

# WGU GUIDE FOR PRAXIS® CORE BASIC SKILLS

Updated by the WGU Teachers College Team

## Start here

This guide will help you get started with your Praxis Core Basic Skills exam study with free online learning resources in reading, writing, and math. These resources are aimed at learners planning to teach grades K–12; an eighth-grade knowledge level in each subject is recommended for best success. Passing high-stakes standardized tests is a team effort—you are not alone!

## What topics are covered in this guide?

- [FAQs: What to expect from Praxis Core](#)
- Discipline-specific content: individual or combined subtests
  - [Reading](#)
  - [Writing](#)
  - [Mathematics](#)
- Exams that require essays
  - [Constructed response](#)
- WGU-specific content
  - [What are the cut scores needed?](#)

## FAQs: What to expect from Praxis Core

### How is the Praxis Core formatted?

The [Praxis Core exams](#) are offered as a bundle (all three subtests combined) or as individual subtests. Consider how challenging you may find these tests. It will not save you money if you are too mentally exhausted to do well on all subtests in a single day and need to retake one or more exams anyway.

### Is this the same as the elementary education Praxis or other exams?

No, Praxis Core is different from the elementary education Praxis exam or state content exams. Those are subject assessments to be completed in addition to (and preferably after) the teacher candidate has passed Core or Basic Skills tests in reading, writing, and math. Content knowledge expectations in English and math are higher for elementary education exams (and other discipline-specific exams) than Basic Skills. Additionally, elementary education Praxis expects greater fluency with pedagogical methods for these subjects.

### How do I register for the Praxis Core?

Here's [how to register](#) for the appropriate exam.

### Where can I take the exams?

You may take your Praxis Core either at home with ProctorU or at a testing center; check exam sites for updated access and cost information. If you go to a testing center, then follow the [ETS Testing Center Guidelines](#). If you choose to take the test at home, please test your system using these [ETS Before Your Test at Home Equipment Requirements](#) before registering. The test is non-refundable.

### What COVID (or other disease) protocols should I be aware of?

Please check with your local testing center before test day. If you are taking the exam at home, there may still be specific criteria to follow from the exam provider. At a testing center, you may need to [bring your own mask](#) and follow the [ETS Testing Center Guidelines](#).



### Can I use any calculator?

While Praxis exams may allow you to use an on-screen calculator, **you will not be allowed a calculator from home.** You must use only those resources provided by the exam vendor; ask your exam proctor for assistance as needed. Watch this video for [Praxis exam testing tools](#) and review this information page about [calculator use](#). You may want to [practice ahead](#) of exam day.

### Can I use formula sheets?

Yes, there will be a math formula sheet for the Praxis Core exam. State content exams may also provide online formula sheets or tables of information with different formats or topics. You must use what is provided only; you are not allowed to bring your own.

### May I use anything else to help me?

You may use scratch paper at a testing center or a whiteboard at home. Be prepared to show both sides of the whiteboard to the proctor to show it is clean; if the whiteboard is bolted to the wall, show that it cannot be removed. You may use only those materials provided to you or approved by the proctor, such as pencils or whiteboard pens and erasers. Otherwise, your work area must be completely clean.

### What question formats are on the exam? Multiple choice, short answer, essay, etc.?

Each exam will consist mostly of multiple-choice test items. Most questions will be standard: select one answer from four options. Some will have multiple correct answers. You may also encounter at least one “drag and drop” test item in which you are asked to move answer options to various parts of the screen.

Expect at least two constructed response (essay) items for the writing assessment, along with multiple-choice questions.

### Is there partial credit for answers that have multiple correct answers?

About 10% of each exam may involve multiple choice items where you select more than one answer option; all responses must be correct or the entire test item will be marked wrong. There is no partial credit.

### Are there trick questions on the test?

No. The questions are straightforward. Answer the question you see on the test.

### Where can I get information about accommodations?

If you need accommodation for medical or language concerns, please refer to the exam site for further guidance. Testing center locations or dates may be limited. Praxis exams provide few alternate arrangements other than additional time. See the [ETS Disabilities Accommodations](#) or [ETS English Language Accommodations](#) pages.

