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3rd Edition

by Carla C. Kirkland and Chan Cleveland

**for
dummies[®]**
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Introduction

If you want to be a teacher, you generally have to take the Praxis Core Academic Skills for Educators exam at least once. “What?! What do you mean by ‘at least once?’” Yes, it’s true that you may have to take the Praxis twice in your quest to shape the minds of future generations. Many colleges and universities require that students who want to enroll in an education major take the exam. And if that isn’t bad enough, most states and some U.S. territories require that you pass the Praxis in order to be licensed to teach. But don’t panic. You’ve come to the right place for help in acing the exam.

The goal of this book is to help you brush up on what you need to know to pass the Praxis with flying colors. We don’t cover every topic that will be tested in detail; instead, we offer an overview of those topics. The overview allows you to review a topic and say to yourself either, “Yep, got it! I can move on to the next topic” or “I don’t get it. I’d better focus on my statistics knowledge.” (If you decide you need more review on a topic, check out the many *For Dummies* books that relate to the chapters in this book.)

You can also use the two practice tests in this book and the additional four practice tests online to test yourself in a lifelike testing situation. You may want to take one test before you read any chapters to see where your strengths and weaknesses are; then you’ll know where to focus your attention. After you’ve studied your weak areas and reviewed the topics you’re better at, you can take another practice test to see how much you’ve improved and where you still may need more work.

So, we have you covered when it comes to studying for and passing the Praxis. Take a couple of tests, review the chapters, and get the confidence you need to score well on the test when it really counts.

About This Book

Praxis Core For Dummies breaks down the exam’s main objectives into understandable sections. This book is organized into parts that align with the test’s subsections so you can find the answers to your most challenging areas quickly. If you’re struggling with math, you can find all those topics grouped together. If writing makes you want to pull your hair out, you can get a comprehensive overview in Part 4.

In addition to reviewing Praxis topics, we offer strategies that you can practice and keep in mind so you don’t fall for the booby traps that others seem to. We outline the different types of questions so you know where to expect the hurdles you’ll see on the Praxis Core Academic Skills for Educators exam. (Okay, this is the last time we will spell out the official title of the test. From now on, we will refer to it as the Praxis or the Praxis Core.)

A test-prep book wouldn’t be a test-prep book without a couple of practice tests. This book offers two tests in the book, those same two tests online, and then another four tests online to help you become familiar with the content and question types you’ll encounter when you take the exam. They say practice makes perfect. With these practice tests, you can put that theory to the “test.”

Foolish Assumptions

In writing this book, we've made some assumptions about you. The biggest assumption we've made applies to all readers: You have decided to teach, which is one of the most rewarding professions known to man. Beyond that, you fall into one of the following categories:

- » You are a first-time test-taker who wants to pass the test on your first try.
- » You are a re-tester who has taken the test and failed based on your state cut score requirement. You can still successfully reach the passing score goal. You're actually in a better situation than the first-time test-taker because you possess a detailed report that outlines your strengths and weaknesses. That way you can truly attack the sections that challenge you the most.
- » You are a traditional teacher candidate in college who is currently enrolled or trying to enroll as an education major in an undergraduate program, and you need to pass this test to start taking your specialized courses.
- » You are an alternative route teacher candidate who possesses a four-year degree, and you need to pass this test as one of your first steps toward certification.

Regardless of your category, we have written this book to fit your specific needs.

Icons Used in This Book

Icons are the drawings in the margins of this book, and we use several icons to call out special kinds of information.



EXAMPLE

Examples are sample test questions that appear at the ends of sections and that highlight particular ideas that you should be familiar with. We provide an answer and explanation immediately after the question. (And there's more — at the end of a chapter, you usually find a handful of numbered sample questions, which we don't mark with the icon because they're in their own practice-questions section.)



REMEMBER

The Remember icon points out something you should keep in mind while you're taking the exam.



TIP

A Tip is a suggestion that usually points out a trick for remembering information for the test.



WARNING

The Warning icon flags traps and tricks that the creators of the Praxis often employ to trip you up when it comes to choosing the correct answer. Pay special heed to these paragraphs.

Beyond the Book

In addition to the material in the print or e-book you're reading right now, this product also comes with some access-anywhere goodies on the web. In addition to the two complete practice exams contained in this book, your book purchase also comes with a free one-year subscription to additional practice questions that appear online — enough to fill four more exams. You can

access the content whenever you want. Create your own question sets and view personalized reports that show what you need to study most.

