

What to expect during the testing and how to prepare

Test Administration – In-person

Testing takes place over 3.5 hours. Most candidates are able to complete the questionnaires in about 3 hours but, as not all questionnaires are timed, some candidates take longer to complete the questionnaires than others. When candidates arrive at the testing location, they are checked-in by representatives of the municipality to which they have applied. (Candidates should contact the municipality directly if they have questions about the documentation to be presented at check-in.) Candidates are tested in groups of up to 150 people. Candidates are encouraged to arrive early to ensure they have enough time to find parking and to check in.

All the materials candidates will need to complete the testing is provided during the administration.

Depending on the municipality for which candidates are being tested, they will complete 5-6 separate questionnaires. The demands placed on firefighters are not the same from department to department and this fact is reflected in the questionnaires completed by candidates for any given administration.

At the beginning of a testing session but before responding to the actual questionnaires, candidates are required to read and sign a form that gives consent for *BL Associates Corporate Psychologists Inc.* to submit their personal information and test results to the municipality to which they have applied.

The problem-solving questionnaires are administered earlier in the session, followed by the more lengthy questionnaires focused on character and interests. The problem-solving questionnaires have time limits for completion ranging from 5 to 25 minutes each. The questionnaires focused on character and interests are not timed but can be completed in 30 to 40 minutes each.

There are no scheduled breaks during a testing session. However, once the problem-solving questionnaires have been completed and the character-interest questionnaires have been started, candidates are free to leave the room and return. During such breaks, candidates must leave all test materials at their testing station/seat. There is no restriction on the amount of time a candidate may be absent from during such a break, but *all questionnaires must be completed and returned to the administrators within the time frame set for the session.*

Test Administration – Online

The test battery is the same as with the in-person administration, however, the exam is completed online and is proctored remotely by a proctor organisation.

Candidates will be emailed information about the exam and how to schedule the exam usually around 10 days prior to the test date. In order to take the exam online, candidates must have access to stable internet and have a working webcam and microphone. Candidates will create an account with the proctor company and will schedule their exam at their preferred time on a designated date of the department's choosing.

At the start of the exam, candidates will be connected with a proctor via videoconference who will establish their identity and confirm that the test environment conditions have been met (such as no-one else being present in the room and no resources being used). The exam will then commence and must be completed within 3.5 hours. Most candidates complete the online exam in about 2.5 hours.

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There are no scheduled breaks during a testing session. However, after the first 60 minutes have passed, candidates are free to leave the room and return. There is no restriction on the amount of time a candidate may be absent from during such a break, but the exam must be completed within the 3.5 hours.

Obtaining Results

After candidates have completed psychometric testing for a fire department, their responses are processed and scores are generated for each candidate on each of the 13 firefighter competencies.

Based on the results, the municipality decides which candidates will proceed to the next stage of the hiring process and notifies candidates of their status going forward. Once notified by a municipality of their status, candidates may contact *BL Associates Corporate Psychologists Inc.* via email at info@blassociates.ca to schedule a feedback session to discuss their individual test results. These conversations focus ONLY on candidates' test scores and will NOT touch on other aspects of the hiring process – such as interviews, physical testing, ride along, etc.

How to Prepare for the Testing Session

The best way to prepare for a firefighter competency testing session is to have a good sleep the two nights prior and to come to the testing session well rested! The problem-solving questionnaires, in particular, are susceptible to fatigue effects because of the time limits and it is important that candidates be fresh and alert to perform at their best. Moreover, the testing takes place over a 3.5 hour period and candidates need to focus their attention for the entire time. The level of energy required to maintain concentration for the session is equivalent to that needed for a full day at work.

Once candidates know their testing date and time, they should plan their day to optimize their performance during testing time. For example, a substantial, healthy meal (i.e., containing protein and complex carbohydrates) within two hours of the start of the session in order to maintain their blood-sugar levels. Physical exercise the morning of the session will boost blood flow and increase oxygen flow to the brain. Also, candidates are encouraged to keep their day before the testing as stress free as possible.

Preparing for Specific Questionnaires

The BL Associates Corporate Psychologists Inc. firefighter competency testing process was developed to provide municipalities with a method of screening candidates that does not unfairly advantage candidates who have prior knowledge of firefighting or experience as a firefighter over those who do not. Instead, it is focused on the skills, abilities, and other characteristics candidates need to bring to job in order to become proficient and perform effectively. Where other approaches will test candidates for their knowledge of firefighting techniques, our approach tests candidates for their ability to learn what they need to know to fight fires effectively. Other approaches will evaluate candidates based on the length of time they have spent as a firefighter, whereas our process evaluates candidates on the extent to which they possess the characteristics needed to execute firefighting tasks effectively. There are two broad categories: Character/Interest, and Intellect. Information on how to prepare for these areas is outlined below.

