

**SUFFOLK COUNTY  
POLICE OFFICER (SPANISH SPEAKING)  
QUALIFICATION EXAM**

**CANDIDATE  
PREPARATION GUIDE**

## CANDIDATE PREPARATION PACKET FOR THE

### Suffolk County Police Officer (Spanish Speaking) Qualification Exam

In order to become a Suffolk County Police Officer, a candidate must take the written selection test, achieve a score at the top end of the eligibility list, successfully complete additional steps in the hiring process, and meet all expectations and requirements during the training academy. In order to serve in the specialized role of Suffolk County Police Officer (Spanish Speaking), an individual under consideration must possess expertise in communicating in Spanish and translating between English and Spanish. To assess these language skills, Police Officer (Spanish Speaking) candidates must undergo the Police Officer (Spanish Speaking) Qualification Exam. The purpose of this document is to prepare candidates to take the Police Officer (Spanish Speaking) Qualification Exam by identifying the skills to be assessed, describing the specific steps in the testing process, and offering suggestions for preparing to take the exam.

**Requirements of the Job:** A portion of the general population in Suffolk County speaks only Spanish or primarily uses Spanish. When dealing with these individuals, an officer's effectiveness is greatly enhanced if the officer can fluently communicate in Spanish. Specifically, Spanish Speaking Officers must not only speak and understand Spanish so they can effectively interview these individuals, but they must also accurately translate Spanish to English since all Department documents, records, and internal processes are completed in English. These tasks become even more challenging considering a) the level of precision required when any officer gathers information that may impact a case or other police actions and b) the presence of many different Spanish dialects within the Suffolk County communities that may alter the way a given phrase in English is communicated in Spanish. As a result, it is important that a Suffolk County Spanish Speaking Officer can:

- ✓ Converse in Spanish to establish an initial rapport with the Spanish speaking individual.
- ✓ Ask specific questions in Spanish to collect required information from the Spanish speaking individual.
- ✓ Accurately comprehend the Spanish speaking individual's responses in order to accurately document the information collected.
- ✓ Demonstrate an extensive Spanish vocabulary and the ability to ask a question or phrase a statement different ways in order to effectively work around challenges with specific individuals and/or certain Spanish dialects.
- ✓ Accurately translate information gathered from Spanish into English and document the important facts in writing (English) on Department forms/documents or convey the information orally to other police personnel.

**Qualification Exam Overview:** The Suffolk County Police Officer (Spanish Speaking) Qualification Exam has been designed to parallel the requirements of the job. The exam will involve oral tasks completed in Spanish and then translated into English. Upon arrival at the exam site, you (as the candidate) will be expected to show a photo ID (such as a Driver's License) and complete some basic check-in procedures. Prior to completing the exam, you will be given additional information about the examination process to supplement the information in this preparation packet. After a short preparation period, you will be tested by an examiner and the entire exam will be audiotaped.

Description of the Qualification Exam: The Suffolk County Police Officer (Spanish Speaking) Qualification Exam involves three tasks that will occur as successive steps. The entire exam should be completed in less than 40 minutes. Specifically, in the presence of an examiner, you will complete the following three tasks in the order listed:

Task #	Your Task	Time Allotted	Examiner's Role
1	<p><b>SPANISH INTERVIEW:</b> You will interview an individual who witnessed an incident in order to gather facts or details about the incident. The examiner will role-play as the witness. You will be given a form which lists the specific details you need to collect and provides space for you to record the witness' answers. The topics on the form are presented in English. However, the dialogue between you and the witness can <b>ONLY OCCUR IN SPANISH</b>. You will be given <u>a maximum of 20 minutes to conduct this interview</u>. You are NOT required to use the full 20 minutes, but you will NOT be allowed to exceed this time limit. It is your responsibility to pace yourself to finish within the specified time frame.</p> <p>You must ask the questions in the order listed on the recording form. If you ask the question correctly, you will be provided with details from this incident. Once you receive the details for that question, you should move to the next question. In other words, <u>you are NOT expected to probe for more details</u>. If you do probe further or ask a question on a topic not on the script, the witness will respond "<u>No se.</u>" which means there is no more information on that topic. If the witness questions you back, such as "<u>Que quiere decir?</u>", that means you need to explain or reword your question. Thus, your question needed additional detail or was problematic in some way. You should revise the question and ask it again to attempt to get that set of details. If you get stuck on a question, you can skip it and move to the next question, but you will miss those details. If you are unsure of the witness' answer, you may ask questions in Spanish to get clarification.</p> <p>You may write the answers and take notes on the recording form in Spanish, or English, or a combination of the two. You should <u>record all information, not just those comments you feel are important</u>. These interview notes will NOT be viewed by the evaluator, but will be collected at the conclusion of the exam simply to protect the integrity of the exam.</p>	20 minutes maximum	To be the witness
2	<p><b>ORAL REPORT IN SPANISH:</b> Once the interview is finished, the examiner will stop playing the role of the witness. Your second task is to orally summarize the information you collected from the witness. You may refer to your interview notes during this task. Your summary must be presented <b>USING ONLY SPANISH</b>. During the summary, you must be specific and include all of the information provided by the witness. You will be scored on <u>how accurately and completely you recount all of the details provided</u> by the witness.</p>	10 minutes maximum	To listen to and score your oral report
3	<p><b>ORAL REPORT IN ENGLISH:</b> Once you finish your summary in Spanish, your third task is to repeat in English your summary of the information collected from the witness. Again, you may refer to your interview notes during this task. This summary must be presented <b>USING ONLY ENGLISH</b>. During the summary, you must be specific and include all of the information provided by the witness. You will be scored on <u>how accurately and completely you recount all of the details provided</u> by the witness.</p>	10 minutes maximum	To listen to and score your oral report

