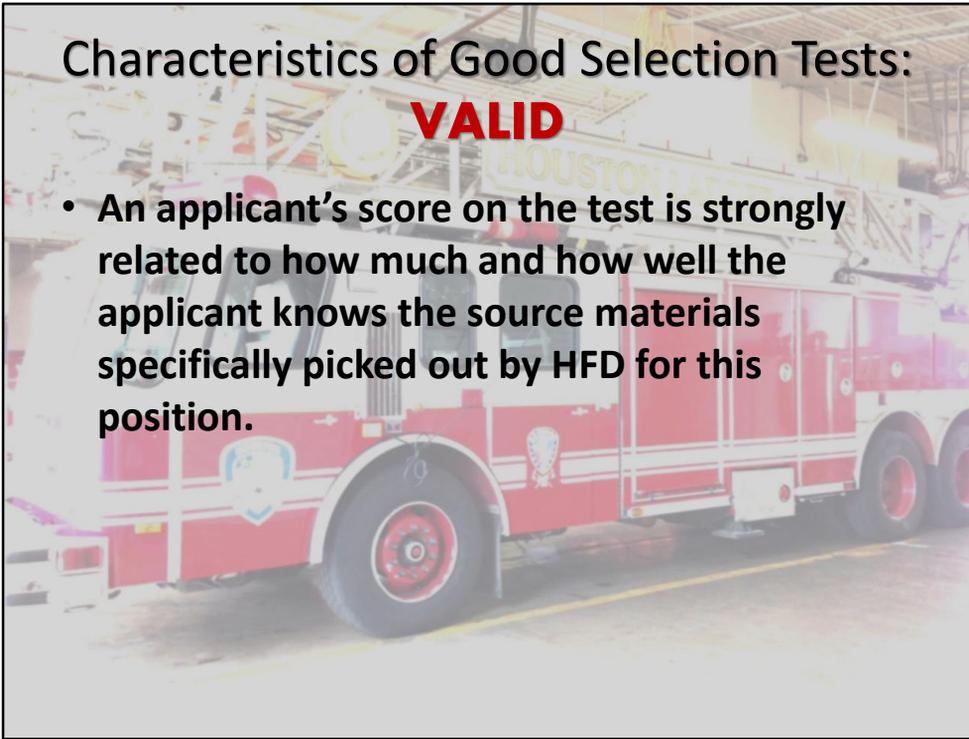
- The test requires applicants to use knowledge similar to knowledge used on the job to answer questions similar to challenges encountered on the job.



## Characteristics of Good Selection Tests:

### **VALID**

- An applicant's score on the test is strongly related to how much and how well the applicant knows the source materials specifically picked out by HFD for this position.



# Reasonable Accommodation

## Testing Accommodations

- Changes to the regular testing process that allow individuals with disabilities to demonstrate their true aptitude or achievement level.

## Documentation

Sufficient documentation includes documentation from:

- Past testing accommodations documents
- Formal public school accommodations documents
- Private school testing accommodations documents
- Written documentation from a qualified professional that made an individualized assessment

## Request Deadline

- Request and supporting documents should be turned into Classified Testing at least **3 weeks** before the examination date.
- If a recently developed circumstance keeps the applicant from following this deadline, the applicant must notify Classified Testing as soon as possible.

Testing Accommodations:

Changes to the regular testing process that allows individuals with disabilities to demonstrate their true aptitude or achievement level.

Documentation:

This is the documentation we consider sufficient to support a request for testing accommodations.

Request Deadline:

We want to provide the best testing scenario for applicants. In order to do that this process needs to be completed as soon as possible.

Request and supporting documents should be turned into Classified Testing within **3 weeks** of the examination date.

If a recently developed circumstance impedes the applicant's ability to follow this deadline, the applicant must notify Classified Testing as soon as possible.

**NOTE:** A request that is not deemed as "reasonable" will not be granted. CT **WILL NOT** provide a reasonable accommodation in the event that the accommodation requested would cause an undue hardship to the CT team, the City of Houston, and/or the Houston Fire Department. (Undue hardship: denial of a reasonable accommodation that would cause a significant difficulty or expense to the employer.)