Character & Interest: We encourage candidates prepare to write the character and interest questionnaires by (a) reflecting on their personal qualities and (b) resolving to portray their personal qualities honestly and accurately. When asked a question like, "I would like to belong to a book club," candidates are encouraged to reflect on how they feel about joining a book club and respond in line with how they genuinely feel. Some candidates will answer questions like this based on how they think firefighters would answer instead of how they, themselves, feel. Answering on the basis of how one thinks a firefighter would answer is a bad strategy and candidates who use it tend to receive lower scores than candidates who respond in accord with how they really feel.

Examples of personality test items (true or false response):

- I like to play practical jokes on people.
- When things go wrong, I sometimes blame the other person.
- The most important things to me are my duties to my job and to other people.
- Even when I have got into trouble, I was usually trying to do the right thing.

Intellect: Study and review can help candidates to prepare for the problem-solving questionnaires. These questionnaires measure thinking skills that can be improved through effort and practice.

Verbal: Ability to read, write, understand spoken messages, and speak fluently. The best way to build verbal skills is to read.

The following videos and websites may be helpful for verbal ability practice:

- This site provides ideas on how to enhance language facility:
<http://buildvocabulary.org/index.php>
- This site simulates actual testing conditions. On the site, set length to “open”, level to “35-40,” and timer to “5:00”. To practice, follow this link:
<http://www.thatquiz.org/tq-D-z0/vocabulary/English/>
- This site has sample verbal ability questions:
<https://www.geeksforgeeks.org/verbal-ability/>
- Video tutorial:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=39zRq_cVDGQ&t=9s

Mathematical: Ability to perform mathematical computations. The best way to build math skills is to do lots of computations that require different kinds of operations (i.e.: addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division).

The following videos and websites may be helpful for mathematics practice:

- Test item practice:
<https://www.testprepreview.com/modules/mathematics1.htm>
- Video tutorials:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KmXKQD0gDyM>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VaXNNI0jVJY>
- Skill building and test practice:
<http://www.thatquiz.org/tq-1/math/arithmic/>
(select all of the arithmetic operators (+, -, /, x) and experiment with the other options to generate a broad domain of question types. To simulate testing conditions, set length to “open”, level to “100”, and time to “100:00”).

Reasoning: Ability to think logically in order to arrive at sound conclusions. A good way to build reasoning skills is consistently to apply formal logic to problems without allowing attitudes and feelings to affect the conclusions. If searching online, look for practice materials labelled “symbolic reasoning,” “abstract reasoning,” and “syllogisms”.

The following videos and websites may be helpful for reasoning practice:

- Video tutorial:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UD_5IXy3IpU

Mechanical: Ability to understand mechanical systems and how they work. A good way to build mechanical understanding is to study the mechanics of gears and pulleys together with a review of the mechanical principles of force and motion.

The following videos and websites may be helpful for mechanical reasoning practice:

- Video tutorials:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RPvwCpaChUA>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wkc8sFi4Csl>

The following video tutorials provide information on how to prepare for problem solving tests in general:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z18lkaAeoEs>
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gJJWp7q_cfY

Note: the preceding links are provided as a courtesy to assist with candidates’ preparation. We are not responsible for the content of the sites linked to and do not provide additional assistance with the materials presented on the sites. Other methods of preparation can also be helpful.

Sample Problem Solving Questions:

Example 1: The day before two days after the day before tomorrow is Saturday. What day is it today?

Example 2: Five people were eating candies. A finished before B, but behind C. D finished before E, but behind B. What was the finishing order?

Example 3: All of the following are ways to write 25 percent of N EXCEPT

- A. 0.25 N
- B. $25N / 100$
- C. $\frac{1}{4} N$
- D. 25 N

Example 4: Sarah is twice as old as her youngest brother. If the difference between their ages is 15 years. How old is her youngest brother?

- A. 10
- B. 15
- C. 20
- D. 25
- E. 30

Example 5: Choose the pair of words that best completes the sentence: The ----- of the timetable caused some -----

- A. rivation/inconvenience
- B. revision/inconvenience
- C. reversion/inconvenience
- D. revition/inconvenience

Example 5 Answer: B. all the other pairs of words are spelled incorrectly.

Example 4 Answer: B. If her youngest brother is 15, then Sarah at twice as old would be 30. 30 minus 15 is 15.

Example 3 Answer: D. All the others are fractions but D represents $25 \times N$.

Example 2 Answer: CABDE. (Putting the first three in order, A finished in front of B but behind C, so CAB. Then, we know D finished before B, so CABD. We know E finished after D, so CABDE).

Example 1 Answer: Friday. (The "day before tomorrow" is today; "the day before two days after" is really one day after. So if "one day after today is Saturday," then it must be Friday).