The Official Study Guide

Social Studies: Content and Interpretation Test

Test Code: 0086/5086

- Study Topics
- Practice Questions Directly from the Test Makers
- Test-Taking Strategies

www.ets.org/praxis
Table of Contents
Study Guide for the Social Studies: Content and Interpretation Test
**Chapter 1**
Introduction to the Test and Suggestions for Using This Study Guide ........................................ 1

**Chapter 2**
Background Information on the *The Praxis Series* ................................................................. 5

**Chapter 3**
Screens for the Computer-Delivered Test .................................................................................. 9

**Chapter 4**
Study Topics ............................................................................................................................... 18

**Chapter 5**
Don’t Be Defeated by Multiple-Choice Questions ..................................................................... 27

**Chapter 6**
Succeeding on the Constructed-Response Questions ................................................................. 38

**Chapter 7**
Practice Questions ...................................................................................................................... 42

**Chapter 8**
Right Answers and Explanations for the Multiple-Choice Practice Questions ....................... 81

**Chapter 9**
Scoring Guides and Sample Responses to the Constructed-Response Practice Questions .... 96

**Chapter 10**
Are You Ready? Last-Minute Tips .............................................................................................. 103

**Appendix A**
Study Plan Sheet ......................................................................................................................... 106

**Appendix B**
For More Information ............................................................................................................... 108
Chapter 1
Introduction to the Test and Suggestions for Using This Study Guide
CHAPTER 1

Introduction to the Test and Suggestions for Using This Study Guide

Introduction to the Social Studies: Content and Interpretation Test
(0086/5086)

The Social Studies: Content and Interpretation test is designed for prospective secondary social studies teachers. The test is designed to reflect current standards for knowledge, skills, and abilities in social studies education. Educational Testing Service (ETS) collaborates with its client states, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), and the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), along with teacher educators, higher education content specialists, and accomplished practicing teachers in the field of social studies, to keep the test updated and representative of current standards.

The Social Studies: Content and Interpretation test consists of 90 multiple-choice questions and 3 constructed-response questions. The test covers the seven major areas related to the standards, in the following proportions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Categories</th>
<th>Approximate Number of Questions</th>
<th>Approximate Percentage of Examination</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. United States History</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. World History</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Government/Civics</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Economics</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Geography</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. Behavioral Sciences</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. Short Content Essays</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Test takers have 2 hours to complete the test.

Calculators are not allowed.
Suggestions for Using the “Study Topics” Chapter of this Study Guide

This test is different from a final exam or tests you may have taken for specific courses because it is comprehensive—that is, it covers material you may have learned from experience, observation, or in courses. It requires you to synthesize information you have learned from many sources and to understand the subject as a whole.

As a teacher, you will need a thorough understanding of the fundamental concepts in the six content categories and the ways in which the various concepts fit together. You also need to understand typical misconceptions, because as a teacher you will need to apply your knowledge to situations in the classroom.

This test is very different from the SAT® or other assessments of reading, writing, and mathematical skills. You may have heard it said that you can’t study for the SAT—that is, you should have learned these skills throughout your school years, and you can’t learn reading or reasoning skills shortly before you take the exam. The Social Studies: Content and Interpretation test assesses a domain you can review for and can prepare to be tested on. Moreover, studying for your licensing exam is a great opportunity to reflect on your field and develop a deeper understanding of it before you begin to teach the subject matter to others.

We recommend the following approach for using the Study Topics chapter to prepare for the test

- **Become familiar with the test content.** Learn what will be assessed in the test, covered in chapter 4.

- **Assess how well you know the content in each area.** After you learn what topics the test contains, you should assess your knowledge in each area. How well do you know the material? In which areas do you need to learn more before you take the test? It is quite likely that you will need to brush up on most or all of the areas.

- **Develop a study plan.** Assess what you need to study and create a realistic plan for studying. You can develop your study plan in any way that works best for you. A Study Plan form is included in appendix A at the end of the book as a possible way to structure your planning. Remember that this is a licensure test and covers a great deal of material. Plan to review carefully. You will need to allow time to find the books and other materials, time to read the material and take notes, and time to go over your notes.