# Requesting Accommodations

- **What should I do first?**

- **Notify a member of Classified Testing**

City of Houston Classified Testing

4501 Leeland Street

Houston, Texas 77023

[hfdcst@houstontx.gov](mailto:hfdcst@houstontx.gov)

832-395-4850

- **What happens next?**

- **Classified Testing will provide you the forms upon notification.**
- **Complete the forms and turn them in to Classified Testing as soon as possible.**

# Supplemental Points

- Calculating Points – Based on current Chapter 143 and Civil Service Guidelines
- **YOUR** responsibility to verify them!
- Documentation Turn in Deadline
  - **3 weeks** prior to the date of the exam
  - Documents should be emailed to the email address below
  - We recommend you turn documentation as soon as you get it. No need to wait until you are testing.
- Points Draft List
  - 1<sup>st</sup>: approximately 2 weeks after the job posting closes
  - 2<sup>nd</sup>: approximately 1 month after the first list
  - Final: Approximately a week prior to the exam. (after the documentation deadline)

Contact:

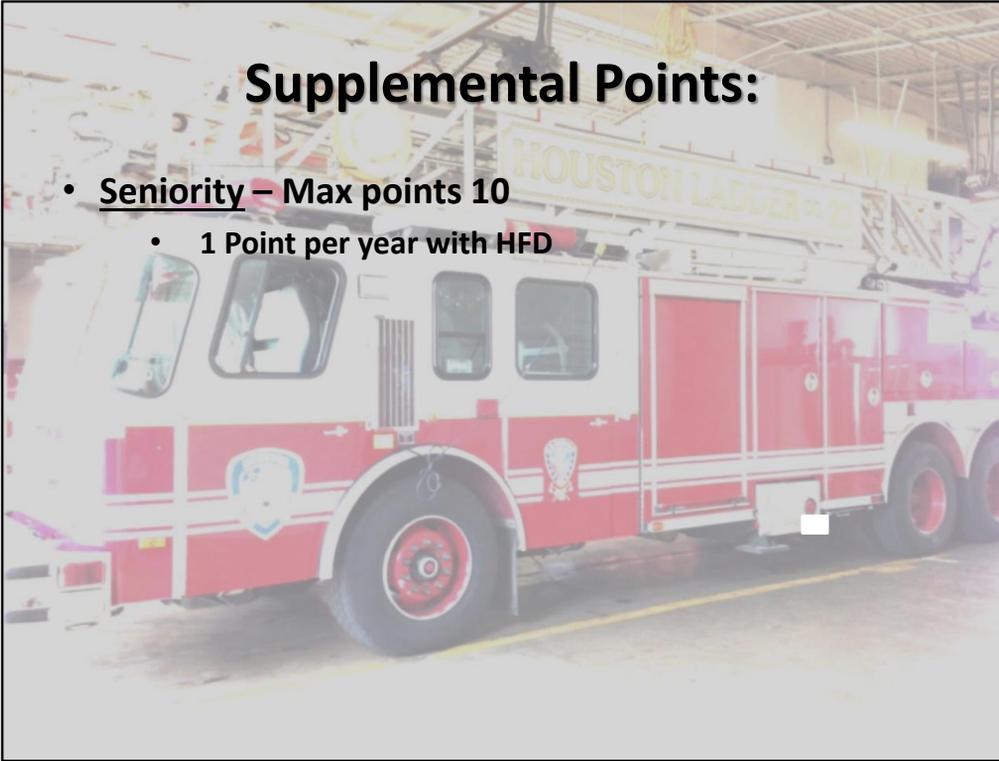
[HFDCST@houstontx.gov](mailto:HFDCST@houstontx.gov)

