

Preparation Guide

*Homeland Security Investigations (HSI)
Criminal Investigator Pre-Hire Assessments*



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to help applicants prepare for the assessment and interview phases of the Criminal Investigator Selection Process for Homeland Security Investigations (HSI).

Assessments are pre-hire tests used by HSI to identify the applicants who may be well-suited for the entry-level criminal investigator role. Structured interviews for applicants who pass both assessment phases will be scheduled once testing windows have closed.

This guide includes a high-level overview of the complete assessment process, including summaries of the two phases of assessments and a general overview of the structured interview phase. Applicants must successfully complete all three phases of the assessment process for consideration.

****IMPORTANT NOTE: All communications associated with the criminal investigator hiring process will be sent via email to the email address the applicant has listed in his or her USAJOBS profile.**

It is critical that applicants check their USAJOBS profile prior to applying to ensure their email address is correct and up-to-date. Email addresses cannot be changed during the assessment process.

Assessment Process Overview

The hiring process for entry-level criminal investigators requires applicants to complete and pass three phases of assessments. An overview is provided on this page; additional information is provided in the sections that follow.

Each USAJOBS posting specifies a time frame during which interested applicants must complete any required assessments; the time frame is also stated in the invitation email applicants receive at the beginning of an assessment phase. **Failure to complete testing within this defined time frame will result in removal of the applicant from further consideration for the current criminal investigator job opportunity.**

Phase I Assessments

The two assessments in Phase I can be taken at any time during the time frame specified in the invitation email and may be completed from any computer with internet access.

Applicants who earn passing scores on both assessments will advance to Phase II.

Phase II Assessments

Phase II assessments are completed under the supervision of a proctor at an ICE-designated testing center. This proctored testing is by appointment only; applicants who advance to Phase II will be emailed detailed information about the scheduling process and completion timeframe.

Phase III Structured Interview

Applicants earning passing scores on all Phase I and II assessments will be contacted by an interview coordinator to schedule and complete a structured interview.

Applicants will receive their overall pass/fail status via email after the **full** assessment process concludes. Applicants with valid results on Phases I, II, or III from a prior application will receive information about their status sooner.

The remainder of the sections in this guide provide additional detail about the assessments, the interview process, retesting rules, as well as sample questions from Phase II assessments.

Phase I Assessments

The first phase of the criminal investigator application process requires completion of two pre-hire assessments. The tests in Phase I are completed independently (not under supervision), so they are referred to as “non-proctored” assessments.

As non-proctored tests, Phase I assessments can be completed on any computer with internet access. Applicants should take these assessments at a quiet location with reliable internet access that is free from distractions (e.g., at home, at a public library).

Advancing to the next phase in the application process is contingent on an applicant completing and passing both Phase I assessments within the time frame specified in the USAJOBS posting.

Phase I assessments are described in greater detail below.

Automated Writing Assessment (AWA)

Communicating in writing is a major component of the criminal investigator role; effective writing is the cornerstone of the ability to document accurately, report comprehensively, and appropriately communicate important messages.

The AWA asks applicants to compose a short essay (at least 100 words) in response to a broad (non-job-related) writing prompt; essays are evaluated on presentation/written flow, grammar, and completeness of response.

Applicants have 25 minutes to complete the AWA.

Situational Judgment Test (SJT)

Criminal investigators regularly work with teams of other agents and often need to adjust their approach in response to different situations. Difficulty making quick, effective decisions and adjusting behavior as appropriate to specific situations can have negative consequences.

The Situational Judgment Test (SJT) presents applicants with realistic, job-related scenarios, and several potential courses of action for each. Applicants are asked to review each scenario and indicate how effective they believe each suggested course of action might be.

Applicants have 75 minutes to complete responses to 14 SJT scenarios.

Please note: Applicants who have already passed one or more of the assessments as part of a previous application may only be presented the ones they need to retake.

Phase II Assessments

Applicants who earn passing scores on both Phase I assessments will be invited to complete Phase II assessments.

The three assessments in Phase II are taken together, under the supervision of a test proctor in an ICE-designated testing center available in most U.S. cities. **Proctored assessments are administered by appointment only; applicants are responsible for self-scheduling appointments.** A link to access a self-scheduling system and set an appointment will be distributed to qualified applicants via email.

Phase II of the application process includes three assessments, described in more detail below.

Advancing to Phase III in the assessment process is contingent on an applicant passing all Phase II assessments (within the time frame specified in the scheduling email).

All Phase II assessments are completed during the same proctored testing appointment. From beginning to end, the Phase II proctored assessment process takes approximately 3-3.5 hours.

Please note: Applicants who have already passed one or more of the assessments as a part of a previous application may only be presented the ones they need to retake.

Writing Skills Test (WST)

Criminal investigators frequently write briefs, reports, and emails – these types of written communications are vital to success in the role.

The Writing Skills Test (WST) differs from the Phase I AWA in that this Phase II test asks each applicant to review questions and demonstrate an understanding of common rules related to written English (e.g., proper sentence construction, correct word usage).