- **Identify study materials.** Most of the material covered by the test is contained in standard introductory textbooks in each of the major fields. If you do not own an introductory text in each area, you may want to borrow one or more from friends or from a library. You may also want to obtain a copy of your state’s standards for social studies. (One way to find these standards quickly is to go to the website for your state’s Department of Education.) The textbooks used in secondary classrooms may also prove useful to you, since they also present the material you need to know. Use standard school and college introductory textbooks and other reliable, professionally prepared materials. Don’t rely heavily on information provided by friends or from searching the Internet. Neither of these sources is as uniformly reliable as textbooks.
CHAPTER 1

- Work through your study plan. You may want to work alone, or you may find it more helpful to work with a group or with a mentor. Work through the topics and questions provided in chapter 4. Be able to define and discuss the topics in your own words rather than memorizing definitions from books. If you are working with a group or mentor, you can also try informal quizzes and questioning techniques.

- Proceed to the practice questions. Once you have completed your review, you are ready to benefit from the Practice Questions portion of this guide. Separate sections of the guide are devoted to multiple-choice and constructed-response questions.

Suggestions for Using the “Practice Questions” and “Right Answers and Sample Responses” Chapters

- Read chapter 5. This chapter will sharpen your skills in reading and answering multiple-choice questions. For you to succeed on multiple-choice questions, you must focus carefully on the question, avoid reading things into the question, pay attention to details, and sift patiently through the answer choices.

- Read chapter 6. This chapter will help you prepare for answering the constructed-response questions. Just as with the multiple-choice questions, it is important for you to carefully read and understand the questions and documents attached to the question. Some of the questions will require that you synthesize information from several different sources in order to answer the questions.

- Answer the practice questions in chapter 7. Work on the practice questions in a quiet place without distractions. Remember that the practice questions are only examples of the way the topics are covered in the test. The test will have different questions.

- Score the practice questions. Go through the detailed answers in chapters 8 and 9 and mark the questions you answered correctly and the ones you missed. Look over the explanations of the questions you missed and see if you understand them.

- Decide whether you need more review. After you have looked at your results, decide whether there are areas that you need to brush up on before taking the actual test. Go back to your textbooks and reference materials to see if the topics are covered there. You might also want to go over your questions with a friend, administrator, or instructor who is familiar with the subjects.

- Assess your readiness. Do you feel confident about your level of understanding in each of the areas? If not, where do you need more work? If you feel ready, complete the checklist in chapter 10 (“Are You Ready?”) to double-check that you’ve thought through the details. If you need more information about registration or the testing situation itself, use the resources in appendix B: “For More Information.”
Chapter 2
Background Information on The Praxis Series™
What Are The Praxis Series™ Subject Assessments?

The Praxis Series Subject Assessments are designed by Educational Testing Service (ETS) to assess your knowledge of the subject area you plan to teach, and they are a part of the licensing procedure in many states. This study guide covers an assessment that tests your knowledge of the actual content you hope to be licensed to teach. Your state has adopted The Praxis Series tests because it wants to be certain that you have achieved a specified level of mastery of your subject area before it grants you a license to teach in a classroom.

The Praxis Series tests are part of a national testing program, meaning that the test covered in this study guide is required by more than one state for licensure. The advantage of taking Praxis tests is that if you want to move to another state that uses Praxis tests, you can transfer your scores to that state. Passing scores are set by states, however, so if you are planning to apply for licensure in another state, you may find that passing scores are different. You can find passing scores for all states that use The Praxis Series tests online at www.ets.org/praxis or on the website of the state for which you are seeking certification/licensure.

What Is Licensure?

Licensure in any area—medicine, law, architecture, accounting, cosmetology—is an assurance to the public that the person holding the license possesses sufficient knowledge and skills to perform important occupational activities safely and effectively. In the case of education leader licensing, a license tells the public that the individual has met pre-defined competency standards for a beginning education leader.