### Is there a waiting period between attempts?

There is usually a mandatory waiting period between attempts at the Praxis exams; check exam sites for more specific information.

### Are there additional study guides?

The Praxis Core exam has a study guide or study companion provided by the publisher or state at no cost.

## Discipline-Specific Content: Reading

### Where do I find help with the Praxis Core exam?

[PrepSTEP](#) and Khan Academy have [Praxis Core Writing, Reading, and Math help](#).

ETS provides detailed information [about the Praxis Core exams](#).

### Get organized: What do I know and need to know?

The [ETS Study Companion for Core Academic Skills for Educators: Reading \(5713\)](#) includes very helpful

information about the exam and preparation. We recommend reviewing these topics and identifying areas requiring further study:

- Page 5 describes the overall test, such as number of questions and time allowed.
  - There are only selected response items (multiple choice) on this exam; no constructed response.
- Page 6 provides a detailed breakdown of content with each topic, which include:
  - Key Ideas and Details (35%)
  - Craft, Structure, and Language Skills (30%)
  - Integration of Knowledge and Ideas (35%)
- Pages 27–42 go into even more detail for how to approach Praxis Core test items, including examples of reading passages, types of questions, and sample problems.
- [Additional preparation and study materials](#) are provided by ETS.

According to the ETS study plan, you should be able to do the following:

### I. Key Ideas and Details (35%)

- A. **Main idea and primary purpose:** Identify accurate summaries or paraphrases of the main idea or primary purpose of a reading selection.
- B. **Supporting ideas:** Identify accurate summaries or paraphrases of the supporting ideas and specific details in a reading selection.
- C. **Inferences:** Identify inferences and implications that can reasonably be drawn from the directly stated content of a reading selection.

### II. Craft, Structure, and Language Skills (30%)

- A. **Attitude and tone:** Identify accurate descriptions of the author's tone or attitude toward material discussed in a reading selection.
- B. **Organization and structure:**
  1. Identify key transition words and phrases in a reading selection and how they are used.
  2. Identify accurate descriptions of how a reading selection is organized in terms of cause/effect, compare/contrast, problem/solution, etc.
  3. Identify the role that an idea, reference, or piece of information plays in an author's discussion or argument.
- C. **Meanings of words:** Identify the meanings of words as they are used in the context of a reading selection.
- D. **Fact or opinion:** Determine whether information presented in a reading selection is presented as fact or opinion.

### III. Integration of Knowledge and Ideas (35%)

- A. **Diverse media and formats:** Identify accurate interpretations of texts that include visual representations.
- B. **Evaluation of arguments:**
  1. Identify the relationships among ideas presented in a reading selection.
  2. Determine whether evidence strengthens, weakens, or is relevant to the arguments in a reading selection.
  3. Determine the assumptions on which an argument or conclusion is based.
  4. Draw conclusions from material presented in a reading selection.
- C. **Analysis and comparison of texts:**
  1. Recognize ideas or situations that are similar to what has been presented in a reading selection.
  2. Apply ideas presented in a reading selection to other situations.
  3. Recognize points of agreement and disagreement between two texts.

### Work through practice questions: Did I master the concepts?

Content knowledge is not enough! You need to practice applying content knowledge and solving sample test items. Consider your test-taking strategy while you work through sample questions from reliable sources.

- Start with the [ETS Study Companion for Core Academic Skills for Educators: Reading \(5713\)](#): take the sample test on pages 12–19.
  - ETS provides one free practice test when you register for the exam.
  - ETS also offers one full-length [practice exam available to purchase](#) for the Praxis Core: Reading exam.

Stay confident. **You can do this!**

## Discipline-Specific Content: Writing

### Where do I find help with the Praxis Core?

PrepSTEP and Khan Academy have [Praxis Core Writing, Reading, and Math help](#).

ETS provides detailed information [about the Praxis Core exams](#).