Classified Testing Services



## Supplemental Points:

- Seniority – Max points 10
  - 1 Point per year with HFD



# Study Aide

	Study Source 1	Study Source 2	Study Source 3	Study Source 4	Study Source 5
Senior Inspector	Leadership in Organizations	Supervision: Key Link to Productivity	Diversity Consciousness	Guidelines Vol. 1	Executive Order
Management and Supervision.	Chapters 2-16	Chapters 1-20	Chapters 1, 8	I-01,22, 30	EO 1-50,
Training/Instructing/Coaching/Mentoring Principles and Methods.	Chapter 3	Chapters 1, 4, 11, 13-16	Chapter 8	I-01, 06, 14, 16, 19, 22, 30, 36	EO 1-50,
Decision making principles and methods.	Chapters 4-10	Chapters 2, 5, 9	Chapter 7	I-30	EO 1-50,
HFD - Standard Operating Guidelines.				I-14	EO 1-50,
Knowledge of the Life Safety Bureau System					22
Public Relations principles and methods.		Chapter 12			LSB 08
HFD - Rules and Regulations.				I-01, 06, 14, 16, 19, 22, 30, 36	EO 1-50, EO 1-18
HFD - Orders and Bulletins.				I-06	
Current IFC and UFC codes.					LSB 01, 02, 03, 08, 11, 22
Knowledge of arithmetic.					LSB 01, 02, 08, 11, 22
F.L.S.A. Laws.				I-19	
Municipal Fire Protection.					LSB 01, 02, 08, 11

Example: How does Chapter 1 in Source 1 give you information you need to know or attend to in order to learn a knowledge area?

1. How the source material was chosen
  1. A job analysis study was done to determine what tasks, skills, knowledge and abilities are most important to this job within HFD
  2. HFD members helped us link the most important tasks to knowledge areas that are important for performing those tasks well.
  3. Current HFD subject matter experts (incumbents, supervisors, etc.) then picked the source materials they thought most relevant for learning the important knowledge areas.
  4. The SMEs reviewed each source and marked on a list of Knowledge areas exactly which part of that source should help you learn a knowledge area needed to do one or more tasks well
  5. Source materials that relate to more of the most important knowledge areas, and as a result to more of the most important tasks, are also more represented on the exam.
2. If you have questions about source material... start with CT because CT is using the material to write the test questions.
3. How to use the study matrix
  1. What information in Chapter X might help you learn a knowledge area it is linked to?
  2. Use the matrix to help you make up practice exam questions...

## Study Aide

- **Omits**
  - Not included on the study aide
  - In your best interest to read the source in its entirety
- **Helpful guide**
  - Use the study aide to target your reading and study habits
  - Test questions will come from the chapters identified by the SME's

1. The study aide is just an aide we offer to help guide your reading of the source materials. **That is where you should concentrate your study time towards, yet there are no "OMITS" on the Source Material Announcement and you should read the entire source.**
2. Saying "OMIT" means that there is no relevant information in that chapter/section of the source. This is not always true. Some times an idea is formulated and defined in a chapter that has not been identified by the SME but used in a following chapter. Even though CT staff will not write from the unidentified chapter, you may have less understanding of the information by not reading the unidentified chapter from the source. This is why we say it is best to have a firm grasp of the entire source, but know that questions will come from ONLY those chapters/sections that have been identified by the SME's.

# Sample Test Questions

1. Regardless of any other exits provided, assembly buildings must also have a main entrance and exit that is capable of accommodating how much of the total occupant load?

- A. One-half of the total occupant load.
- B. Two-thirds of the total occupant load.
- C. All of the total occupant load.

Source: [Fire Prevention: Inspection and Code Enforcement](#), Chapter 7, Page 119.

2. In the event of severe inclement weather or emergency situations, who issues the proclamation that would suspend non-emergency services?

- A. Fire Chief.
- B. Personnel Assignment Office.
- C. Mayor.

Source: [HFD Guidelines Vol. I, Reference I-22](#), Section 6.07B.

3. Your supervisor makes a decision with which you disagree. Which of the following options deviates furthest from the HFD Accountability Manual?

- A. Comply with the decision and keep the disagreement to yourself.
- B. Comply with the decision, but express your disagreement to your colleagues.
- C. Comply with the decision, but express your disagreement to the supervisor in private.

Source: [HFD Accountability Manual](#), Section Rules of Conduct, Page 39.

4. Which statement about small power distance is correct?

- A. Employees are hesitant to question their supervisor or even offer up ideas.
- B. A person's title and rank is socially significant, and greatly impacts interpersonal relationships.
- C. There is more two-way communication between those in authority and subordinates.

Source: [Diversity Consciousness](#), Chapter 7, Page 234.

