

# Alberta Police Cognitive Ability Test (APCAT) General Information

## 1. What does the APCAT measure?

The APCAT test measures one's potential to successfully complete police recruit training and to perform effectively as a police officer in the province of Alberta.

## 2. How many questions are there?

The test includes 120 multiple-choice questions.

## 3. How much time is allowed to write the test?

Candidates are given 30 minutes to review a Pretest Study Booklet. They then are given 2 hours and 15 minutes to complete the test.

## 4. What do I need to do to prepare for the test?

Unlike a high school or university test, it is not necessary to study for the APCAT. The reason is that the APCAT does not measure your knowledge of a particular subject, but rather your ability to think and reason.

## 5. How do I arrange to take the test?

If you need to write the APCAT as part of the application process for a particular police agency, that agency will inform you of where and when you can write the APCAT.

*This brochure is provided to prospective APCAT candidates to address common questions they may have about the test. However, the material in this brochure does not give the reader an advantage over someone who has not read the brochure. Therefore, it is not essential, nor necessary, that candidates receive or read this brochure in advance of taking the APCAT.*

## Sample Test Questions

The APCAT includes questions that measure five different areas: (1) judgment; (2) observation skills; (3) learning/memory recall; (4) written communication; and (5) problem analysis.

Following are 10 sample questions that are similar to the questions found in the test. After each question, the best response is identified along with a brief rationale.

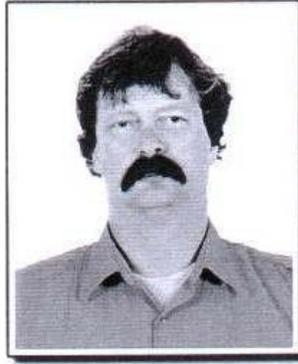
- 1) You and your partner arrive at the scene of a domestic dispute. In what order should you do the following?
- I. determine the marital status of the persons
  - II. check for available weapons
  - III. separate the two persons
  - IV. check for injuries
- a. II, III, I, IV                      b. I, III, II, IV                      c. III, II, IV, I                      d. II, I, IV, III

*Option “a” can be ruled out as it suggests that step I should occur before step IV. Because step I - determining the marital status of the persons - is less urgent than step IV – checking for injuries, step I should occur after, not before step IV. Option “b” can be ruled out for similar reasons, as it begins with step I. Likewise, option “d” has step I occurring before other more urgent steps. Option “c” begins with the more urgent steps that will prevent any (further) injuries or harm - separating the two persons and checking for weapons, and finishes with the least urgent step, determining marital status. Therefore, option “c” is the best of the four options.*

- 2) In Alberta all rivers flow to the east. Edmonton is a city in Alberta. A person fishing along the north river bank in central Edmonton sees a boat floating by with a lone small child inside. The child is crying for help. In Edmonton all police rescue boats are kept at the east end of the city. The person fishing immediately phones the police, and a police officer jumps into a boat to rescue the child.
- a. The police officer must travel upstream to reach the child.
  - b. The police officer must travel east to reach the child.
  - c. The police officer must travel downstream to reach the child.
  - d. The police officer must pass the person fishing to reach the child.

*The police officer gets into the rescue boat at the east end of the city, and travels westward towards the centre of the city, as this was where the boat with the child was spotted. As we know that all rivers in Alberta flow to the east, traveling west means traveling upstream. Therefore, options “b” and “c” can be ruled out. As the boat with the child was spotted by the person fishing in central Edmonton, and the boat would have continued to drift downstream (east) from there, and the rescue boat would have begun to travel west from the east end of the city, the rescue boat would meet the boat with the child before reaching the centre of Edmonton. Therefore, option “d” can be ruled out as well. As a result, the best of the four options is “a.”*

3) Which of the four pictures (A, B, C, or D) is the original person (top picture) in disguise?



