EDUCATION

Postal Exam 718 Computer Skills Test

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Understanding the Postal Exam 718 Computer Skills Test

For anyone looking to begin a career with the United States Postal Service (USPS) in a role that involves modern technology, the **Postal Exam 718 Computer Skills Test** is an essential gateway. This assessment is designed specifically to evaluate a candidate's proficiency with fundamental computer operations and common software applications. Unlike general aptitude exams, the 718 test focuses exclusively on the practical, day-to-day digital skills that many USPS positions now require. Whether you are applying to become a clerk, a data entry technician, or a mail processing specialist, passing this exam demonstrates that you possess the technical competence needed to handle a computerized work environment.

The USPS has increasingly integrated digital systems into its operations. From sorting mail electronically to managing customer databases and processing financial transactions, computers are at the heart of many postal functions. Therefore, the **Postal Exam 718 Computer Skills Test** ensures that all applicants have a baseline understanding of how to operate a computer efficiently. It is not a test of advanced IT knowledge or programming; rather, it assesses the everyday skills that any office or administrative worker would be expected to know. This makes the exam accessible to a wide range of candidates, but preparation is still critical for success.

In this article, we will explore every aspect of the Postal Exam 718, including the test format, the specific topics covered, effective study strategies, and how this exam fits into the larger USPS hiring process. By the end, you will have a clear roadmap to approaching the test with confidence and improving your chances of landing a rewarding postal position.

Who Needs to Take the Postal Exam 718?

The 718 test is not required for every USPS job. It is specifically used for positions that involve significant interaction with computer systems. Typical roles that may require the **Postal Exam 718 Computer Skills Test** include:

- Sales, Services, and Distribution Associate (SSDA) – This role involves serving customers at retail windows, handling financial transactions, and managing computer-based systems for tracking mail and packages.
- Mail Processing Clerk – Duties often include operating automated sorting machines, entering data, and using software to manage mail flow.
- Data Entry Technician – As the title indicates, this position focuses on accurate and fast data entry into postal databases.
- Accounting Technician – These employees work with spreadsheets, financial software, and digital records.
- Administrative Support Roles – Many clerical and office assistant positions within the USPS also require computer literacy.

If you are applying for any of these job families, you will likely be required to take the 718 exam, often in addition to other assessments like the 474 or 475. The USPS hiring system uses these tests to match candidates with specific job requirements, so passing the 718 can open doors to a variety of career paths.

What Does the Postal Exam 718 Computer Skills Test Cover?

The test is divided into several sections, each targeting a different aspect of computer proficiency. While the exact question pool may vary, the core competencies remain consistent. Below is a breakdown of the main topics you can expect.

1. Basic Computer Operations

This section assesses your understanding of fundamental computer functions, such as:

- Turning on and shutting down a computer properly
- Using a mouse and keyboard efficiently
- Navigating the desktop, taskbar, and start menu
- Managing files and folders: creating, copying, moving, renaming, and deleting
- Understanding the concept of drives (C: drive, network drives) and directory structures
- Using shortcuts and right-click menus

Questions may be presented as multiple-choice or interactive simulations where you are asked to perform a virtual task. For example, you might be shown a picture of a desktop and asked to click on the correct icon to open a specific program.

2. Microsoft Windows Operating System

Since most USPS computers run on a version of Windows, the test focuses heavily on this operating system. Key areas include:

- Customizing display settings (resolution, wallpaper, screen saver)
- Using the Control Panel to adjust system settings (date/time, keyboard, mouse)
- Task Manager basics: ending a program that has stopped responding
- Using File Explorer to search for files and organize folders
- Understanding the Recycle Bin and how to recover deleted files
- Creating desktop shortcuts

3. Word Processing (Microsoft Word)

Strong word processing skills are essential for many postal positions that involve creating documents, reports, or correspondence. Expect questions on:

- Creating, saving, and opening documents
- Formatting text: font styles, sizes, bold, italic, underline, colors
- Paragraph alignment (left, center, right, justify)
- Using bulleted and numbered lists
- Inserting tables, images, and headers/footers
- Spell check and grammar tools
- Setting margins, page orientation, and page breaks
- Printing options

4. Spreadsheets (Microsoft Excel)

Data management and basic analysis are common tasks in USPS accounting and administrative roles. The test covers:

- Understanding cells, rows, columns, and worksheets

- Entering and editing data
- Using simple formulas (SUM, AVERAGE, COUNT, MIN, MAX)
- Creating basic charts and graphs
- Sorting and filtering data
- Formatting cells (currency, percentage, date, text wrap)
- Using the fill handle to copy data or formulas