These questions are examples from an exam, but they give you a good idea of how questions are structured. Let's read over number 2 together...As you can see, some questions are near verbatim from the materials and simply ask you to recall factual information at the Knowledge level. Now let's read over number 1 together... Questions like this one are supported by the source material, but **are not verbatim** recall. First you have to remember that assembly buildings are special cases, and then define the total occupant load according to exit requirements (all of these facts are explained on page 119 of that source). While not verbatim, the question is entirely factual in nature and asks you to comprehend the information given in the source materials to identify the correct answer.

1. All questions have only one **best or most correct** answer
2. Section 143 states FD promo exams must be multiple choice and on a 100 point **scale**
3. We pick 100 items to make scoring and understanding your score easy
4. We give three answer options, because the research on how to build tests shows that 3 choices work better than 2 choices, and just as well as 4 or 5 choices.
5. It is better for you if questions are NOT verbatim--If everyone answers all the question correctly, then giving a test is no better than flipping a quarter—it's a competition for a limited number of spots, and the idea is that the people with the most knowledge used on the job win the competition.
6. If you find yourself reading a test question and think that there are two answer or no correct answer, consider this a red flag and re-read the question to be sure you understand exactly what the question is asking.

## Test Accuracy and Security

- **>2 HFD Subject Matter Experts Review >150 Questions Prior to Final Test Creation**
  - Answers are supported by the source materials
  - Questions are “Highly Job Related” in Houston
- **All Test Materials are PROTECTED**
  - Confidential to HFD by LAW
  - Proprietary to the City by LAW
  - Secured through HFD Honor Code & City Ethical Standards

How we verify question accuracy and applicability to HFD

1. We know the source materials aren't 100% correct and don't apply perfectly to any job—so we also double check to make sure the question is truly knowledge someone in this job with HFD would actually use and that the right answer is not contradicted within the exam source materials themselves or by HFD guidelines. We have at least 2 HFD members in that rank or above review, edit, and match the answers based on the source materials for each question. In fact, we make these folks review at least 150 questions and only keep the best, most job related 100 for the test.

Why test security is so important to you personally and how you can help keep it secure

1. As you can imagine, we make anyone who looks at possible test questions sign a confidentiality agreement and an honor code acknowledgement. Test security is important to us because it does take a culmination of 6 months or more of work by many people to make each test. Test security should also be important to you because it is a competition...giving away any test question on this exam could make someone you are going to compete against in a future exam a better test taker—and could be the difference between you or that person getting a promotion on a future exam. It is also important to you because the US and Texas governments recognize testing as a business and these tests as proprietary business products—like the recipe for Coca Cola. If you compromise the security of promotional test, or cheat the quality of the testing process—you are committing a crime and could be fined, imprisoned, and sued for damages to other test takers and the city.
2. For many of the same reasons, it is also important to you to verify your points are correct before the exam....



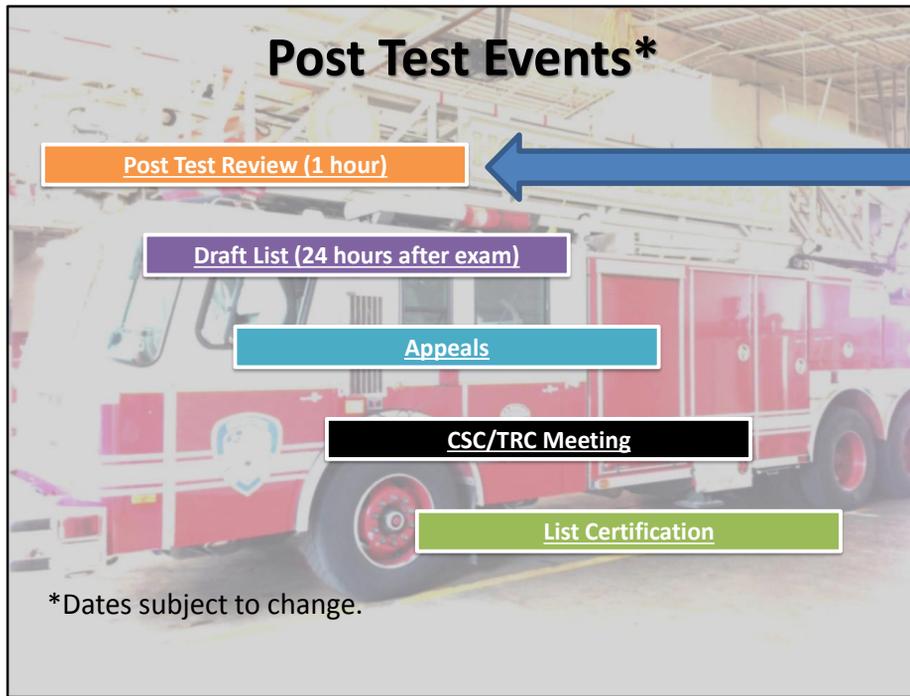
Please be on time to the test site. It may be a good idea to make a practice drive from your home or where ever you will be coming from to the test site during weekday traffic.