Because a license makes such a serious claim about its holder, licensure tests are usually quite demanding. In some fields, licensure tests have more than one part and last for more than one day. Candidates for licensure in all fields plan intensive study as part of their professional preparation: some join study groups, others study alone. But preparing to take a licensure test is, in all cases, a professional activity. Because it assesses the entire body of knowledge for the field you are entering, preparing for a licensure exam takes planning, discipline, and sustained effort.

Why Does My State Require The Praxis Series Assessments?

Your state chose The Praxis Series Assessments because the test assesses the breadth and depth of content—called the “domain”—that your state wants its education leaders to possess before they begin to teach. The level of content knowledge, reflected in the passing score, is based on recommendations of panels of teachers and teacher educators. The state licensing agency and, in some states, the state legislature ratify the passing scores that have been recommended by the panels.
What Kinds of Tests Are The Praxis Series Subject Assessments?

The Praxis Series Subject Assessments generally include two types of test questions: multiple choice (for which you select your answer from a list of choices) and constructed response (for which you write a response of your own). Multiple-choice tests can survey a wider domain because they can ask more questions in a limited period of time. Constructed-response tests have far fewer questions, but the questions require you to demonstrate the depth of your knowledge in the area covered. This test includes both multiple-choice and constructed-response questions.

What Do the Tests Measure?

The Praxis Series Subject Assessments are tests of content knowledge. They measure your understanding and skills in a particular subject area. Multiple-choice tests measure a broad range of knowledge across your content area. Constructed-response tests measure your ability to provide in-depth explanations of a few essential topics in a given subject area. Content-specific pedagogy tests, most of which are constructed response, measure your understanding of how to teach certain fundamental concepts in a subject area. The tests do not measure your actual teaching ability, however. They measure your knowledge of a subject and of how to teach it. The teachers in your field who help us design and write these tests, and the states that require them, do so in the belief that knowledge of your subject area is the first requirement for licensing. Teaching combines many complex skills, only some of which can be measured by a single test. While The Praxis Series Assessments are designed to measure how thoroughly you understand the material in the subject area(s) in which you want to be licensed to teach, your teaching ability is a skill that is typically measured in other ways; for example, through observation, videotaped practice, or portfolios.

How Are These Tests Developed and How Are Passing Scores Recommended?

ETS begins the development of each new subject test in The Praxis Series by assembling a test committee of practicing teachers and teacher educators from among the states that may use the test in their licensure process. The committee reviews and revises a draft domain of knowledge and/or skills developed by ETS subject experts. The revised domain is then sent as a web-based survey to a national sample of practicing teachers representing a variety of teaching settings, and faculty members from schools of education who prepare teachers in that subject area. These educators are asked to judge the importance of each of the knowledge and/or skill statements that define the domain. The results of this “job analysis survey” are used to identify those statements that have been verified to be important for entering practice. These verified statements are then used by the test committee, under the guidance of ETS test developers, to develop test content specifications. Teams of teachers then work with ETS test developers to write questions that align with the content specifications and meet ETS’s rigorous requirements for quality and fairness—ETS Standards for Quality and Fairness.**

When your state adopts a Praxis Subject Assessment, a cut score needs to be defined; the cut score is the minimum test score required to pass the test. ETS has pioneered a multi-state process to recommend passing scores. In this process, up to 50 educators (teachers and faculty members) from across the states...
that have adopted the test participate in a standard setting process to recommend a passing score. Each specific state is encouraged to review the multi-state recommendation with a small state-specific group of educators to decide on the final passing score for the state. During the multi-state study, the educators also judge the importance of the test content specifications for entering practice. This serves as an additional source of evidence of the job-relevance of the tested content.

Practicing teachers and faculty members are involved in all major phases of test development and the standard setting process. Such expert involvement is needed to develop high-quality and job-relevant licensure assessments. This practice is consistent with how professional licensure works in most fields: those who are already licensed oversee the licensing of new practitioners. When you pass The Praxis Series Subject Assessments, you and the practitioners in your state will have evidence that you have the knowledge and skills required for beginning teaching practice.