### Get organized: What do I know and need to know?

The [ETS Study Companion for Core Academic Skills for Educators: Writing \(5723\)](#) includes very helpful information about the exam and preparation. We recommend reviewing these topics and identifying areas requiring further study.

- Page 5 describes the overall test, such as number of questions and time allowed.
  - There are both selected response items (multiple choice) on this exam and two constructed response (essay) items.
- Pages 6–8 provide a detailed breakdown of content with each topic, which include:
  - Text Types, Purposes, and Production (60%)
  - Language and Research Skills for Writing (40%)
- Pages 19–30 go into detail about how to approach Praxis Core constructed response (essay) items, including examples of prompts, types of questions, and sample problems.
- [Additional preparation and study materials](#) are provided by ETS.

According to the ETS Study Plan, you should be able to do the following:

## I. Text Types, Purposes, and Production (60%)

### A. Text Production: Writing Arguments

1. Produce an argumentative essay to support a claim using relevant and sufficient evidence.
2. Write clearly and coherently.
  - a. Address the assigned task appropriately for an audience of educated adults.
  - b. Organize and develop ideas logically and make coherent connections between them.
  - c. Provide and sustain a clear focus or thesis.
  - d. Use supporting reasons, examples, and details to develop clearly and logically the ideas presented.
  - e. Demonstrate facility in the use of language and the ability to use a variety of sentence structures.
  - f. Construct effective sentences in standard written English that are generally free of errors.

### B. Text Production: Writing Informative/Explanatory Texts

1. Produce an informative/explanatory essay to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
  - a. Write clearly and coherently.
  - b. Address the assigned task appropriately for an audience of educated adults.
  - c. Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis.
  - d. Organize and develop ideas logically and make coherent connections between them.
  - e. Synthesize information from multiple sources on a subject.
  - f. Integrate and attribute information from multiple sources on a subject to avoid plagiarism.
  - g. Provide and sustain a clear focus or thesis.
  - h. Demonstrate facility in the use of language and the ability to use a variety of sentence structures.
  - i. Construct effective sentences in standard written English that are generally free of errors.

### C. Text Production: Revision

1. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by revising and editing.
  - a. Recognize how a passage can be strengthened through editing and revision.
  - b. Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts and to make effective choices for meaning or style.
  - c. Choose words and phrases for effect or to convey ideas precisely.
  - d. Maintain consistency in style and tone.

## II. Language and Research Skills for Writing (40%)

### A. Language Skills

1. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage.
  - a. Use grammatical relationships to recognize and correct errors in the following: use of adjectives and adverbs; noun-noun agreement; pronoun-antecedent agreement; pronoun case; use of intensive pronouns; pronoun number and person; vague pronouns; subject-verb agreement; or inappropriate shifts in verb tense.
  - b. Analyze structural relationships to recognize and correct errors in the following: placement of phrases and clauses within a sentence; misplaced and dangling modifiers; use of coordinating and subordinating conjunctions; fragments and run-ons; use of correlative conjunctions; or parallel structure.
  - c. Consider word choice to recognize and correct errors in the following: use of idiomatic expressions; frequently confused words; wrong word use; or redundancy.
  - d. Have no errors; be able to recognize sentences free of errors in the conventions of standard English grammar and usage.
2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization and punctuation.
  - a. Use mechanics to recognize and correct errors in the following: capitalization; punctuation; commas (e.g., the use of a comma to separate an introductory element from the rest of the sentence); semicolons (e.g., the use of a semicolon [and perhaps a conjunctive adverb] to link two or more closely related independent clauses); or apostrophes (e.g., the use of an apostrophe to form contractions and frequently occurring possessives).
  - b. Have no errors; be able to recognize sentences free of errors in the conventions of standard English capitalization and punctuation.

## B. Research Skills

Recognize and apply appropriate research skills and strategies.

- a. Assess the credibility and relevance of sources.
- b. Recognize the different elements of a citation.
- c. Recognize effective research strategies appropriate to a particular research task.
- d. Recognize information relevant to a particular research task.

## Work through practice questions: Did I master the concepts?

Content knowledge is not enough! You need to practice applying content knowledge and solving sample test items. Consider your test-taking strategy while you work through sample questions from reliable sources.

