



NEW YORK STATE UNIFIED COURT SYSTEM
OFFICE OF COURT ADMINISTRATION

EXAMINATION
ORIENTATION GUIDE:
2015 Court Reporter Examination

Examination Number 45-786
April 2015

This Orientation Guide for the Court Reporter Examination is being provided to all applicants who have applied to take the 2015 Court Reporter Examination. The following material describes the format and content of the written and performance components of the examination and also suggests a number of ways to prepare for the examination so that applicants can perform at their best. In addition, this guide provides a brief summary of the work that Court Reporters perform for the New York State Unified Court System.

We hope this guide and the general examination announcement (#45-786) will answer any questions about the screening and hiring process for the court reporter job.

I. INTRODUCTION

Court Reporters provide a crucial service in the New York State Unified Court System by reporting and preserving word-for-word accounts of trials and other court proceedings. Transcripts of these proceedings are used by judges and counsel to assess the facts, evidence, and procedures employed in a particular case, thereby playing an integral role in the fair administration of justice. Court Reporters provide an essential service to the courts, the legal community, and the public at large.

In addition to proficiency in shorthand and in the operation of the stenographic machine, Court Reporters must have excellent command of the English language. They must also possess research and computer skills and have familiarity with legal and medical terminology. Court reporting requires a highly trained ear that can adapt to different accents and styles of speech. A Court Reporter must be detail-oriented, work under pressure, and meet court deadlines for producing transcripts.

II. TYPICAL ACTIVITIES

The duties of a Court Reporter vary from day to day and usually depend upon the type of court and its location. Typically, Court Reporters are responsible for verbatim reporting and transcribing testimony in formal and informal court settings such as trials, conferences, calendar calls, arraignments, hearings, and in camera proceedings. They also perform back office and courtroom clerical tasks such as processing forms related to case proceedings. Court Reporters work in the Civil, Family, and Criminal Courts of the City of New York and in City, Family, District, and County Courts.

III. DESCRIPTION OF EXAMINATION

The examination for Court Reporter consists of two components: a written multiple-choice test and a dictated performance test presented in a video-recorded format.

Written Component

The written test consists of multiple-choice questions which are designed to assess applicants in the following areas:

1. **Knowledge of English Grammar and Usage, Punctuation, and Sentence Structure**
These questions assess applicants' ability to apply the rules of English grammar and usage, punctuation, and sentence structure. Applicants are presented with a series of sentences and must select the sentence that best conforms to standard English grammar and usage, punctuation, and sentence structure.
2. **Spelling and General Vocabulary**
These questions assess applicants' knowledge of the spelling and meaning of words and phrases that Court Reporters may encounter in their daily work.
3. **Knowledge of Medical, Legal, and Technical Terminology**
These questions assess applicants' knowledge of the medical, legal, and technical terminology that Court Reporters may encounter in their daily work. These questions include, but may not be limited to, terms from fields such as law, forensic science, anatomy, physiology and medicine.

TIMING - Applicants will be given one (1) hour to complete the written test.

Performance Component

The performance component of the Court Reporter exam consists of two parts:

1. **TRANSCRIPTION** - Applicants will be required to take dictation and transcribe an Opening of Counsel (averaging 175 words per minute for three minutes) and a Direct Testimony involving four voices, including the examination of a witness, objections by opposing counsel, and rulings by the Court (averaging 190 words per minute for five minutes).

NOTE: Prior to the beginning of the actual dictated portion of the test, applicants will be provided with a practice dictation involving four voices for 2 minutes at a rate averaging 190 words per minute. This section does not have to be transcribed and will not be rated.

2. **READ-BACK** - Applicants will also be required to take dictation and later read back a Judge's Charge (averaging 185 words per minute for three minutes). Applicants will be given 5 minutes to study their notes from the dictation and 10 minutes to read back the Charge. Applicants must be able to produce a paper record of their stenographic notes and read back from these notes for this portion of the examination.

TIMING - Applicants will be given a total of 2½ hours to complete the transcription and read-back parts of the performance test.

