

**City and County Denver Fire Department  
2024 Captain Promotional Process  
Candidate Handout**



# General Information

## Introduction

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Ergometrics & Applied Personnel Research, Inc. is a human resource management firm specializing in personnel selection and training. Established over 40 years ago, Ergometrics has designed the most comprehensive, award-winning, video and job simulation testing programs in the nation. We have provided personnel testing services for over 2,000 clients in the U.S. and Canada.

## Components of the Selection Process

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There are two test components included in the promotional process that contribute to your overall promotional score. These dimensions are described below and weighted as follows:

1. **Multiple-choice exam (31.5%):** A 120-item multiple-choice test of professional knowledge and leadership skills based on sources identified by the department.
2. **An assessment center consisting of three exercises (63.5%):**
  - a. **Tactical Exercise:** For this exercise, you will be presented with a fire tactical scenario and asked to respond and explain your actions to the panel.
  - b. **Interview Exercise:** For this exercise, the assessors will ask you to respond to a series of questions relevant to the Captain rank.
  - c. **In-Basket Exercise:** For this exercise, you will be presented with a number of in-basket items and asked to identify the priority level of each item, what action and what correspondence is necessary to address each item, assuming the role of Captain.
3. **Seniority (5%):** The Commission will assign a seniority score based on each candidate's tenure with the department as outlined in the Commission's Rule 6 § 6.

## Test Date, Time, and Location

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| Test Component       | Date                          | Time  | Location   |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|---|--|
| Multiple-Choice Exam | April 23, 2024                | Registration will start at 7:30 am and will close promptly at 7:45 am. The Written Examination will start once registration is closed. Latecomers will not be allowed to register/test. | Lakeside Union Hall<br>12 Lakeside Lane<br>Denver, CO 80212                                  |
| Assessment Center    | June 10 through June 13, 2024 | TBD   | Denver Post Building<br>101 W. Colfax Ave.<br>Denver, CO 80202<br>7 <sup>th</sup> Floor, CSC |

\*The Commission will inform you of your reporting time prior to the Assessment Center.

## Dress Code

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You will be required to wear your Class A uniform to the Assessment Center. You may wear your badge, but you must remove your name tag. No pins, insignia, etc., indicating names or special commendations will be allowed.

## General Test Information

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- You are responsible for monitoring your own time during the promotional exercise. A watch or timer is recommended; ensure your watch does not contain any prohibited electronic features. Smart watches are not allowed.
- **No electronic devices are allowed** at the testing site.
- Get rest and a good night's sleep prior to your exam.
- Arrive early. This is one of the easiest and most effective ways to minimize stress.
- Candidates are prohibited from removing any material from the testing site.

## Test Security and Confidentiality

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You will be required to sign a security and confidentiality agreement, stating that you have not and will not violate test security. Breach of this agreement is subject to prosecution under federal copyright law and would be viewed as an unacceptable integrity failure for an employee, particularly a management candidate. Additionally, to maintain test security, there are specific devices not allowed in the testing session. These include cellular phones, pagers, audio/radio headsets, cameras, recording devices or other electronic devices.

**Disclaimer:** The information provided in this handout is meant to be helpful and prepare you for the general nature of the process. It is not meant to advise you of every question that will be asked. Some aspects of the process may be modified, including order of events and times.

# Written Exam

On April 23, 2024, you will take a multiple-choice written examination consisting of 120 multiple-choice questions based on the reading list you have been provided. The written test has been developed and prepared by Ergometrics and Applied Personnel Research, Inc., a human resources consulting firm that specializes in the development of fire department promotional examinations. The questions in the examination have been selected and reviewed by a panel of Denver Fire Department subject matter experts (SMEs). Following is some information that will assist you in preparing for the written examination.

## Book-Referenced Written Exam

At your scheduled time, you will take a multiple-choice written test consisting of 120 questions. You will have three (3) hours to complete the written exam. The exam will be based on the following announced references:

1. **No Nonsense Leadership**, by Jarrod Sergi.
2. **Step up and Lead**, by Frank Viscuso.
3. **Fire Officer's Handbook of Tactics, 5th Edition**, 2019, John Norman, PennWell Corporation.
4. **Denver Firefighters – Local 858, IAFF, AFL-CIO and City and County of Denver, 2023-2025 Fire Fighters Agreement, January 1, 2023, through December 31, 2025** (*Articles IV, VIII, XIII, XIV, XV, XVIII*)
5. **Executive Orders**
6. **All Material in the [Study Guide](#)**

## Book References

Your department has determined the above publications necessary to read in preparation for your upcoming promotional process. You are competing with other outstanding members of the department. Studying the publications assigned is one way you may improve your chances of ultimately being a top competitor.

