

# HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE PSYCHOLOGY LICENSING EXAMINATION

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The Examination for Professional Practice in Psychology (EPPP) is the national examination required for candidates who wish to become licensed psychologists in jurisdictions in the United States and Canada. The EPPP is developed and owned by the Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards (ASPPB). The exam is designed to assist state and provincial psychology boards in their evaluation of the qualifications of applicants for licensure and certification.

In March 2016, the ASPPB board of directors announced plans to add a second part to the EPPP. Whereas the original EPPP was a knowledge-based exam (Part 1), the new format would include a skills-based exam (Part 2). The goal was to create a multipart exam to standardize clinical skills evaluation for entry to practice, rather than rely exclusively on graduate programs' judgments, standardized assessment of knowledge, and other non-standardized measures such as oral examinations. In 2018, the EPPP-2 was adopted by several jurisdictions, and Georgia was one of the early adopters.

In Georgia, the EPPP-2 has been required for all Applications by Examination approved after November 1, 2020. Candidates for licensure in Georgia (and other early adopter jurisdictions) are required to pass the knowledge test before taking the skills test. Applicants for Georgia licensure by Endorsement that have taken and passed the original EPPP (Part I) for their current licensure on or before October 31, 2020, are not required to take and pass the new Part II for licensure in Georgia. In Georgia, all endorsement applicants licensed on or after November 1, 2020 in other states or jurisdictions that do not require Part II of the EPPP exam for licensure, are required to take and pass Part II of the EPPP exam in order to be considered for licensure in Georgia. By January 1, 2026, the EPPP-2 will be a mandatory part of licensing requirements for all U.S. and Canadian jurisdictions currently using the EPPP.

For those candidates planning to take the EPPP-2, here are some practical tips summarized from the ASPPB (2022) *EPPP Candidate Handbook*, the Georgia Secretary of State (2023), PSI Services (2020), and Santaro (2023).

## **Consider the costs of the exam.**

During the test adoption period, the exam fee is \$300.00, but eventually the fee will be raised to \$450.00, plus additional test center and administrative costs. This fee schedule below has been estimated from data in the *EPPP Candidate Handbook* (ASPPB, 2022, p. 7). Because the title page is numbered, page 7 of handbook is PDF page 8. Note that all fees are payable in U.S. dollars and are non-refundable.

Part 1: \$600.00 per sitting

Test sitting fee: \$ 87.50 per sitting

Until August 15, 2023:

Part 2: \$300.00 per sitting

Test sitting fee: \$ 87.50 per sitting

After August 15, 2023:

Part 2: \$450.00 per sitting

Test sitting fee: \$ 87.50 per sitting

### **Understand the 2-part examination.**

Even if your jurisdiction has not implemented the EPPP-2, it would be wise to review the *EPPP Candidate Handbook* (ASPPB, 2022). The 2-part EPPP exam consists of a knowledge-based exam and a skills-based exam. Each form of the knowledge portion of the EPPP (Part 1) contains 225 items, of which 175 are scored and 50 are pretest items, which are not scored and do not count toward the final score. Each item has four possible responses, only one of which is the correct answer. Scaled scores range from 200 to 800, and the current EPPP passing score is 500. For states that require the EPPP-2, the candidate submits to the state regulatory board an application for licensure and, if approved, the candidate can schedule Part 1. If passed, the candidate for licensure can schedule Part 2.

Each form of the skills-based portion of the EPPP (Part 2) contains 170 items, of which 130 are scored and 40 are pretest items, which are not scored and do not count toward the final score (ASPPB, 2022, p. 5). Note that page 5 is actually PDF page 6. Of the 170 questions, 45% are multiple choice, 45% scenario based, and 10% other types of questions. The Part 2 questions cover six domains: (1) Scientific orientation; (2) Assessment and intervention; (3) Relational competence; (4) Professionalism; (5) Ethical practice; and (6) Collaboration,

consultation, and supervision (ASPPB, 2022, p. 4, which is PDF p. 5). Examinees are allowed 4-hours and 15-minutes to complete the exam. The skills-based (Part 2) exam can only be taken after the knowledge-based (Part 1) exam has been taken and passed (ASPPB, 2022, p. 4). A candidate applying for a Georgia license requests approval through an application by Examination or by Endorsement. For further information, see the “How to Guide” Psychologist” linked to the official website of the Georgia State Board of Examiners of Psychologists (Georgia Secretary of State, 2023a): <https://sos.ga.gov/how-to-guide/how-guide-psychologist>