Two sample WST questions are provided in the Sample Questions section of this guide.

Applicants have 60 minutes to complete 40 WST questions.

Logical Reasoning Assessment (LRA)

Criminal investigators often read and study laws, legal commentary, and regulations, and then must use sound reasoning skills to apply this information and make critical decisions (which may have broad-reaching implications).

The Logical Reasoning Assessment (LRA) in Phase II evaluates each applicant's ability to interpret materials that are provided and apply critical thinking skills to related factual situations.

Two sample LRA questions are provided in the Sample Questions section of this guide.

Applicants have 90 minutes to complete 40 LRA questions.

Candidate Experience Record (CER)

HSI evaluates applicants holistically (i.e., using the full picture of a person's qualifications). This includes past experience, preferences, and perceptions applicants have of their own abilities.

In alignment with the importance of these considerations, the Candidate Experience Record (CER) assessment asks applicants about prior work attendance, educational preferences, and perceived competence in skill areas important to the criminal investigator role.

Applicants have 25 minutes to complete 36 CER questions.

Phase III Structured Interview

Applicants earning passing scores on all Phase I and Phase II assessments will be referred for a structured interview. Applicants will be contacted by an interview coordinator to schedule an interview. All interviews will be conducted in a virtual environment, by a panel of experienced criminal investigators. The location of the panel with which applicants interview is assigned randomly and may not be the location of employment, should a job offer be made.

The structured interview includes a series of standardized and scored questions, and takes between 30 and 60 minutes.

Applicants earning passing scores on all Phase I and II assessments and the Phase III structured interview will be placed into a pool for further review/consideration for the criminal investigator position and notified regarding next steps.

Retesting and Reusing Scores

Results from these assessments will be used for this job opportunity and may be used for future similar job opportunities requiring these tests. Applicants who do not successfully pass the assessments will not be able to retake them for two (2) years from when they were most recently completed.

Sample Questions

Writing Skills Test (WST)

****NOTE: The questions presented on this page are NOT actual WST items and are provided for informational purposes only.**

1. Select the option that represents a change that should be made to correct the sentence.

Ms. Reece was a primary suspect, and the fraudulent credit cards were eventually traced back to she and Mr. Hanes.

- A) Change she and Mr. Hanes to Mr. Hanes and she.
- B) Change she and Mr. Hanes to her and Mr. Hanes.
- C) Change she and Mr. Hanes to she and he.
- D) Change she and Mr. Hanes to her and he.
- E) No correction is necessary.

2. Select the correct sentence order to form a paragraph that is organized, clear, and coherent.

- (1) Smith was arrested the following day and charged with two counts of possession and distribution of child pornography.
- (2) Agents from the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) arrested John Smith earlier this week for crimes related to child pornography.
- (3) On August 19, ICE and FBI agents executed a search warrant at the home of John Smith, seizing a computer, pornographic publications, diskettes, and documents.
- (4) If convicted, Smith could receive up to 5 years in prison and/or be required to pay fines totaling up to \$100,000.

- A) 4 3 2 1
- B) 3 1 4 2
- C) 2 3 1 4
- D) 2 1 4 3
- E) no correction is necessary

Logical Reasoning Assessment (LRA)

****NOTE: The questions presented on this page are NOT actual LRA items and are provided for informational purposes only.**

1. If a 1977 immigrant from country Y had entered the United States at 40 years of age or younger, that person was certain to elect naturalized citizenship during the subsequent 16 years. Older immigrants from country Y were not likely to naturalize. Although naturalization rates have varied according to nationality, immigration status, and other conditions, it appears that age 40 represents about the last time in life when people from country Y willingly changed citizenship. In fact, 80 out of every 100 of all the 1977 immigrants did not naturalize over the 16-year period.

From the information given above, it can be validly concluded that, in 1977, a randomly selected immigrant from country Y:

- A) was under 40 years of age, with a probability higher than 80%.
 - B) elected naturalized citizenship, with a probability higher than 80%.
 - C) did not elect naturalized citizenship, with a probability of 50%.
 - D) was over 40 years of age when entering the United States, with a probability of at least 80%.
 - E) was over 40 years old, with a probability lower than 20%.
2. A rapidly changing technical environment in government is promoting greater reliance on electronic mail (e-mail) systems. As this usage grows, there are increasing chances of conflict between the users' expectations of privacy and public access rights. In some investigations, access to all e-mail, including those messages stored in archival files and messages outside the scope of the investigation, has been sought and granted. In spite of this, some people send messages through e-mail that would never be said face-to-face or written formally.

From the information given above, it **CANNOT** be validly concluded that:

- A) Some e-mail messages that have been requested as part of investigations have contained messages that would never be said face-to-face.
- B) Some messages that people would never say face-to-face are sent in e-mail messages.
- C) Some e-mail messages have been requested as part of investigations.
- D) E-mail messages have not been exempted from investigations.
- E) Some e-mail messages contain information that would be omitted from formal writing.