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# Praxis<sup>®</sup> Core Study Guide

with Online Practice  
5th Edition

**by Carla C. Kirkland and Chan Cleveland**

for  
**dummies**<sup>®</sup>  
A Wiley Brand

## Praxis® Core Study Guide For Dummies® with Online Practice, 5th Edition

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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 a *For Dummies* book that relates specifically to that topic.)

You can also use the two practice tests in this book and the additional four practice tests online to test yourself in an almost-real 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 Study Guide For Dummies*, 5th Edition, breaks down the exam’s main objectives into understandable sections. This book is organized into parts that align with the test’s subsections so that 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 in Part 2. 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 that you don’t fall for the booby traps that the test creators put in your way. We outline the different types of questions so that 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’ll spell out the official title of the test. From now on, we’ll 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 itself, 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.

This new edition has information in Chapter 2 on how to budget your study time in preparation for the Praxis Core. Understanding how to divide your study time is important for making sure you have time to cover the topics you need to study the most and how to break up your time.

## Foolish Assumptions

In writing this book, we've made some assumptions about you. The biggest assumption we've made is that you've 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're a first-time exam-taker who wants to pass the test on your first try.
- » You're an exam re-tester who has taken the exam 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 exam-taker because you possess a detailed report that outlines your strengths and weaknesses. With that information, you can truly attack the sections that challenge you the most.
- » You're a traditional teacher candidate in college who's currently enrolled or trying to enroll as an education major in an undergraduate program, and you need to pass this exam to start taking your specialized courses.
- » You're an alternative-route teacher candidate who possesses a four-year degree, and you need to pass this exam as one of your first steps toward certification.

Regardless of your category, we've 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 in 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

This product also comes with some access-anywhere goodies on the web. For some quick and helpful advice to help you prepare for and succeed on the Praxis Core exam, check out the online Cheat Sheet. Just go to [www.dummies.com](http://www.dummies.com) and type in “Praxis Core For Dummies Cheat Sheet” in the search box.

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.

So you can take six full-length online practice tests and review hundreds of flashcards. To gain access to all of this online practice, all you have to do is register. Just follow these simple steps:

- 1. Register your book or ebook at [Dummies.com](http://Dummies.com) to get your PIN. Go to [www.dummies.com/go/getaccess](http://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 <https://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 use 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 where you could improve.

- » Knowing why you're taking the Praxis
- » Finding out what tests make up 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 need to 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 take it only once, but you might need to take it two or more times 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. Educational Testing Service (ETS), the company that creates and administers the Praxis tests, may allow some students to skip taking certain parts of the Praxis if they have high scores on college entrance exams, such as the ACT.

Most states also use the Praxis as a certification test to show that you've mastered the skills that you need 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 Pre-Professional Skills Test, but ETS decided to make a change to reflect the requirement to get potential teachers up to the level needed to meet ever-changing standards, mainly because of the application of Common Core. ETS breaks down the exam into the following three parts:

- » **The reading test:** Poses multiple-choice questions based on reading passages and statements.
- » **The writing test:** 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:** 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 have access to an on-screen calculator, so you don't have to sweat the simple stuff.)

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

## Knowing what topics the Praxis covers

Just like most other standardized tests, the Praxis includes long reading passages, complicated math problems, and detailed essay topics. You get 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 questions	85 minutes
Writing	40 questions and 2 essays	100 minutes
Mathematics	56 questions	90 minutes

Each subject is broken down further into specific concepts.

The Reading test requires you to display proficiency in certain areas:

- » **Key ideas and details:** Closely read text, make logical inferences, connect specific details, address author differences, and determine uncertain matters. (Includes 17 to 22 questions.)
- » **Craft, structure, and language skills:** 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. (Includes 14 to 19 questions.)
- » **Integration of knowledge and ideas:** Analyze diverse media content, evaluate arguments in texts, and analyze how two or more texts address similar themes. (Includes 17 to 22 questions.)