IV. ADMINISTRATION

Applicants will be given one (1) hour to complete the written component and two and one-half (2½) hours to complete the transcription and read-back sections of the performance test.

V. SCORING

The passing score for the written examination will be determined at a date following the administration of the examination. Applicants must pass **both** the written and performance components of the examination.

For the performance component, applicants cannot have more than a 5% error rate across the entire dictated portion of the examination in order to obtain a passing score. The performance test includes the Opening Statement of Counsel and the Direct Examination sections as well as the Read-Back portion. There are approximately 2,030 words on this examination which translates into approximately 102 errors allowed across the entire performance portion of the examination, and not on any one individual section. **Please note:** One error does not equal one point. Each error on the performance section deducts approximately one-fourth of a point from the total performance score. Applicants are *strongly* encouraged to complete and transcribe the entire test and should not be discouraged by a few dropped words or sentences in any individual section.

PERFORMANCE TEST - RATING CRITERIA
SAMPLE RATING

The performance test is usually scored by three raters using the following key:

1. Dictated Passage:

Direct Examination by Mr. Arthur:

Q. Doctor, are you a physician duly licensed to practice medicine in the State of New York?

A. I am.

2. Applicant's Transcription Paper

Direct Examination by Mr. Paulson:

Q. Doctor Jackson, were you a psychiatrist _____ licensed to practice medacine in
_____ New York State?

A. Yes I am

KEY TO RATING

- | | | | |
|---|---|-------|---------|
| ① | Wrong Speaker (applicant must identify speaker, Q & A must match), repeated use of the wrong speaker will result in additional errors | | 1 error |
| ② | One word insertion | | 1 error |
| ③ | One word omission | | 1 error |
| ④ | Transposition of words (if all words are still included) | ... | 1 error |
| ⑤ | Wrong verb tense | | 1 error |
| ⑥ | Wrong word (substitution) | | 1 error |
| ⑦ | Misspelled words | | 1 error |

Repeated misspelling of the same word will result in additional errors counted.

Note: No errors are counted for split words such as "anywhere" written as "any where." Arabic numerals may be substituted for the numbered word, e.g., twelve = 12. No errors are counted if an applicant drops the "th" from 5th. Contractions such as: "it's" written as "it is," or "can't" written as "cannot" are not counted as errors. No errors are counted for wrong punctuation or capitalization; however, **1 error will be counted for using plural for singular and vice versa.**

The title of speakers, which are considered **two words**, such as Mr. Jones, Mr. Smith, Miss James, or the Court/Judge are not counted toward the total word count, but will have errors counted if misidentified or not properly identified. "A" or "Witness" is acceptable.

Examples of dates and time: 10 o'clock is considered two words; 24th is two words (twenty fourth); 2008 is three words (two thousand eight); 3-2-2009 is five words (three, two, two thousand nine).

The Read-Back

During the 2½ -hour period designated for the transcription, applicants will be individually called out of the examination room to read back Section III - the Judge's Charge. **Applicants using a paperless writer must be able to produce stenographic paper notes in an untranslated format on 8½ x 11 inch sheets of paper.** Refer to the last page of this document to see an example of what a printout might look like. It should be large enough so that applicants are able to read it back. The read-back is organized as follows:

- 1) The read-back will take place in a separate examination area away from the transcription room. The proctor will inform the applicants when it is their turn for the read-back.
- 2) During the read-back portion of the examination, applicants will be provided with the stenographic notes that they took during the dictation of Section III -- the Judge's Charge. They will be given exactly 5 minutes to review these notes. They **may** write on their stenographic notes of the Judge's Charge when reviewing them; however, applicants will **not** be permitted to have access to their original notes from the Judge's Charge, or to make a copy of their notes ***prior*** to the official read-back, except as explained above for those with paperless writers.
- 3) At the completion of the 5-minute period or at an *earlier* time if applicants indicate they are ready to begin, a proctor will start a tape recorder and they will read back the entire dictation from their notes. They will be given 10 minutes to complete the read-back.
- 4) No errors will be counted for words which applicants correct. The **last** version of any phrase, sentence, or word which they **repeat** will be the version that is scored. Therefore, applicants may repeat a word, phrase, or sentence several times when reading from their notes. The **last** time that word, phrase, or sentence is recorded will be the version that is scored.
- 5) At the completion of the read-back or the 10 minutes, applicants will return to the transcription room to complete the transcription.
- 6) The time used to read back the Judge's Charge will be counted as part of the 2½ -hour transcription period.