## Purpose of Book-Referenced Test

Higher-level positions call for deep knowledge of technical topics. The department is interested in promoting future leaders who will do the necessary studying and use the information on the

job. As a promotional candidate, these tests are your opportunity to demonstrate your study ethic and effectiveness. The books assigned for this exam represent only a small portion of the formal study that will be required upon promotion. This test is not intended to measure all aspects of your promotional potential. It is designed to look at your ability to absorb important information that comes from reading materials.

*[Preparation strategies below are suggestions only. Each individual is personally responsible for determining which preparation strategies and tips are appropriate for himself/herself.]*

## **Preparation Strategies**

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Again, studying the selected publications is one way to improve your chances of ultimately being a top competitor. There are many different approaches that one can take to studying. An excellent way to prepare for a multiple-choice book-reference test is to read each publication twice. First, read it straight through so that you understand the general focus, as a whole. Then, reread the publication, making notes and highlighting the most important points that you see in each section. Other strategies are to use acronyms for remembering information or to form a study group. In the end, the choice is personal. When you find a strategy that works best for you, test yourself by considering how you would explain the content of a section to a subordinate.

## **Study Tips**

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1. **Minimize environmental distractions.** Try to limit the amount of distractions in your environment when studying. This includes, but is not limited to email, cell phones and even other people. Eliminating distractions will make it easier for you to concentrate and retain the information you are studying.
2. **Avoid burning the midnight oil.** For many people, it is harder to retain information when tired. If possible, try to study when you are well rested and ready to concentrate.
3. **Review chapter overviews or summaries.** Chapter overviews and summaries typically provide information on the most important points in a chapter. Many times, it is helpful to review these areas before reading a chapter to help you understand what the important topics are in the chapter. After reading the chapter, overviews and summaries can be used to test yourself on critical knowledge from the chapter.
4. **Quiz yourself.** After reading a chapter or section, quiz yourself on important topics, definitions, etc. You can also develop questions regarding the material based upon headings and specific terms prior to reading it and then, while reading the section or chapter, try to answer those questions.
5. **Have someone quiz you.** After reading a text, a great way to see if you have retained information is to have someone ask you questions regarding the material you just read.
6. **Avoid cramming.** Spreading your studying out over time will help you concentrate and retain the information you read.

7. **Look up words or phrases you don't know.** Have a computer or dictionary available when studying so that you are able to look up words and phrases that you don't know.
8. **Mark it up.** Highlight and/or underline important sections of the text while you study. This will help you concentrate on important topics and make it easier to review the material again later.
9. **Take notes.** Taking notes of the important topics in the text you read can help you remember what you read and be an efficient study aid.

### Test Taking Tips

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The written test items have four answer choices. To get the highest score, always select the best choice listed, even if more than one seems good to you. Be sure to read all answers before deciding your final answer. Don't focus on a choice that is not given to you. Don't get distracted by thinking of other possible responses that are not among the choices presented. Don't get stuck on the idea that you want to combine two responses. Show your judgment by picking the one answer that, by itself, is better than any other answer, by itself.

Prepare yourself physically and mentally for your exam as you would prepare yourself for any special assignment that requires concentration. Get the amount of sleep that will leave you most alert. It's also a good idea to eat a nutritious and hearty meal to help you stay focused throughout your exam. Unusual changes in your routine may cause you problems during your exam. For example, consuming more caffeine than usual may make you jittery; less than usual may leave you listless. Try to remain calm and relaxed before and during your exam. If you feel anxious, take a few moments to calm yourself down. Bring to the test administration site whatever personal items you need for the exam, such as eyeglasses or tissues.

Here are some additional tips to help you during the book-referenced exam. These simple procedures help you avoid marking the wrong answer when you know the right one.

1. **Listen to the instructions.** Before you begin the exam, it is important that you read and/or listen to all instructions carefully. Ensure you know how to correctly fill out the answer sheet. Specific instructions will be provided at the test site.
2. **Get familiar with your test.** When you begin the multiple-choice written test, glance through it to acquaint yourself with the task ahead of you. You do not have to go through the questions in the order you find them.
3. **Check the time.** Check your watch periodically throughout the exam so that you know how much time you have remaining.
4. **Don't spend too much time on one question.** If you have a difficult time with a question, go on and come back to that question later. Do make a note to come back to it, though. You may come back with a fresh approach, and a question you had trouble with earlier may seem easy.