- Start with the [ETS Study Companion for Core Academic Skills for Educators: Writing \(5723\)](#): take the sample test on pages 14–18 (selected response items only).
  - ETS provides one free practice test when you register for the exam.
  - ETS also offers one full-length [practice exam available to purchase](#) for the Praxis Core: Reading exam.

Stay confident. **You can do this!**

## Discipline-Specific Content: Mathematics

### Where do I find help with the Praxis Core?

PrepSTEP and Khan Academy have [Praxis Core Writing, Reading, and Math help](#).

ETS provides detailed information [about the Praxis Core exams](#).

### Get organized: What do I know and need to know?

The [ETS Study Companion for Core Academic Skills for Educators: Mathematics \(5733\)](#) includes very helpful information about the exam and preparation. We recommend reviewing these topics and identifying areas requiring further study.

- Page 5 describes the overall test, such as number of questions and time allowed.
  - There are only selected response items (multiple choice) on this exam; no constructed response.
- Pages 6–7 provide a detailed breakdown of content with each topic, which include:
  - Number and quantity (36%)
  - Data interpretation and representation, statistics, and probability (32%)

- o Algebra and geometry (32%)
- Pages 29–34 go into great detail about how to approach Praxis Core math items, including content areas and discussion questions.
- [Additional preparation and study materials](#) are provided by ETS.

According to the ETS Study Plan, you should be able to do the following:

### **I. Number and quantity (36%)**

- Solve problems involving integers, decimals, and fractions.
- Solve problems involving ratios and proportions.
- Solve problems involving percent.
- Solve problems involving constant rates (e.g., miles per hour, gallons per mile, cubic feet per minute).
- Demonstrate an understanding of place value, naming of decimal numbers, and ordering of numbers.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the properties of whole numbers (e.g., factors, multiples, even and odd numbers, prime numbers, divisibility).
- Identify counterexamples to statements using basic arithmetic.
- Solve real-life problems by identifying relevant numbers, information, or operations (including rounding).
- Solve problems involving units, including unit conversion and measurements.

### **II. Data interpretation and representation, statistics, and probability (32%)**

- Work with data and data representations to solve problems.
- Solve problems involving measures of central tendency (e.g., mean, median) and spread (e.g., range, standard deviation).
- Use data from a random sample to draw inferences about characteristics of a population.
- Identify positive and negative linear relationships in scatterplots.
- Use a linear model for a data set to make predictions.
- Differentiate between correlation and causation.
- Compute simple probabilities, and use probabilities to solve problems.

### **III. Algebra and geometry (32%)**

#### **A. Algebra**

- Demonstrate an understanding of the properties (commutative, associative, and distributive) of the basic operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division) without needing to know the names of the properties.
- Demonstrate the ability to follow an arithmetic or algebraic procedure (e.g., using a step-by-step procedure, using a simple flowchart, applying a simple recurrence sequence) by carrying it out or analyzing it.
- Use properties of operations to identify or generate equivalent algebraic expressions (e.g., multiplication of whole numbers gives the same result as repeated addition, multiplication by 0.1 gives the same result as division by 10).
- Write an equation or expression that models a real-life or mathematical problem.
- Solve word problems, including problems involving linear relationships and problems that can be represented by Venn diagrams.
- Solve linear equations in one variable algebraically.
- Solve simple quadratic equations (such as  $x^2=49$ ).

#### **B. Geometry**

- Utilize basic properties of common two-dimensional shapes to solve problems.
- Utilize facts about angles to solve problems.
- Utilize facts about congruency and similarity of geometric figures to solve problems.
- Use the formulas for the area and circumference of a circle to solve problems.
- Use the formulas for the perimeter and area of a triangle and a rectangle and the formula for the volume of a rectangular prism (box) to solve problems.

## Work through practice questions: Did I master the concepts?

Content knowledge is not enough! You need to practice applying content knowledge and solving sample test items. Consider your test-taking strategy while you work through sample questions from reliable sources.