You also get access to six full-length online practice tests and hundreds of flashcards. To gain access to the online practice, all you have to do is register. Just follow these simple steps:

- 1. Register your book or ebook at Dummies.com to get your PIN. Go to www.dummies.com/go/getaccess.**
- 2. Select your product from the dropdown list on that page.**
- 3. Follow the prompts to validate your product, and then check your email for a confirmation message that includes your PIN and instructions for logging in.**

If you do not receive this email within two hours, please check your spam folder before contacting us through our Technical Support website at <http://support.wiley.com> or by phone at 877-762-2974.

Now you're ready to go! You can come back to the practice material as often as you want — simply log on with the username and password you created during your initial login. No need to enter the access code a second time.

Your registration is good for one year from the day you activate your PIN.

Where to Go from Here

Use this book as a reference. You don't need to read this book from front to back. Feel free to skip around to the sections that you find most useful. If you can't decide, begin with Chapter 1 — it includes an overview of the Praxis, and you'll probably need to read it at some point. If you know that geometry (Chapter 6) is your Achilles heel or that reading comprehension questions (Chapter 9) make your eyes cross, go straight to the corresponding chapter. We give you an index, too, at the back of the book to help you find specific information. Or, if you like, you can take one of the tests to see how well you do and determine what you need to brush up on.

1

Getting Started with the Praxis Core

IN THIS PART . . .

Get the details about who takes the Praxis, what's on the test, and how your score is calculated.

Figure out how to schedule your study time in advance of test day, find out what to expect on test day, and get some pointers if you're retaking the test.

Try out some practice Praxis questions to discover the areas in which you're strong and the areas where you need more review. Then develop a plan to strengthen the areas in which you're weak.

- » Knowing why you're taking the Praxis
- » Finding out what's on the Praxis
- » Seeing how the Praxis is scored

Chapter 1

Previewing the Praxis

For decades, teacher candidates have been taking assessments to meet certification requirements. Praxis Core Academic Skills for Educators is the latest version of these tests that measures core skills in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics for potential teacher candidates. This chapter gives you an overview of what you need to know about the exam.

Why Take the Praxis?

If you want to become a teacher, you may face the Praxis at some point on the road to certification. You may take it to get into a teaching program at college, or you may take it to get your teaching license before starting a second career. If you're lucky, you may only take it once, but our bet is that you'll take it twice before you're fully qualified to work in a classroom.

Colleges and universities use the Praxis Core testing series to determine whether teaching program candidates meet the minimum requirements to enter into the field of teaching. Most colleges and universities won't allow admission into their teacher preparation programs until candidates complete this basic skills exam. Undergraduate students generally take the Praxis early in their college careers. Some students may be able to skip taking certain parts of the Praxis if they have high scores on college entrance exams like the ACT.

Most states also use the Praxis as a certification test to show that you've mastered the skills needed to be a highly competent teacher. In many cases, teaching licenses are directly tied to this test. Age doesn't get you out of this standardized test.



TIP

Almost every state in the country uses some form of the Praxis. Contact your state department of education for specific licensure details.

Breaking Down the Praxis

The updated Praxis Core evaluates the core academic abilities of prospective educators in the areas of reading, writing, and math. Previously, this test was called the Praxis I PreProfessional Skills Test, but ETS (Educational Testing Services, the folks who create the exam) decided to make a change to reflect the requirement to get potential teachers up to the level needed to meet ever-changing standards. According to ETS, the exam is broken down into the following three parts:

- » **The reading test:** This test poses multiple-choice questions based on reading passages and statements.
- » **The writing test:** This test is divided into two sections. The multiple-choice section tests grammar usage, sentence correction, revision in context, and research skills. The test also requires you to write two essays based on information presented; one is an argumentative essay, and the other is an explanation of a topic.
- » **The mathematics test:** This test measures multiple mathematics topics up to the advanced high-school level. The format of the test has numeric entry questions and multiple-choice questions that may require you to select one or more choices. You do have access to an on-screen calculator.

The following sections give you more details about the subtests and the question types so you don't encounter any (or too many) surprises when you sit down to take the test.

Knowing what topics are covered

Just like most other standardized tests you've taken, the Praxis includes long reading passages, complicated math problems, and detailed essay topics. You'll have a set number of questions about certain topics to answer in a given amount of time. Check out Table 1-1 for the breakdown.

TABLE 1-1 Breakdown of the Praxis

Test Subject	Number of Questions	Time
Reading	56 multiple-choice questions	85 minutes
Writing	40 multiple-choice questions and 2 essays	100 minutes
Mathematics	56 multiple-choice questions	85 minutes

Each subject is broken down further into specific concepts.

Reading:

- » **Key ideas and details:** This section requires you to closely read text, make logical inferences, connect specific details, address author differences, and determine uncertain matters. You'll see 17 to 22 questions about these concepts.
- » **Craft, structure, and language skills:** This section requires you to interpret words and phrases, recognize the tone of word choices, analyze text structure, assess points of view, apply language knowledge to determine fact or opinion, determine word meanings, and understand a range of words and word nuances. You'll see 14 to 19 questions about these concepts.

