

The Future Starts Here



HiSET® Study Companion

Expanding Opportunities. Changing Lives.
The *HiSET*® Exam

Study Guide

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What is the *HiSET*® exam like?

Test at a Glance

Find out what's included on the *HiSET*® exam at <https://hiset.ets.org/about/content>.

How can I prepare for the HiSET exam?

Practice, practice, practice!

The HiSET program offers free and low-cost options to familiarize you with the exam questions and the computer-based testing experience.

We offer free sample questions, practice tests and tips to help you get ready for your HiSET exam. In addition, test centers and adult education centers may be able to help you prepare. To learn more about how to prepare for the exam, contact your test center or visit us online at <https://hiset.ets.org/>.

Start by taking the sample questions provided online at <https://hiset.ets.org/prepare/overview>. You can also check your readiness for the HiSET exam by taking practice tests, which are half the length of the actual tests and provide answer keys. HiSET Practice Tests provide a wider sample of questions and let you assess your readiness for the actual HiSET exam. To access the practice tests online, visit <https://hiset.ets.org/prepare/materials/>.

Low-cost test prep materials

Low-cost practice tests are available for download on the web and as more materials become available, we will link to them via our website. You can also contact your local test center to learn more about the latest test prep materials.

What should I study?

Preparation for the test will depend on the amount of time you have available and your personal preferences for how to prepare. At a minimum, before you take the HiSET exam you should know the:

- types of questions and directions
- approximate number of questions
- amount of time for each section

Here are some tips and strategies to help you do your best on the HiSET exam, whether you take it on a computer or on paper.

1. Learn what the test covers.

You can find test specifications in the free Test at a Glance. The Test at a Glance outlines the content categories that are measured by each subtest.

2. Assess how well you know the content.

Research has shown that test takers tend to overestimate their preparedness — this is why some test takers assume they did well and then find out they did not pass.

The longer you've been away from the content the more preparation you will most likely need. If it has been longer than a few months since you've studied your content area, you will want to make a concerted effort to prepare.

3. Plan and organize your time.

Allow yourself plenty of time to review so you can avoid “cramming” new material at the end. Here are a few tips:

- Choose a test date far enough in the future to leave you plenty of preparation time.
- Work backwards from that date to figure out how much time you will need for review.
- Set a realistic schedule and stick to it.

4. Understand how questions will be scored.

Scoring information can be found in the Scores section of the HiSET Test Taker Bulletin and in the free Test at a Glance available on the web.

5. Develop a study plan.

A study plan provides a road map to prepare for the HiSET exam. It can help you understand what skills and knowledge are covered on the test and where to focus your attention. Use the study plan template on pages 8–9 to help you get started.

6. Become comfortable with the types of questions you'll find on the HiSET exam.

The HiSET exam includes two types of questions: multiple-choice (for which you select your answers from a list of choices) and essay (for which you write a response of your own).

How to approach multiple-choice questions

All of the subtests contain multiple-choice questions. Answer choices are provided to help you focus your thinking about the question. Make sure when answering a question that you understand what response is required.

NOTE: When taking the computer-based exam, you can skip questions that you might have difficulty answering. The testing software has a “mark and review” feature that allows you to mark questions you want to come back to during the time you're working on that section. The testing software also:

- lets you view a complete list of all the questions in the section on which you're working
- indicates whether you've answered each question
- identifies the questions you've marked for review

Additionally, you can review questions you've already answered and change your answers as long as you still have time remaining to work on that section.

Watch out for multiple-choice questions containing “NOT,” “LEAST,” and “EXCEPT.”

This type of question asks you to select the choice that does not fit. You must be very careful because it is easy to forget that you are selecting the negative. This question type is used in situations which there are several good solutions or ways to approach something, but also a clearly wrong way.