**A**

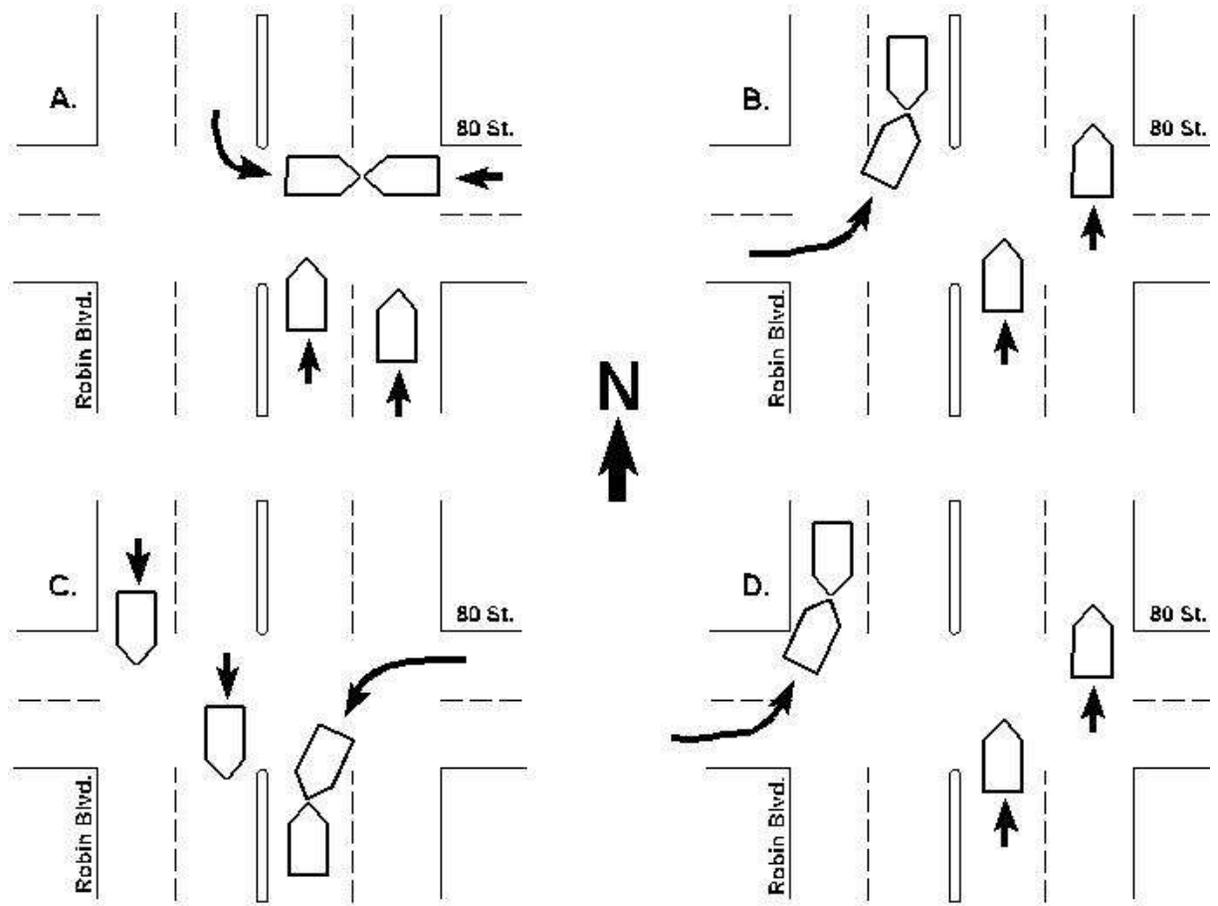
**B**

**C**

**D**

*On close inspection, one can see that the person in picture A has a different shaped mouth and nose than the person in the target picture. The person in picture C has different eyes than the person in the target picture. And the person in picture D also has a different shaped mouth than the person in the target picture. However, the person in picture B has all the same features as the person in the target picture, except less hair (which could be cut off by the person to make himself look different). Therefore, the best response for which picture is the original picture in disguise is B.*

- 4) Which of the four diagrams best fits the description, “An eastbound car attempted to make a left turn onto Robin Boulevard, but turned into the inside southbound lane instead. The car hit a southbound vehicle head-on.”



*There are no eastbound vehicles in diagram C, therefore that option can be ruled out. Diagram A can be ruled out as well, as the only eastbound vehicle has just made a left turn onto 80th Street, not Robin Boulevard. Diagrams B and D both show an eastbound vehicle turning left onto Robin Boulevard. However, only diagram B shows the car hitting another car in the inside southbound lane. Diagram D shows the collision occurring in the outside southbound lane. Therefore, diagram B best illustrates the described accident.*

- 5) Which one of the four words is spelled incorrectly?

- a. silencer      b. alcohol      c. vehicle      d. pursuent

*Option “d” is spelled incorrectly. The correct spelling is “pursuant.” Option “a” would be considered misspelled, if one had intended to write “silence” as in the absence of sound. However, “silencer” as in a device that attaches to a firearm to muffle the sound is spelled correctly. Therefore, the best option is “d.”*

- 6) Which word or phrase is closest in meaning to the word or phrase in capital letters?

TO SUBSTANTIATE

- a. to dig                      b. to measure                      c. to verify                      d. to legalize

*“To substantiate” means to show to be real or true. The meaning of “to verify,” option “c,” is very similar: to prove or confirm to be true. In contrast, the meanings for the other three options, “to dig,” “to measure,” and “to legalize” are not at all like “to substantiate.” Therefore, the best option is “c.”*

- 7) Which of the following is least grammatically correct?

- a. After roll call, I checked the crime bulletin and signed out a patrol vehicle.  
b. We returned to the station when we heard that the witness had arrived.  
c. Due to many calls that night, the bank alarm was assigned to my partner and I.  
d. The low priority reports were not completed until the end of the shift.

*None of the options “a,” “b,” and “d” have any clear grammatical errors. Some people may consider the use of commas in options “a” and “c” as unnecessary. However, their inclusion does not constitute a clear grammatical error such as that found in option “c.” The use of the word “I” in option “c” is incorrect. It should be “me.” This error is most evident if one removes the words “my partner” from the sentence, resulting in the clearly inappropriate wording... “the bank alarm was assigned to I.” Therefore, the option which is least grammatically correct is “c.”*

- 8) You are parked in a parking lot at the corner of a busy intersection. You observe a toddler walking up to the intersection. There are no adults in sight who may be responsible for the small child. A sports car approaches rapidly and runs a red light. What should you do first?