The Writing test requires you to understand these concepts:

- » **Text types, purposes, and production:** Produce one argumentative and one informative/explanatory essay. This section also requires you to edit and revise text passages. (Includes 6 to 12 multiple-choice questions and two essays.)
- » **Language and research skills:** Demonstrate command of English grammar, usage, capitalization, and punctuation. This section also requires you to apply and recognize research skills. (Includes 28 to 34 multiple-choice questions.)

The Mathematics test evaluates your understanding and ability in a number of areas:

- » **Number and quantity:** Order among integers, representations of numbers in more than one way, place value, whole-number properties, equivalent computational procedures, ratios, proportions, and percentages. (Includes approximately 20 questions.)
- » **Algebra:** Handling equations and inequalities, recognizing various ways to solve a problem, determining the relationship between verbal and symbolic expressions, and interpreting graphs. (Includes about 11 questions.)
- » **Geometry:** The characteristics and properties of geometric shapes, the Pythagorean theorem, transformation, and use of symmetry to analyze mathematical situations. The test assumes that you have a knowledge of basic U.S. and metric systems of measurement. (Includes approximately 7 questions.)
- » **Data interpretation, statistics, and probability:** 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. (Includes around 18 questions.)

The good news about the math test is that you have access to an on-screen, four-function calculator, which reduces the chance that you'll select a wrong answer choice based on a simple arithmetic error.

## Seeing what types of questions you can expect

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

The reading test has four categories of text analysis:

- » **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, asking 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:** Short statements followed by a single question.

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

- » **Multiple-choice writing questions:** Straightforward questions covering sentence correction, revision in context, usage, and research skills.
- » **Essays:** 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:

- » **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.
- » **Multiple-choice questions:** Each question has five possible answers, with one or more correct choices. Be aware that a test question may tell you to select all answer choices that apply without telling you how many of the choices are correct.

## Understanding How the Test Is Scored

The Praxis Core exam is divided into three tests: reading, writing, and mathematics. Take careful note of the fact that the *exam* is made up of the three *tests*. Each test is scored separately, and most states that require passing scores for the exam require that the exam-takers pass each of the three tests that compose the exam. Some states consider an exam to have a passing score when the exam's composite (overall) score is high enough. Professional educators, who apply ETS standards, score a given test by taking the raw score and adjusting it 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 answer every single question incorrectly, you end up with a raw score of 0 (which translates to an adjusted score of 100), the exact same score you get if you don't answer any questions at all. So 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 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, you can't 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, which gives you a benchmark to measure yourself against while 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
- » Making a study plan
- » 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, give yourself a couple of months to get ready for the test. In that time, you'll study and review concepts that 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 that 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](http://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 the same time (on the same day) is discounted to \$150.

After you register, read all the admission ticket info to make sure all the content, including your test center and reporting time, is correct. Contact ETS if you have any disabilities that require accommodations.



TIP

Consider taking one test per day rather than 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 can also help you map out your study plan more strategically (see the following section). You can study for one test at a time, rather than 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 lasts two hours. If you take all of the tests in one day, the session takes 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 can help you pace yourself while 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 your 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. You must do this at least three days before your scheduled testing time, and doing so requires a \$40 fee.

### 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. Preparing for 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 before the test to focus on the Praxis.



TIP

Create an adjustable timetable that you can revise to best meet your needs while 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. While 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 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.



TIP

When you take the practice tests, take them under timed conditions in a quiet setting where you won't be disturbed. This creates a test-like environment and gives you a better sense of how you'll perform on the Praxis when it counts. After you take a practice test, be sure to review the answer explanations. These explanations help you see what you did right or where you went wrong; they're another learning opportunity beyond the review material.

## Joining forces with others

Sometimes, people gain more knowledge when they study with others. Other people may have a different way to solve an algebra problem or a better way to get to the heart of a reading passage, and their explanations may help you learn what you need for the test. So, consider creating or joining a study group.

If you can't find a group to study with, look for a Praxis prep course. The instructors of these courses know the ins and outs of what's on the test, and during the class, they review material that you're likely to encounter. Yes, you'll have to pay for the course, but the advantage is that the instructor should know the material in depth and be able to answer your questions or explain the material in a way that suits your learning style. The Kirkland Group has been conducting Praxis workshops for several years. For more details, go to [www.kirklandgroup.org](http://www.kirklandgroup.org).