### **Stay current with updated information.**

To stay informed about current developments, check the websites of these three organizations: (1) ASPPB’s EPPP-2 webpage (<https://www.asppb.net/page/EPPPPart2-Skills>), (2) the state psychological association (SPA) in the state in which you intend to become licensed, and (3) the licensing board in the state in which you plan to practice. In Georgia, follow the Georgia Psychological Association (<https://www.gapsychology.org/>) and the State Board of Examiners of Psychologists (<https://sos.ga.gov/georgia-state-board-examiners-psychologists>). To stay current with proposed rule changes, consider joining the Georgia Secretary of State’s “Interested Parties List for Proposed Rule Changes and Other Notifications” (<https://sos.ga.gov/form/interested-parties-list-proposed-rule-changes-and-other-notifications>).

### **Take the exam as soon as you are eligible.**

The best advice is to take the knowledge-based exam (Part 1) as soon as all academic coursework has been completed. The ASPPB suggests not waiting too long after coursework

is completed. According to Matt Turner, Ph.D., former Senior Director of the Examination Services of ASPPB, “Almost all of the items in the exam reference information in graduate-level textbooks. We also know that pass rates are higher when the exam is taken closer to graduation” (as cited in Santaro, 2023, p. 27). Taking the test early can also reduce expenses on exam-preparation materials, which can otherwise cost hundreds or even thousands of dollars.

**Use resources if you encounter difficulties.**

Use the Pearson VUE EPPP candidate helpline for scheduling or rescheduling (800-513-6910). Use this link to additional information about the EPPP or for difficulties logging-in to register: <https://www.asppb.net/general/?type=EPPPcontact>

**Use knowledge and skills to manage anxiety.**

When we are anxious or scared, we may feel the urge to avoid or escape the source of the anxiety. However, procrastination usually works against candidates who postpone the exam too long. Put your clinical training to good use and remember the concept of *opposite action*, which allows you the choice of doing exactly the opposite of what you are feeling. Using opposite action can allow you to take a pause and, when it is appropriate, make a conscious choice to do the opposite of what your emotions are driving you to do. Acting in opposition to your natural impulses sometimes means simply approaching rather than avoiding the things that you dread or fear. Furthermore, reframing of your thoughts, you may be able to transform your anxiety into excitement that can energize you to prepare. Use the learning principle of *distributed learning* rather than *massed practice*. In other words, spread out

your study sessions over a period of time rather than trying to cram near the exam date.

**Use evidence-based study techniques.**

When reviewing material, use evidence-based study techniques. Remember that a number of effective study techniques have been researched and developed by educational and school psychologists. One useful technique is known as the PQRS method (Preview, Question, Read, State, Turn Back). This technique is also known as the SQRRR method (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review).

**Use your personality style to help you study.**

Although many introverts prefer studying alone or with a study partner, extraverts often benefit from having a study group. Whatever your style, old-fashioned note cards and online Quizlet tests can be useful. Note cards can often become more effective if they are used to connect single pieces of information on each card to other concepts through a concept map. Whether the maps are drawn by hand or created with software, they should emphasize substance over form. Their purpose is to make connections that help you see the content from different perspectives (Berry & Chew, 2008).