How to approach essay questions

Only the Language Arts – Writing subtest contains an essay question. While working on your essay, remember to budget your time. You need to allow sufficient time to think about the question, plan a response and write your essay. Although the raters scoring the essays understand the time constraints you're writing under and consider that when scoring your response, you still want to produce the best possible example of your writing. Keep these things in mind when writing your response:

1. **Answer the question accurately.** Analyze what each part of the question is asking you to do. If the question asks you to describe or discuss, you should provide more than just a list.
2. **Answer the question completely.** If a question asks you to do three distinct things in your response, you should cover all three things for the best score. Otherwise, no matter how well you write, you will not be awarded full credit.
3. **Answer the question that is asked.** Do not change the question or challenge the basis of the question. You will receive no credit or a low score if you answer another question or if you state, for example, that there is no possible answer.
4. **Give a thorough and detailed response.** You must demonstrate that you have a thorough understanding of the subject matter. However, your response should be straightforward and not filled with unnecessary information.
5. **Reread your response.** Check that you have written what you thought you wrote. Be sure not to leave sentences unfinished or omit clarifying information.

Save a few minutes at the end of your exam to check for obvious errors. Although an occasional typographical, spelling or grammatical error will not affect your score, severe and persistent errors will detract from the overall effectiveness of your writing and lower your score.

How to approach questions about graphs, tables or reading passages

When answering questions about graphs, tables or reading passages, provide only the information that the questions ask for. In the case of a map or graph, you might want to read the questions first, and then look at the map or graph. In the case of a long reading passage, you might want to go ahead and read the passage first, noting places you think are important on your scratch paper, and then answer the questions. Again, the most important thing is to be sure you answer the questions as they refer to the material presented. So read the questions carefully.

Do you have any tips?

Yes! First and foremost, you should get ready for test day so that you will be calm and confident.

Plan to end your review a day or two before the actual test date so you avoid cramming. Take a dry run to the test center so you're sure of the route, traffic conditions and parking. Most of all, you want to eliminate any unexpected factors that could distract you from your ultimate goal — passing the HiSET exam.

On the day of the test, you should:

- be well rested
- wear comfortable clothes and dress in layers
- eat before you take the test and bring food with you to eat during break to keep your energy level up
- bring your state's required identification for entrance to the exam
- bring a supply of well-sharpened No. 2 pencils (at least 3) and a blue or black pen for the essay or constructed-response question for a paper-delivered test
- be prepared to stand in line to check in or to wait while other test takers check in

You can't control the testing situation, but you can control yourself. Stay calm. The supervisors are well trained and make every effort to provide uniform testing conditions, but don't let it bother you if the test doesn't start exactly on time. You will have the necessary amount of time once it does start.

You can think of preparing for this test as training for an athletic event. Once you've trained, prepared and rested, give it everything you've got.

Complete the following checklist to determine if you are ready.

- Do you know the testing requirements for the state where you plan to take the test?
- Have you followed all of the test registration procedures?
- Do you know the topics that will be covered in each test you plan to take?
- Have you reviewed any textbooks, class notes and course readings that relate to the topics covered?
- Do you know how long the test will take and the number of questions it contains?
- Have you considered how you will pace your work?
- Are you familiar with the types of questions for your test?
- Are you familiar with the recommended test-taking strategies?
- Have you practiced by working through the practice questions in this study companion or in a study guide or practice test?
- If essay questions are part of your test, do you understand the scoring criteria for these items?
- If you are retaking a HiSET exam, have you analyzed your previous score report to determine areas where additional study and test preparation could be useful?

If you answered “yes” to the questions above, your preparation has paid off. Now take the HiSET exam, do your best, pass it, and move forward in your career and/or college education!

Smart tips for taking the test

1. **For a paper-delivered test, put your answers in the right bubbles.** It seems obvious, but be sure that you fill in the answer bubble that corresponds to the question you are answering. A significant number of test takers fill in a bubble without checking to see that the number matches the question they are answering.
2. **Skip the questions you find extremely difficult.** Rather than trying to answer these on your first pass through the test, leave them blank. Pay attention to the time as you answer the rest of the questions on the test, and try to finish with 10 or 15 minutes remaining so that you can go back over the questions you left blank. Even if you don’t know the answer the second time you read the questions, see if you can narrow down the possible answers, and then guess.
3. **Read all of the possible answers before selecting one.** Then reread the question to be sure the answer you have selected really answers the question. Remember, a question that contains a phrase such as “Which of the following does NOT...” is asking for the one answer that is NOT a correct statement or conclusion.
4. **Check your answers.** If you have extra time left over at the end of the test, look over each question and make sure that you have answered it as you intended.
5. **Don’t worry about your score while you are taking the test.** No one is expected to answer all of the questions correctly. If you meet the minimum passing score on each of the HiSET subtests, and you meet the HiSET cumulative score requirement as well as any state requirements, the state will issue your high school equivalency certification or diploma.