- Start with the [ETS Study Companion for Core Academic Skills for Educators: Mathematics \(5733\)](#): take the sample test on pages 13–20.
  - ETS provides one free practice test when you register for the exam.
  - ETS also offers one full-length [practice exam available to purchase](#) for the Praxis Core: Reading exam.

Stay confident. **You can do this!**

## Exams that require constructed responses

### How can I best prepare for constructed-response questions?

As you would for multiple-choice questions, you should practice and prepare how to organize what you know quickly to develop constructed responses under timed conditions. Use the tips below to help.

### Practice and analyze: How can I study and prepare for constructed response questions?

- Practice writing essays (up to 150 words) under timed conditions. Allow up to 30 minutes per essay.
- Practice organizing your thoughts quickly. Use scratch paper or your whiteboard to organize your ideas and information you can use in your response.
- Practice answering the prompts directly. Start with a general response, then go into specific details. Analyze the structure of your practice answers.
- Practice avoiding fluff or filler. Focus on the question and answer it. Analyze your practice responses for keeping the content meaningful and descriptive.
- Practice supporting your statements with descriptive details. Use the data provided in the prompt. Analyze your practice responses for the quality of your evidence.
- Practice addressing each prompt. An incomplete answer is better than no answer. Analyze practice responses for how fully you answered each prompt.

### Review key components: What makes a successful constructed response?

Be as honest and as accurate as you can. This is your opportunity to demonstrate what you know in your own words. Constructed-response questions are generally scored on:

- Content knowledge – What do you know about this topic?
  - Stay true and stick to the facts. Emphasize accurate subject matter knowledge.
- Support – How do you know this is the right approach?
  - Provide examples or additional details. You will be scored on how effectively you analyze and apply information as well as the quality of your evidence.
- Purpose – Answer the question being asked.
  - Information appropriate to this topic is best. If necessary, tie in related subject matter to the topic and be clear about its relevance to the prompt.

### Review this sample strategy for composing a constructed response.

Each constructed response question in a state content exam generally includes a prompt providing a scenario or graphic or both. You might see some data (quantitative or qualitative) but not always.

### Sample constructed response prompt:

Use your knowledge of the water cycle and cause-and-effect relationships to explain all pathways of the cycle and the physical processes involved.

1. Brainstorm what you know quickly.
  - a. On your scratch paper or whiteboard, draw and label all parts of the water cycle.

2. Develop your response.
  - a. If you cannot recall the name of a particular process (like deposition), you can still describe it: "Sometimes frost develops directly on power lines or black ice forms on a highway at night."
  - b. When you are really stuck, talk about something related: "Water is a molecule made of two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom. This is relevant because its stable nature allows phase changes to occur."
  - c. Be sure to define all terms you use to aid in fully developing your thoughts.
3. Finalizing your response.
  - a. Read over what you wrote before you hit submit. While you will not be graded directly for spelling or grammar, you will be assessed for readability, so be sure to use complete sentences.
  - b. Consider your audience as you review your work. It is highly likely that an actual human will read your work after it is scored first by the software, so please keep that person in mind as you write.

**Review this rubric: What is required on constructed responses?**

Here is a sample rubric (for your benefit only) to help self-assess your response.

	Score of 3	Score of 2	Score of 1	Score of 0
General	Response demonstrates thorough understanding of the aspects relevant to the question	Response demonstrates a basic or general understanding of the aspects relevant to the question	Response demonstrates a weak or limited understanding of the aspects relevant to the question	The response demonstrates little or no understanding of the aspects relevant to the question
Address the entire question	All parts of the question are appropriately addressed	Most parts of the question are appropriately addressed	Some parts of the question are appropriately addressed	Fails to address the question or restates the question
Understands the material in the prompt	Thorough understanding	General understanding	Weak understanding	No understanding or serious misconceptions
Knowledge of subject matter, pedagogy, facts relevant to the prompt	Strong	Basic	Weak	None
Explain and support with details	Strong	Basic	Weak	None

Stay confident. **You can do this!**

Best of luck on your first attempt of the actual exam!