- » **Integration of knowledge and ideas:** This section requires you to analyze diverse media content, evaluate arguments in texts, and analyze how two or more texts address similar themes. You'll see 17 to 22 questions about these concepts.

Writing:

- » **Text types, purposes, and production:** This section requires you to produce one argumentative and one informative/explanatory essay. This section also requires you to edit and revise text passages. You'll see 6 to 12 multiple-choice questions about these concepts.
- » **Language and research skills:** This section requires you to demonstrate command of English grammar, usage, capitalization, and punctuation. This section also requires you to apply and recognize research skills. You'll see 28 to 34 multiple-choice questions about these concepts.

Mathematics:

- » **Number and quantity:** This section focuses on the understanding of order among integers, representations of numbers in more than one way, place value, whole-number properties, equivalent computational procedures, ratios, proportions, and percentages. You'll see approximately 17 questions about these concepts.
- » **Algebra:** This section assesses the ability to handle equations and inequalities, recognize various ways to solve a problem, determine the relationship between verbal and symbolic expressions, and interpret graphs. You'll see about 17 questions on these concepts.
- » **Geometry:** This part assesses the understanding and application of the characteristics and properties of geometric shapes, the Pythagorean theorem, transformation, and use of symmetry to analyze mathematical situations. (Knowledge of basic U.S. and metric systems of measurement is assumed.) You'll see approximately 11 questions about these concepts.
- » **Data interpretation, statistics, and probability:** This part assesses the ability to read and interpret visual displays of quantitative information, understand the correspondence between data and graph, make inferences from a given data display, determine mean, median, and mode, and assign a probability to an outcome. You'll see around 11 questions about these concepts.

The good news about the math subtest is that an on-screen four-function calculator is available for your use, which reduces the chance that you'll select a wrong answer choice based on a simple arithmetic error.

Seeing what types of questions you'll face

The Praxis Core gives you multiple types of questions. Taking all of our practice tests will give you a consistent idea of what you will see on the actual test. Before you get to the practice tests, check out this list of question types you'll encounter in the different subtests:

The reading test has four categories of text paragraph sections:

- » Reading Category 1 questions deal with paired passages of about 150 to 200 words combined with four to seven questions, such as "Unlike the author of Passage 2, the author of Passage 1 mentions . . ." or "Which of the following statements best describes the relationship between the two passages?"

- » Reading Category 2 questions deal with lengthy paragraphs of about 175 to 200 words combined with four to seven questions that may ask, “Which of the following best describes the organization of the passage?” or “The author would be *most* likely to agree with which of the following statements?”
- » Reading Category 3 questions deal with abbreviated passages of 75 to 100 words with two or three questions, such as “The passage is primarily concerned with . . .” or “Which of the following is an unstated assumption made by the author of the passage?”
- » Reading Category 4 questions deal with short statements followed by a single question.

The writing test has four categories of multiple-choice questions and two essays.

- » The multiple-choice writing questions are straightforward questions covering sentence correction, revision in context, usage, and research skills. You have to find only one correct answer for each of these questions.
- » The argumentative and informative/explanatory essay sections test your skills to write a detailed essay in a very short period of time. See Chapter 11 for more on the essay questions.

The mathematics test has several question categories:

- » One of the categories deals with numeric entry. These types of questions require you to input an integer or decimal into a single box or a fraction into two separate boxes.
- » The other categories contain multiple-choice questions followed by five answers, with either one or two of those choices being correct. Be aware that the test may not tell you the number of choices to select, but the directions will tell you to check all that apply.

Understanding How the Test Is Scored

The Praxis Core exam is divided into three tests: reading, writing, and mathematics. Take careful note of the difference between our use of “exam” and “test.” Each test is scored separately, and most states that require passing scores for the exam require that exam-takers pass each of the three tests that compose the exam. Some states consider exams to have passing scores when their composite (overall) scores are high enough. Your score on a given test is based on a raw score and adjusted to a scale that ranges from 100 to 200 points.

Your raw score is the number of questions you answer correctly. You don’t lose any points for answering a question incorrectly. If you were to answer every single question incorrectly, your raw score would be 0, which is exactly what it would be if you didn’t answer any questions at all. That’s why you have nothing to lose by guessing if you don’t know the answer to a question.

