

# 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 portion of the Criminal Investigator Selection Process for Homeland Security Investigations (HSI).

Assessments are pre-hire tests used by HSI to identify the applicants best suited for the entry-level special agent role, the criminal investigator.

This guide includes a high-level overview of the assessment process, as well as summaries of the two phases of assessments applicants must complete for consideration.

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

**It is critical for applicants to check (and if necessary, update) their USAJOBS profile prior to applying to ensure their email address is correct and up-to-date.**

# Assessment Process Overview

The hiring process for entry-level criminal investigators requires applicants complete and pass two phases of assessments. High level details about each phase can be found below; additional details are provided in the sections that follow.

Each USAJOBS posting contains specifications for a time frame during which applicants must complete any required assessments. **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.

Assessments in Phase I can be taken at any time during the time frame specified in the USAJOBS posting and may be completed from any computer with Internet access.

Applicants will be notified of Phase I assessment results (pass/not pass) via email; those who earn passing scores on both assessments are invited to 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 are advanced to Phase II will be emailed detailed information about the scheduling process.

Applicants earning passing scores on all Phase I and II assessments will be placed into a pool for further review/consideration for the criminal investigator position and notified regarding next steps. Applicants may be required to complete one or more interviews for this role.

**The remainder of the sections in this prep guide provide additional detail about the assessments in each phase, 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 and free from distractions (e.g., at home, at a public library).

**Eligibility to continue 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.**

Both Phase I assessments are described in more detail below.

## Automated Writing Assessment (AWA)

Communicating in writing is core to the success of criminal investigators; 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 up to 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.*

## Phase II Assessments

Each applicant will be notified of Phase I assessment pass/fail results via email. Applicants who earn passing scores on both Phase I assessments are 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 US 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.

**Eligibility to continue to the next phase in the application process is contingent on an applicant completing and passing all Phase II assessments (within the time frame specified in the USAJOBS posting).**

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.

### 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 CI role.

*Applicants have 25 minutes to complete 36 CER questions.*

## **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.