TIP

Take the test within a week after the prep class ends. Jumping right into the test can increase your chances of remembering the information you learn in the prep class. Don't wait six months after completing the course before you take the test, or you may end up back in the same boat you were in before you took the prep class.

## Employing other study techniques

Even when you're not officially studying, try to sneak in some learning or review. Pull out your old textbooks for grammar, reading, and math, and skim through them during lunch or while you're on the treadmill. The info in your old textbooks may jog your memory about something you learned a while back. The only way to study math is to practice math problems. You need to know certain grammar rules that may only be explained in a traditional grammar book.

Gather up crossword puzzle books, Sudoku challenges, and other mind games, and work them while you're relaxing in front of the TV. If you're a whiz at English, work numbers games. If numbers are your thing, try your hand at crossword puzzles. Your goal is to strengthen the areas where you're weak, and puzzles or games are a fun way to accomplish that.



REMEMBER

You are what you eat. You can't run a marathon by eating candy bars and drinking soft drinks every day for breakfast. Some foods assist you during the learning process. They naturally improve your memory and release chemicals that are helpful to the brain. These foods include eggs, fish, whole grains, leafy greens, fruits, and — thank goodness — coffee.

## Budgeting your time while taking the test

On test day, it's all about pacing yourself. We like to look at the test from the perspective of how many questions you have to answer per minute:

- » **The reading test:** Gives you 85 minutes to answer 56 questions. This gives you a little over a minute and a half to answer each question.
- » **The math test:** Gives you 90 minutes to answer 56 questions. This allows you about a minute and 36 seconds to answer each question.

- » **The writing test:** Gives you 40 minutes to answer 40 multiple-choice questions. That comes out to one question per minute. This test also has an essay section, which gives you 60 minutes to write two essays. So you get 30 minutes per essay.
- » **The essay section:** Gives you 60 minutes to write two essays. So you get 30 minutes per essay.

You may look at those numbers and think, “There’s no way I can answer questions that quickly!” But fear not. Here are some tips that will help you shave seconds off the amount of time it takes you to answer many of the questions:



WARNING

- » **Watch the clock on the computer screen.** Monitor the time on the computer screen like it’s your million-dollar countdown. Remember that you’ll have at least one minute per question, and you need to use every minute wisely.
- » **Don’t make time your sole focus.** Don’t get so caught up on timing that you aren’t paying attention to what the questions are asking. Strike a balance between monitoring the time and concentrating on the task at hand.
- » **Watch for the traps.** The people who write the assessment questions always add “trap” answers into the mix. These incorrect answers look like they’re correct, but they’re not. For example, you may see an answer to a word problem that’s achieved by multiplying when you should be dividing. It’s a trap. Watch out for it.
- » **Use the process of elimination.** If you don’t know the answer immediately after reading the answer choices, try to eliminate as many answers as possible. Then guess at the answer. Your chances of guessing correctly increase while you eliminate more answer choices.
- » **Read all possible answers.** Sift through each answer choice and ensure that you aren’t overlooking a better answer. Don’t select Choice (A) before looking at the alternative answer choices.
- » **Save unusually time-consuming questions for last.** If you come across a question that you know will require much more time to answer than most of the other questions, skip the question and go back to it, and perhaps others like it, at the end. You do not want to spend so much time on one question that you could have answered several others in that time instead.

## Following an Effective Study Schedule

Putting together a study schedule ahead of time is wise when you’re preparing to take the Praxis Core to make sure you’re ready as you can be on exam day. As you get closer to that day, you’ll gain a better understanding of what information you need to cover the most in the time remaining. Your perspective on where you are and what you need to know will evolve, and you can adjust your schedule as needed.

The exam covers large volumes of concepts of three major subjects, and cramming near exam day isn’t something we recommend. We might even venture to say that anybody who does recommend cramming should write a book about how not to pass the exam. We want you to be prepared for the Praxis Core when exam day comes, so we recommend creating and following a study schedule. The following sections provide three study guides and when you should follow which depends on how much time you have before taking the exam. Feel free to customize these plans to meet your needs.