VI. FINAL SCORING AND RANKING

To be eligible for appointment, applicants **must** obtain a passing score on each of the two components. The written part will be weighted 25% and the performance part will be weighted at 75% of the final ranked score.

VII. GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS USING *COMPUTER-AIDED TRANSCRIPTION (CAT)*

GENERAL TEST INSTRUCTIONS

1. Applicants are responsible for producing their own transcripts without assistance. Applicants must use their own dictionary, and perform their own translating, editing, and printing functions.
2. Additional transcription time will **not** be allowed for equipment failure, applicant mishaps such as accidental erasing of computer files, or forgotten items (e.g., cables, power cords).
3. Applicants are personally responsible for the proper functioning of their equipment. Should any equipment not perform properly, be dropped, stolen, broken, etc., neither the site, the Chief Examiner, nor the Office of Court Administration is responsible.
4. Applicants are responsible for all necessary hardware and software including **CAT** writers, software, computers, security keys, blank disks, flash memory cards, printers, cables, extension cords, adapters, and surge protector/power strips.
5. The printing of rough drafts is permitted; however, the following rules apply:
 - **All** rough draft pages must be turned in with the final test transcript.
 - **All** rough draft pages must be clearly marked "Rough Draft" and a large "X" marked across the page to separate them from final copies.
 - No printer may be shared with another applicant. In the event of a computer/printer failure, the applicant may use the remaining test time to transcribe the dictation on a personal typewriter that he or she brings to the test center.
6. Applicants are prohibited from both viewing and handling another applicant's test material. Failure to adhere to this rule will result in automatic disqualification. **Sharing of test material by electronic or manual transmission, via email, text messaging, or any other means is not permitted.**
7. Applicants, including those withdrawing from the examination, are required to submit the following items to the room proctor:
 - Writer Disk (with 9-digit Social Security Number on it);
 - **All** rough drafts;
 - Final transcript.
8. Applicants whose writer does not use a disc, e.g., a RAM memory or memory flash card, will be asked to reformat their writer's memory after the exam. Therefore, we strongly recommend jobs in their writer's memory be deleted prior to arriving at the exam site.

PLEASE NOTE:

- **TYPEWRITERS AND TRANSCRIPTION PAPER ARE NOT AVAILABLE AT ANY TEST SITE. APPLICANTS MAY BRING THEIR OWN TYPEWRITER. APPLICANTS MUST INDICATE ON THEIR APPLICATION IF THEY WILL BE BRINGING AN ELECTRIC TYPEWRITER. IF THEY BRING AN ELECTRIC TYPEWRITER, THEY MUST ALSO BRING AN EXTENSION CORD AT LEAST 10 FEET LONG. IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT APPLICANTS BRING AT LEAST 50 SHEETS OF TRANSCRIPTION PAPER. THEY MAY ALSO BRING ADDITIONAL TRANSCRIPTION PAPER TO INSURE THAT THEY HAVE A SUFFICIENT SUPPLY.**