Frequently Asked Questions

Should I guess?

Yes. Your score is based on the number of questions you answer correctly, with no penalty or subtraction for an incorrect answer. When you don't know the answer to a question, try to eliminate any obviously wrong answers and then guess at the correct one. Try to pace yourself so that you have enough time to carefully consider every question.

Can I answer the questions in any order?

Yes. You can go through the questions from beginning to end, as many test takers do, or you can create your own path. Perhaps you will want to answer questions in your strongest area of knowledge first and then move from your strengths to your weaker areas. On computer-delivered tests, you can use the "Skip" function to skip a question and come back to it later. There is no right or wrong way. Use the approach that works best for you.

Are there trick questions on the test?

No. There are no hidden meanings or trick wording. All of the questions on the test ask subject matter knowledge in a straightforward manner.

Are there answer patterns on the test?

No. You might have heard this myth: the answers on multiple-choice tests follow patterns. Another myth is that there will never be more than two questions with the same lettered answer following each other. Neither myth is true. Select the answer you think is correct on your knowledge of the subject.

Can I write in the test booklet or, for a computer-delivered test, on the scratch paper I am given?

No. You may not write in the HiSET test booklet. However, you can use your scratch paper to work out problems, make notes to yourself, or note questions you want to review later. Your scratch paper will be destroyed after you are finished with it, so use it in any way that is helpful to you. But be sure to mark your answers on the answer sheet or enter them on the computer.

Will the test be paper-based, computer-based or both?

The HiSET program is available in paper- and computer-based formats. However, not every state or test center will offer both formats, so be sure to check online at <https://hiset.ets.org> before you register for the exam.

What is different about computer-based testing?

The computer-based tests offer a clear and simple design, with useful tools to enhance your test experience including:

- An onscreen calculator on the math test
- Word-processing software with insert, delete, cut, paste and undo features on the essay test
- A special toolbar with Spanish-language characters on the essay test
- A help button and a timer so you can budget your time during the test
- A mark and skip feature that lets you bypass a question and return to it later
- A review tool that tells you which questions you still need to answer

Are the questions the same on paper-based as on computer-based tests?

Yes. Both tests ask the same questions.

What should I do before test day?

Before test day, there are some important things you should do to get ready.

- Verify your test location by logging into your My HiSET account or contacting your test center.
- Find out what you need to bring on test day. Review your state requirements or contact your test center for more information.
- Make sure you have the correct identification requirements. ID requirements vary by state, so you need to review your state requirements.
- Check with the test center to see what time you need to be there on the day of your test. It may vary depending on whether you're taking the computer test or the paper test.
- Create a Study Plan to help identify your strengths and weaknesses in each of the content areas using Test at a Glance (TAAG).
- Review the test and take practice exams at <https://hiset.ets.org/>.

My Study Plan

Use this worksheet to:

- 1. **Define Content Areas:** List the most important content areas for your test as defined in the Test at a Glance (TAAG) and Topics Covered sections.
- 2. **Determine Strengths and Weaknesses:** Identify your strengths and weaknesses in each content area.
- 3. **Identify Resources:** Identify the books, courses, and other resources you plan to use for each content area.
- 4. **Study:** Create and commit to a schedule that provides for regular study periods.

HiSET Test Name: _____

HiSET Test Code: _____

Test Date: _____

Content covered	Description of content	How well do I know the content? (scale 1–5)	What resources do I have/ need for the content?	Where can I find the resources I need?	Dates I will study the content	Date completed

(continued on next page)