5. Email and Communication Software

Many USPS jobs require you to communicate internally via email. The test may include questions about:

- Composing, replying to, and forwarding messages
- Attaching files to an email
- Using the address book and distribution lists
- Understanding CC, BCC, and subject lines
- Organizing emails into folders
- Flagging or marking messages as important

6. Internet and Web Browsing

Even though USPS uses internal systems, employees often need to access web-based resources. Expect questions on:

- Using a web browser (address bar, bookmarks, history)
- Navigating between tabs and windows
- Downloading files from the internet
- Understanding secure connections (https, lock icon)
- Using search engines effectively

Test Format and Duration

The **Postal Exam 718 Computer Skills Test** is typically administered online at a designated testing center. In some cases, it may be offered as a proctored remote exam. The test is computer-based and consists of multiple-choice questions, drag-and-drop exercises, and sometimes simulation tasks that require you to interact with a virtual desktop environment. The total number of questions ranges from 60 to 80, and you are given approximately 60–75 minutes to complete the exam. There is no penalty for guessing, so it is better to answer every question even if you are uncertain.

One important aspect to note: the test is not adaptive, meaning the difficulty does not change based on your answers. All test takers receive the same set of questions, although versions may vary by administration. The passing score is determined by the USPS based on the specific job's requirements, but generally you need to answer at least 70% of questions correctly to be considered qualified. However, higher scores increase your competitiveness in the hiring pool, as the USPS often ranks candidates by test score.

How to Prepare for the Postal Exam 718 Computer Skills Test

Preparation is the key to doing well on this exam. Unlike more abstract reasoning tests, the 718 is highly practical and can be studied effectively. Below are proven strategies to help you succeed.

Review the Official USPS Job Posting

Before you start studying, carefully read the job announcement for the position you are applying for. It will often mention specific skills that the 718 test evaluates. Some announcements may even provide a brief outline of the test content. Use this as a starting point to focus your efforts on the most relevant areas.

Practice with Real Software

Since the test covers Microsoft Word, Excel, and Windows, the best preparation is hands-on practice. If you have access to a computer with these programs, spend time performing the tasks described earlier. For example:

- Create a Word document, format a paragraph, insert a table, and save it in a specific folder.
- Open Excel, enter a list of numbers, use the SUM formula to add them, and create a bar chart.
- Use File Explorer to move files between directories, rename a file, and search for a document by name.

If you do not have Microsoft Office installed, consider using free alternatives like LibreOffice or online versions of Office 365, but be aware that the actual test uses the Microsoft interface. Familiarizing yourself with the ribbon toolbar and menu options in Word and Excel 2016 or 2019 is very helpful.

Use Online Practice Tests

Several websites offer sample questions for the **Postal Exam 718 Computer Skills Test**. While these may not be official, they can give you a sense of the question style and difficulty. Look for practice tests that include simulation exercises where you have to click on the correct button or menu. This will also help you get comfortable with the timed environment. Make sure to simulate test conditions: no interruptions, time yourself, and avoid using outside help.

Brush Up on Windows Shortcuts

Many questions on the test involve knowing keyboard shortcuts or quick ways to perform actions. Some useful shortcuts to know include:

- Ctrl+C (copy), Ctrl+X (cut), Ctrl+V (paste)
- Ctrl+Z (undo), Ctrl+Y (redo)
- Ctrl+S (save), Ctrl+P (print)
- Windows key + E (open File Explorer)
- Alt+Tab (switch between open windows)

These shortcuts are not only helpful for the test but also for on-the-job efficiency.

Understand the Scoring System

Your score on the 718 test is often combined with other assessments to create a final rating. For some positions, the computer skills test may be weighted more heavily. Knowing that every point matters can motivate you to study thoroughly. Aim for a perfect or near-perfect score, especially if you are competing against many applicants.

Common Challenges and How to Overcome Them

Even experienced computer users can struggle with certain aspects of the 718 test. Here are common pitfalls and tips to avoid them.

Not Reading the Question Carefully

Sometimes the test will ask you to perform a specific action, such as “Insert a footer that displays the date.” You might be tempted to quickly click through without reading the details. Always read the entire question and any instructions before answering. Check if there are multiple steps required in a simulation.

Forgetting Basic Terminology

The test uses basic computer vocabulary like “taskbar,” “ribbon,” “cell,” “worksheet,” etc. If you are not confident with these terms, review a glossary of common computer terms for beginners. Understanding the language is half the battle.

Mismanaging Time

With 60–80 questions in about 75 minutes, you have roughly one

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