Your score for each test involves taking your raw score, or the number of questions you answer correctly, and comparing it to the number of questions on the test. This comparison, along with the level of rigor involved in the particular test you take, determines your final score, the number that exists in the range from 100 to 200. Your final score determines whether you pass the test. (*Note:* When you take the practice tests in the book or online, there is no way to convert your raw score to a final score.) You pass the test in most states by answering at least 60 percent of the

questions correctly. This gives you a benchmark to measure yourself against as you go through the practice tests.



TIP

If you fail the Praxis the first time you take it (or if you've already failed it), you can look at your scores for each content category to see where you did well and where you struggled. Use those scores to direct your studies in anticipation of taking the test again.

Each state that requires passing the exam has its own minimum scores for each of the tests that make up the exam, except for states in which a high enough composite score qualifies as passing. What constitutes a passing score in one state may not be a passing score in another state. Contact your state department of education for the actual cut scores.

- » Signing up to take the test
- » Making the most of your time
- » Knowing what to expect on test day
- » Preparing to take the test again

Chapter 2

Getting Ready for Test Day

You've known for months, if not years, that you need to take the Praxis exam to be certified to teach in your state. And just like any other major undertaking in life, you need to prepare for the test. You wouldn't run a marathon without doing some training, would you? You shouldn't just show up to take the Praxis either.

Before you take the Praxis, you should put a strategy in place. Ideally, you'll give yourself a couple of months to get ready for the test. In that time, you'll study and review concepts the test covers, take practice tests to familiarize yourself with the format and timing of the test, and brush up in areas where you're weak so you can ace the test.

In this chapter, we offer suggestions about how to prepare for the test, whether you're taking it for the first time or taking it again.

Registering for the Test



TIP

Before you register to take the Praxis, check with the local department of education to make sure you're taking the right test. Don't ask ETS or your mom or anyone else who isn't in a position to admit you to a teaching program; they may give you wrong information, which can lead to wasted time and money.

You can find out how to register to take the Praxis Core by going to www.ets.org. The Praxis Core is offered during testing windows at more than 300 Prometric testing sites across the country. Contact your local testing site for specific questions regarding its testing windows. Test-takers must register at least three days prior to their intended test date, and you must pay the testing fee online. At the time of this writing, individual tests (reading, writing, or mathematics) cost \$90; the price to take all three tests at once (on the same day) is discounted to \$150.

After you register, read all the admission ticket info to make sure all the content is correct. Contact ETS if you have any disabilities that require accommodations.



TIP

Consider taking one test per day instead of multiple tests per day. You know your limits and abilities. Some people take all three tests on the same day, and they bomb all three. If you aren't super confident that you can pass multiple tests in one sitting, you may want to schedule them for different days. This approach will also help you map out your study plan more strategically (see the next section). You can study for one test at a time instead of all three.

A test session includes time for taking a test or tests, and it also includes time for tutorials and collection of background information. If you take one test on a given day, the session will last two hours. If you take all of the tests in one day, the session will take five hours.

Using Your Time Wisely

When preparing for the Praxis, you need to think of time in two different ways. First, you need to plan your study time. Expect to spend many hours over the next several weeks reviewing the material that could be on the test. Then you need to know how much time is allotted for the test itself. Knowing these details will help you pace yourself as you answer questions during the test when it really counts. We cover both aspects of using your time wisely in the following sections.

Budgeting your study time leading up to test day

When you budget your study time ahead of your test date, you increase your chances of passing the first time. Do you really want to face the Praxis more than once to enroll in a teacher education program? We didn't think so.



TIP

If you can't put in adequate study time before taking the test, seriously consider rescheduling. The Praxis Core is given several times each year at the local testing center. Rather than taking the test with no preparation, contact the testing center or go online to reschedule to take the test at a later date.

Creating a schedule and penciling in the practice tests

The best way to prepare to take the Praxis is to set up a study schedule and then stick to it. Block off an amount of time each day to prepare for the test and note what topics you plan to study or review. You may need to ask your sister to baby-sit the kids, or you may need to turn down drinks with friends for a few weeks, but it will be worth it. This test will affect your life for a short amount of time. After you receive a passing score, you can commit to the bowling league. Use all of your extra time to focus on the Praxis.



TIP

Create an adjustable timetable that you can revise to best meet your needs as test time gets closer. The latest that you should begin studying is four to six weeks before the test.

During your study sessions, familiarize yourself with the question types for each section. Not all the questions are straightforward, multiple-choice questions. Some of them ask you to choose *all* the right answers. Other questions require you to calculate an answer and write it in a box. Knowing the variations in question types gives you a better chance of answering them correctly. As you get familiar with the question types, also pay attention to the test's directions. Understanding the directions ahead of time can save you valuable time on test day and can reduce test anxiety.

This book includes the two full-length tests in Part 5 plus four additional tests online. You may want to take a test now and save the others to take in the days leading up to the exam.