VIII. SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

1. Only manual shorthand or shorthand writing machines will be permitted. Real-time translation is ***not*** permitted and computers will ***not*** be allowed to be present during the dictation or the read-back portion of the examination. **The audiosync function of stenographic machines equipped with this feature must be turned off.** Audio or video recording devices will ***not*** be allowed. Applicants using paperless writers must produce paper notes.
2. Stenographic paper, computer disks and flash cards will not be available at the test site. Each applicant must provide his or her own equipment and supplies necessary to record, transcribe and print the exam. Proper functioning of equipment and having adequate supplies are the **sole** responsibilities of the applicant.
3. The transcription portion of the dictation must be completed on a typewriter, personal computer, or with the use of computer-aided transcription (CAT). Applicants must provide their own equipment to transcribe the dictation. Laptop computers and compact printers are preferred since transcription space will be limited. Typewriters and computers will ***not*** be available at any of the examination sites.
4. All notes, tapes, and diskettes must be given to the proctor at the close of the examination. Applicants who plan to use stenographic machines requiring diskettes must bring a blank diskette to the examination. After the exam, applicants using stenographic machines with internal memories or a memory flash card, will be asked to reformat the writer's memory and/or flash drives and delete any files from their computer. **Therefore, applicants should be careful to arrive at the examination with NO files stored in their writer's memory or on the memory flash card.** Applicants must turn off the power to their machines at the close of the examination.
5. Use of dictionaries (English, Legal and/or Medical) will be permitted during the performance component of the examination ***only***. Applicants must supply their own dictionaries. Sharing of dictionaries is ***not*** permitted.
6. Use of **cell phones** and **beepers** is ***not*** permitted at the test site and these devices must be turned off before entering the test center. Applicants will ***not*** be permitted to make or receive any calls or electronic messages, until they are dismissed from the test center. Headsets, bluetooth and other hands-free devices are ***not*** permitted. Children and/or pets are ***not*** permitted at the test center.
7. Access to the Internet will not be permitted during the examination.

CHECK LIST

Prior to the day of the Examination:

- Thoroughly familiarize yourself with your equipment and software.** Make certain that you have the correct software for your printer. If you have new equipment or are borrowing equipment, make sure you know how to operate it. Turn it on and off a few times and make sure it is operational. **Do not** expect that someone at the test site will be familiar with your equipment or can help you in getting it operational. It is *your* responsibility to make sure that you can produce a transcript when required.
- For paperless writers, make sure you know how to print your untranslated stenographic notes that will be needed for the read-back portion of the Judge's Charge. For an example of a printout, see the last page of this guide. You should print it large enough for you to be able to read it.
- Make sure you know how to save your work!
- Ensure that the batteries to your stenographic machine, laptop computer, and any other equipment are fully charged.
- Make sure that you have sufficient ink/toner in your printer. Bring additional ink/toner cartridges to ensure that you don't run out. You will **not** be allowed to leave the test site if you run out of ink/toner or other supplies, and you will **not** be permitted to have someone bring you supplies once the test begins.
- If you intend to bring a typewriter, make sure you have sufficient cartridges and/or correction ribbons.
- Bring sufficient transcription paper and stenographic note paper. The test site will not have any supplies available.
- Bring a power surge protector and a 10-foot long extension cord.
- Gather the material you will need for the test site (admission letter, **picture identification**, any equipment for transcription and instructions for getting to the test site). Applicants will **not** be allowed to take the examination unless they have a picture identification. Make certain you know the exact location of the test center and how to get there. If you are not certain of the test center location, attempt to locate it a few days before the test. Make certain of any train, subway, or traffic detours that might affect your ability to get to the test center on time.
- Electronic devices, cell phones and beepers** are **not** permitted at the test site and must be turned off before entering the test center. The **audiosync** function of stenographic machines equipped with this feature **must be turned off**. You will **not** be permitted to make any calls during the entire time you are present at the test center until the examination is over and you are dismissed. Therefore, it is your responsibility to make any arrangements for childcare, parking, pets, and food preparation, prior to the exam. **No children or pets will be allowed at the test site.** You may want to bring a small snack or refreshment with you.
- Bring a watch to keep track of your time. Electronic devices are **not** permitted at the test site and cannot be used for time management purposes.
- Access to the Internet will **not** be permitted during the examination.
- Be prepared to spend at least **4-5** hours at the test center.

- ❑ Take a few minutes to review the material in this Orientation Guide carefully.
- ❑ Get a good night's sleep prior to the examination.

On the day of the Examination:

Bring all the necessary materials. Dress casually; be as comfortable as possible. Plan to arrive at the test site at least 15 minutes early. At some locations, applicants will have to go through a magnetometer (metal detector) before going to the examination room. There will be an identification form to fill out prior to the test. The entire examination should take approximately **4 to 5** hours to complete.