- a. pursue the sports car and issue a violation to the driver  
b. broadcast a description of the sports car to all police units  
c. get out of the vehicle and take control of the toddler  
d. check the area further for the child’s parents or caregivers

*If the toddler was not there, it may be appropriate to pursue the sports car (option “a”) and/or to broadcast a description of the car (option “b”). However, given the imminent danger to the toddler, there is no time to do either “a” or “b,” as the toddler could step out into traffic at any moment. Both options “c” and “d” address the danger to the toddler. However, option “d” may take several minutes to locate the parents and point out to them that their child has wandered away from them. Therefore, the best option to do first is “c”—take control of the toddler yourself. After that, you can search for the parents confident that the child is safe.*

- 9) The charge to be laid for shoplifting is dependant upon the value of the merchandise stolen. A suspect shoplifts 2 watches priced at \$95 each, 3 pairs of earrings priced at \$21 per pair, and a gold chain priced at \$196. What is the total value of the stolen merchandise?

- a. \$443                      b. \$445                      c. \$447                      d. \$449

*The total value is calculated by adding the value of the watches to the earrings and the gold chain. The value of the 2 watches is \$190 (2 watches X \$95 per watch = \$190). The value of the 3 pairs of earrings is \$63 (3 pairs X \$21 per pair = \$63). The value of the gold chain is \$196. Therefore, the total value of the stolen merchandise is \$190 plus \$63 plus \$196, which equals \$449. This corresponds to option “d.”*

10) Three of the four groups of letters follow a certain pattern or rule. Which one does not?

- a. YXWZ                      b. PONQ                      c. TSRV                      d. HGFI

*Each of the letter groups follows the pattern: all four letters occur together in the alphabet, with the first three letters presented in reverse order. This rule is broke in option “c,” where the last letter is “V,” which does not occur together with the other three letters in the alphabet. It should have been “U” to be consistent with the pattern. Therefore, the correct choice is “c.”*

## Test Writing Tips and Techniques

**Get a good night’s sleep.** Writing a test such as the APCAT is mentally challenging to do. No one can perform at their best if they are tired. Therefore, the night before you write the test, get to bed on time so that you are well rested. It will not guarantee that you will do well on the test, but it will increase the chances that you will do your best.

**Budget your time.** To ensure you do not run out of time, at the start of the test make note of the time, and determine approximately how much time you have per question. For example, in the APCAT test, there are 120 questions and the time limit is 2 hours and 15 minutes. Therefore, you will have a little more than 1 minute per question. With this in mind, if you end up spending 5 minutes on one question, you know that you will have to make up that time by answering other questions more quickly. It is also useful to determine how many questions you should have completed by certain time points. For example, if the test begins at 9:00 a.m. you will be half way through the allotted time at 10:08 a.m. (i.e., half of 2 hours and 15 minutes added to the starting time of 9:00 a.m.). If you are on pace to complete the test, you should have completed approximately half of the test questions by that time. The APCAT has 120 questions in total. Therefore, if you have completed fewer than 60 questions by half time, you know that you will have to increase your pace somewhat in order to have sufficient time to complete all the test questions.

**Read instructions, test questions, and answer options carefully.** When writing the test, take the time to read the instructions, the test questions, and each answer option carefully before recording your response. Do not settle for the first option that appears to be “correct.” There may be a better option provided amongst the choices. Read all options prior to choosing that which you believe to be the best.

**Eliminate the options you know are wrong.** For some questions you may not be sure of the correct or best response. However, you may be able to rule out some of the response options. If so, you will then have a better chance of guessing the correct or best response amongst the remaining options you could not rule out. Therefore, if you do not know which response is the correct or best one, rule out those options that are clearly wrong, and then guess amongst those options remaining.

**Ensure you record your responses in the correct place on the answer sheet.** Make sure that you get credit for the questions for which you know the answers. If you know the right answer but incorrectly record it on the answer sheet, you will not get credit for it. Take your time to ensure you record your answers in the appropriate spaces on the answer sheet. If in doubt as to where to record

your answers, check with the person administering the test. Periodically, while writing the test, double check that you are recording your responses in the correct places. If you have any time left at the end, use that time to double-check your responses. (You do not get extra marks for completing the test early.)

**Answer all questions.** For the APCAT test, no marks are taken away for incorrectly answering a question. Therefore, if you are about to run out of time, and you still have 20 questions left, you are better off answering them quickly even if you are simply guessing. The reason is that if you leave the 20 questions blank, you will get 0 marks for those 20 questions. However, if you answer all 20, you are likely to get at least some of the questions right just by chance alone. Therefore, if a test does not penalize for incorrect answers (and the APCAT does not), it is to your advantage to answer all questions before submitting your answer sheet, even if you have to guess at some questions.

**It is OK to be nervous.** If you feel nervous before writing a test such as the APCAT, that is perfectly normal. Most people feel nervous before writing such a test. Plan to get to the testing site a few minutes early so that you can relax before the test begins.