5. **Read thoroughly.** Read every question carefully before you attempt to answer it. This advice may sound too simple, but it is important. The major reason people miss questions when they know the material is that they do not read the question completely.
6. **Circle or underline key words.** When reading a question, circle or underline key words that are important to the question stem. This will both help you focus on the critical aspects of what is being asked, as well as help you remember the important aspects of the question if you need to skip it and return to it later in the test session.
7. **Break a sentence up if you don't understand it.** Sometimes sentences in a question stem can be long. If you don't understand the sentence, use slash marks to break it into smaller sections to better understand the sentence.
8. **Read all of the answers before choosing one.** The most common answer people choose is *a*, whether it is right or not. That is because they think the first answer looks okay, so they stop reading. Don't make the mistake of not reading all of the answers before making a selection. Even if *a* looks like a really good answer, one of the other answers may be better. When you read the other alternatives, you may think of something you had missed at first.
9. **Use process of elimination.** If you aren't sure of the correct answer use process of elimination. Eliminate answer choices that you know are definitely wrong. Then focus on selecting the best answer from the choices remaining.
10. **Do not read something into the question that is not there.** On a situational question, assume that everything is normal unless the question tells you differently. Assume that the pavement is dry; visibility is good; your supervisor is competent; and citizens are behaving normally. When something is amiss, the question will tell you. Stick to the facts of the questions.
11. **Answer every question.** There is no penalty for guessing. Even if you don't know the correct answer, you have one chance in four of choosing the right one. If you can eliminate one or two of the alternatives, your chances are even better.
12. **Fill out your answer sheet correctly.** In marking the answer sheet, be sure to fill in the blank that corresponds to the answer you have chosen. If you skip a question, make sure you skip to the right space on the answer sheet. If you mark the wrong answer and want to change it, erase your first mark completely. Remember to only mark *one* answer for each question.
13. **Use your time wisely.** If you finish early, use the remaining time to answer questions you skipped, re-evaluate questions you were unsure of and check to ensure that you filled out your answer sheet correctly.
14. **Test Proctor/Procedures.** A test proctor will be available during the exam to help the candidates with the testing procedures only; however, he or she will not explain the meaning of any question, define words, or give information which may be of help in answering a question. If you have any questions about the testing procedure, make sure to ask for assistance before the test begins.

## Test Your Assumptions

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When taking your test, don't compromise your chances of success by trying to follow test-taking tips you may find online. Many of these tips are just bad advice and could cost you points. Use the following statements to test your assumptions.

### True or False?

True

False

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1. If you don't know the answer to a test question, take a guess.

*True! Guessing is not penalized and you just might get it right.*

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Choose the longest answer option.

*False! General pattern responses like this are a very poor way to approach a modern test. The length of the answer choices is not an indication of an incorrect or correct response.*

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3. Choose the answer option that seems most logical to you.

*True! Rely on your knowledge of the assigned publications to think critically and logically when answering a question.*

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Choose the answer with a middle value when other options are higher or lower.

*False! This is another piece of bad advice you might come across somewhere. No such pattern as this is present on Ergometrics' tests.*

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. More often than not, the correct answer is B or C.

*False! Once again, poor advice. General pattern strategy is not a way to pass a modern test. There is no pattern to Ergometrics' correct answers. Answer questions by content, not by old, incorrect advice or superstitions.*



# Assessment Center

## Tactical Exercise

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The tactical exercise is designed to allow you the opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge of fire tactical operations at the command level, while focusing on a specific event. Your actions should be focused primarily at the strategic and tactical levels where you will outline your goals and objectives. Your ideas should be presented as if you are the incident commander, responsible for safe and effective operations.

Each candidate, operating as the incident commander, will be shown a fire scenario and asked to respond as the incident commander to a series of questions. The assessors will be scoring candidates on how well they command the incident and communicate their response.

### Typical Instructions

*[These instructions are only an example of typical instructions for a Fire Tactical Exercise. Candidates will be given specific instructions at the time of the assessment center.]*

You will now participate in the fire tactical exercise. You will be provided with scenario-specific instructions, shown a visual display, and asked to respond as the incident commander to a series of questions from the assessor panel. Be sure to describe what actions you would take and what resources you would use. Be sure to explain your thinking (i.e. why would you take a specific course of action).