Cell phones, smart watches or any electronic recording device are strictly prohibited anywhere in the testing area. Please leave your cell phone in your vehicle. You may leave your phone at the registration desk, however we are not liable for ensuring its safe keeping. If a cell phone is discovered in the testing area, regardless of whether it is off or on vibrate, the owner will be asked to leave and they will forfeit their opportunity for testing that day.

Be sure to bring a picture ID with you. You need this to check in at the registration desk.

Be sure to bubble in the answer you want recorded on your Scantron answer sheet. Any blanks will be counted as wrong answers. Don't spend too much time on any one answer, they all count for 1 point. Periodically check to ensure you are bubbling in the corresponding question number from the test booklet.

Bring a jacket, long sleeve shirt, etc. to make sure you are comfortable during the test. Classrooms and assembly hall rooms are usually kept cooler than usual. Proctors may assist in bringing sharpened pencil and/or escort you for a bathroom break. They cannot assist in test question comprehension. If you notice a possible typo on a question, ex: "it" should be "at", let us know and we will announce the typo to everyone, in order for everyone to have the same comprehension of the test question.



### Post Test Review

Once everyone has completed the exam, there will be a review period the same day of the exam. Reviews usually begin 30-45 minutes after the last applicant has finished the exam and we do notify everyone when it is time for the review to start. You will be required to check into the review. You will need to show your ID. You will NOT be allowed to bring your phone or any other electronic device. You may bring your books (but you cannot write in them or on anything). You will be given your test packet and your Scantron. The review only lasts 1 hour. You are not allowed to appeal questions at this review (Classified Testing can not make any changes to the exam without the direction and consent of the CSC). The post test review is simply for you to look at your exam. Remember you are under the honor code. No pencils, pens or recording devices of any type are allowed in the review area. You should not be writing down any test information during the Post Test Review.

**Draft lists** are posted within 24 hours after the exam at 611 walker, city hall and on our website. Applicants are listed by Random Test Number (Each applicant has been given a random number via the email that was sent to you. If you did not receive the email, let us know in order to obtain your random number). CT cannot remind you of your Random Test Number so it is very important to remember this number.

The FINAL list will be sorted in the order, for example:

1. Total Score (test grade plus points)
2. Raw Test Score
3. Total Points as an HFD employee
4. Number of questions correct is the 1<sup>st</sup> quadrant (questions 1-25)
5. Number of questions correct is the 2<sup>nd</sup> quadrant (questions 26-50)
6. Number of questions correct is the 3<sup>rd</sup> quadrant (questions 50-75)

7. Number of questions correct is the 4th quadrant (questions 76-100)
8. Alphabetical order

### **Appeals Process Rules**

You must make an appointment

No phones or electronic devices allowed

If you have e-books we will provide you with a copy of the source

Phones must be checked in

If you need to use your phone you must do so outside of the review room

You are still under the honor code

Representing HFD (act and dress appropriately)

You are allowed to bring your books.

Classified Testing will provide you with appeal/rebuttal forms, pens and scratch paper

You are only allowed to write on the materials provided to you by Classified Testing.

Writing in your book or on any other papers will be a violation of the honor code and could result in indefinite suspension.