**Consider using the priority principle.**

Practice tests can also be helpful in identifying weak areas that may require extra attention. Competitive weightlifters and professional bodybuilders often use the so-called *priority principle* of training. This principle focuses on training a weak muscle group or lift first in a workout or first in the week, when one is fully energized and fully recovered from the previous training. One former competitor used this principle in studying for the national exam, by essentially doing no studying at all in areas that were already overdeveloped (e.g., diagnostics, psychopathology, psychotherapy, and history

and systems) and focusing the majority of study in areas that were underdeveloped (e.g., statistics, research designs, and industrial and organizational psychology). Yes, it not only worked very well but the technique required some use of opposite action, since it is easier to focus studying in areas of scholarly strengths than our weaknesses.

**Consider using pre-test cards and checklists.**

Some candidates find that it helps to hand write pre-test clue cards or crib notes. APA staff writer Helen Santaro (2023) recommends making a “cheat sheet” of concepts that are frequently seen on practice tests. Learn the cheat sheet so that the terms and concepts are stored in your memory. Set aside the notes before entering the test center. When starting the EPPP-2, recommends Santaro, quickly write down the facts, terms, and concepts that you memorized. Do not bring cards, notes, or sheets into the Pearson VUE center. Do bring a currently valid, government-issued photo ID (e.g., driver’s license, passport), as well as another piece of identification imprinted with your name and containing a signature or recent photo. As part of Pearson VUE ID Policy (<https://home.pearsonvue.com/Policies/1S/English>), “The first and last name on both forms of ID must match the name on the Authorization to Test email. Candidates will not be permitted to test and the registration fee will be forfeited if proper IDs are not presented” (ASPPB, 2022, p. 10). Handbook page 10 is PDF page 11.

**Preparation includes practicing self-care.**

Learning new material, reviewing old material, and managing pre-test jitters are all enhanced by practicing good self-care. Although it is vogue in some circles to brag about sleep deprivation, remember that sleep deprivation reduces learning efficiency. Because learning is

consolidated in the brain during sleep cycles, getting sufficient sleep each night improves your learning ability. Prior to the exam, it may help to become familiar with the terrain by checking out the location of the test center ahead of time (i.e., desensitization).

**Prepare for state jurisprudence examination.**

Once you have successfully passed the EPPP-2, your next step will be to take the jurisprudence exam of laws, rules, and regulations in the states in which you intend to practice. For example, candidates for licensure in Georgia would be required to take and pass the Georgia Psychology Jurisprudence Exam (law and rules). The following information is quoted from the Psychology FAQ page of the Georgia State Board of Examiners of Psychologists:

The Georgia Psychology Jurisprudence Exam is a computer based exam designed to assure that Georgia licensees possess knowledge at a level which will allow them to practice in a manner consistent with the Laws and Rules of Georgia applicable to the practice of Psychology. The exam consists of a timed, closed-book, multiple-choice examination covering current law, rules and regulations, and general provisions. After an individual’s application has been approved by the Board to take the exams, applicants will receive correspondence via e-mail from the Board on how to register for the exams through the vendor administering the exam for the Board. The ASPPB national licensure exams, the EPPP Part 1 (Knowledge) and Part 2 (Skills), must be taken and passed first. Then an applicant will be contacted by the administering vendor for the Georgia Jurisprudence exam and may then register and sit for the exam on a date and time of their choice. Refer to Board rule 510-2 Licensure by Examination. (Georgia Secretary of State, 2023b, Question 4).

Additional information on the Georgia Jurisprudence Exam can be found on the [Georgia Psychology Jurisprudence Examination: Candidate Information Bulletin](#) (PSI Services, 2020).

## References

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- The *EPPP Candidate Handbook* is a 34-page downloadable file that contains a Table of Contents (pp. 1–2), Introduction (p. 3), Content and Administrative Policies (pp. 4–18), and several Appendices (pp. 19–33). The *EPPP Candidate Handbook* (ASPPB, 2022, p. 15) provides a link to some [EPPP \(Part 2-Skills\) Sample Items](#). The *EPPP Candidate Handbook* (ASPPB, 2022, p. 31) provides another link to some [EPPP \(Part 2-Skills\) Sample Items](#). Because the title page of this handbook is numbered, the PDF pages are increased by one (e.g., Table of Contents begins on PDF page 2).
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