### Test Tips

*[Preparation strategies below are suggestions only. Each individual is personally responsible for determining which preparation strategies and tips are appropriate for himself/herself.]*

- Communicate everything you are thinking. If you don't say it, it can't be scored.
- Monitor your time during the tactical exercise.
- Consider all resources available to you and how can use them (internal and external).
- Speak loudly and clearly so the assessors are able to hear and understand you.
- Be confident in your decisions.
  
- Display command presence.

## Interview Exercise

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For this exercise, the assessors will ask you to respond to a series of questions relevant to the Captain rank. At the time of the exercise, you will be informed of the number of questions and the length of time to answer each question.

### **Test Tips**

*[Preparation strategies below are suggestions only. Each individual is personally responsible for determining which preparation strategies and tips are appropriate for himself/herself.]*

- Listen to each question carefully.
- Think about the long- and short-term impact of the situation presented, on the people involved, and on the department.
- The total time given to answer each question is time that can be used to organize your thoughts and respond to the question.
- You do not have to use the entire time given to answer each question.
- Ensure your answers are clear and concise, but fully answer the question asked.
- It is important to monitor your time when answering each question.
- Speak loudly and clearly so that the assessors are able to hear and understand you.

### **In-Basket Exercise**

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For this exercise, you will be provided with a set number of correspondence items, such as emails and memos. You will be given time to review the in-basket items and prepare a verbal response to be presented in front of a panel of assessors. The verbal response should identify which item you choose to address, why you choose to address it, and how you address it in the time frame provided.

### **Test Tips**

- It is important to monitor your time while taking the in-basket.
- Be specific in your responses.
- Ensure your responses are clear, concise, and cover all important information.
- Speak loudly and clearly enough for the panel to hear and understand you.
- Be sure to address each of the in-basket items.
- Indicate the priority level of each item and your reasoning for it.

*[This is an example of typical set-up and instructions items for an In-Basket Exercise. Actual instructions and in-basket items being used for this promotion will be given to you at the time of the exercise.]*

### **Exercise Setup**

For this in-basket exercise you will assume the role of a Captain. You arrived to work today and found out that you have to attend a special meeting in one hour and will not be back to the office

until 1700 hours. It is now 0800 hours and you have to leave by 0900 hours. In the in-basket exercise, you are always referred to as Captain (You).

### **While in Front of the Panel**

After your preparation of the instructions and in-basket items, you will be taken before the panel where you will have 15 minutes to present the following information to the panel regarding each in-basket item provided to you:

1. **Management Analysis and Plan** – Indicate the priority level (i.e. high, medium, low or no priority) of each item and why.
2. **Contact** – Indicate to whom you would correspond with regarding each item. (To whom it would be sent, who you would call, or with whom you would speak to.)
3. **Action** – Briefly note the actions you think need to be taken for each item and why. Indicate what issues are presented by the content of each item. Additionally, if you would do something else, such as researching something prior to responding, state that and explain your thinking and plan. The raters are interested in your thinking.

You may make notes on the in-basket items or physically sort them, however, only your oral presentation to the panel will be scored. Notes you make directly on the in-basket items themselves will not be read or rated. During the exercise, be sure to inform the panel of the item number you are talking about. Be sure to explain not just what you would do, but why. You do not have to present your responses in any particular order. Use your time effectively.

### **Test Tips**

- **Don't forget to mention the in-basket item number.** You will not receive credit for an item that you do not address.
- **Be sure to explain not just what you would do, but why.** Assessors will examine your analytic ability and the oral communication skills you demonstrate in communicating your responses. Assessors will look at the quality of what you accomplish in the time you have. If you say you will call someone, state the purpose of the call and why you would call.
- **Your responses can be made in any order you choose.** You do not have to list your responses in order of priority, use your time as effectively as you can. You may choose to respond to a lower priority item first, simply because it is quick and easy to do while you are looking at it, and you feel confident you have time to finish the higher priority items.
- **Assessors will have to listen to your responses.** Assessors will only be able to evaluate your work based on what you verbally communicate. If you do not speak in a clear and understandable manner, this will impact your communication score. Plus, the assessors may not be able to properly credit your response. Assessors will not be giving “the benefit of the doubt” to responses that are hard to interpret. It is up to you to communicate your responses clearly and professionally.