### **Appeals (If you feel that a test question is incorrect or has multiple answers)**

You can come more than once

Must be done in the presence of Classified Testing

You must have an appointment

### List Certification

The CSC meet the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of every month

Some exceptions with holidays

Estimated Certification Date: They review the list and it becomes an official document

Once Classified Testing receives the certified list, it is sent to HFD and posted at 611 Walker, city hall, and on the Classified Testing website

Each list is active for 2 years from the day test date.

The list is recertified only one time. Any revisions such as point error, or USERRA administration, maintains the original certification date and will remain the start day for the 2 year period.



## Rules of Review Sessions

- You can bring your books
- **NO ELECTRONIC DEVICE**
- Classified Testing will provide you with all materials needed to file an appeal
  - Anything that is written on during the appeal process will be kept by Classified Testing. You cannot write, mark or highlight any of your own materials.
- For review sessions at the Cape Center you **MUST** make an appointment at [hfdcst@houstontx.gov](mailto:hfdcst@houstontx.gov)

# Civil Service Commission

- Governed by Chapter 143 and Civil Service Guidelines  
Please review the dates for your exams review period. NO appeals will be accepted after those dates.

## CSC

- 5 Business days to appeal
- CSC reviews the appeals and makes a decision
- All Ranks

# Appeals

- Appeals
  - Appeals are filed when applicants feel a question on the exam is incorrect, has multiple answers, or is not job related



# Appeal Form

**MULTIPLE CHOICE WRITTEN TEST QUESTION - APPEAL - REBUTTAL FORM**  
Complete this form if you are appealing the results of a Multiple Choice Written Test question. This form is used to appeal the results of a Multiple Choice Written Test question. It is not to be used to appeal the results of a Multiple Choice Written Test question that is not a Multiple Choice Written Test question.

Examinee Name \_\_\_\_\_ Department \_\_\_\_\_  
Question \_\_\_\_\_

**Appeal / Rebuttal**

**PLEASE CHECK ONE:**  
According to the cited source:

A is the only correct answer  
 B is the only correct answer  
 C is the only correct answer

Consider the following as correct answers:  
A B C

Explanation: Please provide a detailed explanation of your appeal. **DO NOT REPEAT THE TEST QUESTION ON THIS FORM.** Write legibly.

Examination Year Number \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

Examinee Test Number \_\_\_\_\_  
Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Employee Number \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_

Fill out the back of the form

## Appeal Form

Be sure to 1) Write question number, 2) indicate what you want to happen with the questions 3) give a logical argument or reason why your answer(s) are correct etc. (citing references to support is usually helpful), and 4) fill out both sides of the form.

You cannot write the test question. Only one question per appeal form.

There is no power in numbers (more forms don't equal a better chance).

Proving your point with references and good argument helps the most.

Some useful FACTS about Appeals:

**The governing body per Chapter 143 Section 143.034 for this rank is the Civil Service Commission**

Only the CSC can decide if an appeal has merit.

The only authority base for determining the right answer to any question is the source material for that exam.

Questions that have no verifiable right answer are usually dropped from the exam—and DO NOT change scores by more than 0.10 points per question (since the new grade becomes the percentage of question correct out of 99 total questions).

Questions that have two verifiable right answers in the source material are usually given dual credit—and change scores by 1 point.

Questions do NOT have to be verbatim from source materials (only verifiable)-likewise typos on tests that do not substantially change the meaning of the

answer or question are expected (and don't automatically give merit to an appeal).



Attempting to take an exam in which you are knowingly ineligible is a violation of the Honor Code and may result in disciplinary action at a minimum.

Please verify your seniority points. The information Classified Testing has is based on the official city database. There may be some errors within it, therefore it is your responsibility to let us know about any discrepancies. Even if you have too many points, you must correct the error or be subject to disciplinary action. Let us know PRIOR to the test if you will be requesting reasonable accommodation.

Utilize the study tips we covered in this presentation to focus your study time and what to study during your study periods.

Maintain strict test security while you are in the test environment and afterward during the appeal and rebuttal phases.

We hope this presentation was beneficial and helpful for you to understand the test process and the role Classified Testing plays for you and within the City of Houston.

Please feel free to call anyone in the Classified Testing Division. The contact information is listed at the end of this presentation.

Thank you for spending time with us, and we hope this review helps!

# Classified Testing Services

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Thanks again, and Good Luck!