- **This is a management test.** It does not focus on unimportant details. You will be scored on the quality of work you can accomplish in a given time and your understanding of what is important.

Indicate to the assessors once you have completed your response. When you have completed your response to the in-basket exercise, please indicate so to the assessor panel.

**Example Item**

**ITEM 1**

**Captain Candidate**

From: FirefighterBlue@denvergov.org  
Sent: Sunday, October 31, 2021 4:00 PM  
To: CaptainCandidate@denvergov.org  
Subject: Citizen Complaint

Hey Captain –

A citizen called in today to complain that Engine 2 was speeding down a residential street and there was no emergency siren sounded while the engine was driving down the street. The citizen seemed pretty upset as his kids were playing in their front yard. How do you want me to handle it?

- Firefighter Blue

# Assessment Center Preparation Tips

The information below is meant to be a brief general overview to help you prepare for assessment components that take place before the assessor panel. There are many other resources available as well, including books, classes and on-line resources.

As you approach a promotional process, the most important thing is your own personal readiness for assuming a higher-level position and how that compares with the readiness of others. That does not mean formal preparation only, such as education and study. It also means your mental, intellectual and developmental readiness.

In the assessment center, you will interact directly with a panel of assessors that will ask questions, listen to your answers and observe your behavior. There is nothing to be gained, and much to be lost, by trying to pretend you are someone other than who you are. You do, however, want to show yourself to your best advantage.

## Arrive early

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Plan your transportation and know how you are getting to the assessment center. Arriving early is one of the easiest and most effective ways to minimize stress. Plan for weather and traffic issues.

## Prepare

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You may be able to do well without preparing, but you can always do better with preparation. Remember, you are competing against others who are also very good and you need to do your best to stand out as excellent. The more prepared you are, the more relaxed and confident you will be. There are many ways you can prepare, including:

- **Understanding the job.** Understanding the job itself is the most important way to improve your competitiveness for promotion. The more you understand about supervision, management, department practices and organizational goals, the better you will be able to answer potential questions relating to the job and organization. Expand your understanding of management issues and solutions through study and seeking mentors. Even reading one management book can give you more depth.
- **Minimizing how much you will need to “wing it.”** An assessment center is like an emergency response. You never know precisely what the demands will be, but the more you have practiced what you can, the easier it is to improvise and adapt. You will always have to demonstrate flexibility and on-the-spot thinking. Try to develop your

thinking as much as you can in advance. Study this handout. Think about how you would handle management challenges like those you have seen during your employment.

### **Don't pretend**

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Represent yourself honestly and don't try to fake it. Don't spin your experience to sound like something it's not. Don't use words you don't know as that is a quick way to cast doubt on your credibility, intelligence and integrity. It is easy for assessors to identify candidates who have memorized or scripted answers to questions that they don't really understand or believe. Assessors are also trained to recognize when candidates do not address questions they are asked.

### **Display confidence**

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You are applying for a position of great responsibility. You will need to be a role model of confidence and credibility. In order to display the utmost confidence, consider the following:

- **Show that you can communicate openly with managers.** Answer questions directly and be sure to use eye contact.
- **Never answer a question you don't understand.** Let the panel or proctor know if you are uncertain about what is being asked. If you are confused, ask the panel for clarification.
- **Don't self-deprecate or apologize for your answers.**

### **Think aloud**

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Whatever your answer to a question is, the panel may understand it better if you think aloud. Considering options is an important part of management thinking.

### **Imagine yourself in the assessor panel's place**

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Be friendly and respectful to the assessor panel; they are trying to do a good job, just like you. Don't act offended or defensive if they ask for information that you think they should already know. This is your chance to show how easy you might be to work with.

### **Don't make assumptions**

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The panelists are considering large amounts of complex information about many candidates. Don't assume anyone has memorized or knows anything about you. If something is important for understanding what you are saying, just tell them.

### **Be concise in your communication**

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Sufficient time is provided in each exercise to communicate the necessary responses to questions and situations. Time management is a critical management skill that requires preparation and organization.

### **Relax as much as you can**

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Try to maintain physical relaxation and use appropriate gestures. Smile - don't act like you are in pain and don't feel you have to fill every silence. Answer questions and then wait for the next question. At the end of the exercises, thank the assessors.

### **Do your best**

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Remember, the most important thing is to represent yourself honestly and do your best. We and the Denver Civil Service Commission hope you have a positive promotional experience. If you have any questions about the process, please contact the Denver Civil Service Commission.