Please note the following with respect to this exam:

- Exam instructions given during the short preparation period when you arrive at the testing facility will be spoken or written in English. Prior to the start of the exam, you may ask questions of the administrator in English and will receive responses in English.
- Once the exam begins, the first two tasks will be completed entirely in Spanish. All comments made by you or by the examiner during the interview and initial oral report will be made in Spanish. Then you will repeat your oral report in English.
- An example of an interview recording form is presented on the last page of this packet. This example is FOR ILLUSTRATION ONLY as the actual topics for this exam are different from these samples.
- The actual interview recording form for the exam contains approximately 30 topics. The sample in this packet contains only 10 topics.
- You will receive a copy of the interview recording (note taking) form with the initial instructions. You will be given a few minutes to look over the topics prior to beginning the interview. It will be used to guide your questioning and to record your notes. It will be for your reference only. The examiner WILL NOT evaluate the notes you record on this form. You may RECORD your notes about THE DETAILS YOU COLLECTED in Spanish, English, or a combination of the two. The form is for your use during the three tasks. In order to protect the integrity of the exam, your recording form will be collected at the end of the exam.
- You will NOT be permitted to take any test materials with you following completion of the exam. In addition, prior to the short preparation period, you will be required to complete a non-disclosure form indicating that you will NOT discuss any information about the specific content of the exam with anyone other than the test examiner. In other words, you may NOT assist another candidate in gaining an unfair advantage in preparation for taking this exam. A candidate's failure to comply with this restriction (by sharing information about the exam) is grounds for immediate disqualification as a candidate.

**Evaluation of the Qualification Exam:** Your performance will be evaluated by the examiner with respect to five important skills. A low score on any of the skills will result in your disqualification from further consideration as a Suffolk County Police Officer (Spanish Speaking). If you achieve a passing score on all five skills, you will pass this qualification exam. A description of the five performance dimensions are listed below:

**ORAL QUESTIONING IN SPANISH** – This dimension deals with the candidate's ability to formulate questions in Spanish based on the target topics listed on the recording form. It focuses not only on the candidate's ability to translate ideas from English to Spanish, but also to ask effective and accurate questions to yield the desired information from the witness. Scoring will be based strictly on the number of questions asked correctly by the candidate.

**SPANISH LISTENING COMPREHENSION ACCURACY** – This dimension deals with the candidate's ability to accurately recall (during the oral report period) in Spanish the details introduced by the witness. The examiner will use a Spanish script and determine whether each detail was correctly recounted orally by the candidate. Scoring will be based strictly on the number of key details accurately identified by the candidate.

**SPANISH TO ENGLISH TRANSLATION ACCURACY** – This dimension deals with the candidate’s ability to accurately translate each key detail from Spanish into English. Immediately following the oral report in Spanish, the candidate must repeat the entire oral report in English including the same details first reported in Spanish. The examiner will use an English script and determine whether each detail was correctly recounted by the candidate. Scoring will be based strictly on the number of key details accurately identified by the candidate.

**SPANISH ORAL COMMUNICATION / GENERAL DIALOGUE** – This dimension deals with the ease with which the candidate’s statements in Spanish could be understood. This deals with general communication skills including enunciation, volume, pace, etc.

**COMPREHENSION OF SPOKEN SPANISH** – This dimension deals with the candidate’s ability to quickly understand the Spanish comments spoken by the witness. Indicators of difficulty in this area would include the candidate needing to FREQUENTLY have words repeated or needing to ask NUMEROUS questions to understand a particular response from the witness.

General Preparation for the Qualification Exam: Given the importance of having a high level of competence in Spanish to perform this job, we assume that any individual applying for this position must already have a great deal of expertise in this area. If this is not true for you, we strongly recommend that you reconsider your decision to apply for this position or potentially delay taking the exam until you gain additional skill in these important areas. If you are skilled in Spanish but have not been in any situations in recent years that required the use of Spanish, you should review and practice your Spanish speaking, listening, and translation skills. Based on the way Spanish is used on the job by Spanish Speaking Officers, you should focus on your oral skills. When preparing for this exam, you may find it helpful to:

- Carry on conversations about current events with other Spanish speaking individuals.
- Listen to television shows or speeches that are delivered in Spanish.
- Seek out individuals who speak a different Spanish dialect than you to become more familiar with the unique aspects of other dialects.
- Find another Spanish speaking individual with whom you can practice and interview. Have that person think of a situation that he/she can describe to you. In addition, have that person identify in English the specific topics that you should ask about. Then, not only conduct the interview, but also summarize it afterwards in Spanish and English. In other words, practice doing what you will do for this exam. An example of an interview recording form is presented on the next page. Remember, although this form is similar to the one you will use during this exam, the specific content will not be the same; it is just an example to help you prepare.

Conclusions: This preparation packet provides basic information about the Suffolk County Police Officer (Spanish Speaking) Qualification Exam including some advice for preparing to take the exam. We encourage you to read this document as many times as you need to feel comfortable about what to expect at the exam and to engage in any additional strategies that you feel will help prepare you to be successful.

Sample Recording Form for Practicing

*This form can be used to practice conducting an interview in Spanish as it is similar in design to those that will be used during the Suffolk County Police Officer (Spanish Speaking) Qualification Exam. As mentioned above, the exact content for this practice is different than the content of the actual exam. For the exam, you will interview an individual who witnessed an incident, which is an activity that a police officer frequently performs. For this sample document, you would be interviewing an individual who just witnessed a team sporting event such as a basketball or football game. This form contains a list of ten topics that would be discussed during the interview to gather information about the sporting event. The topics are listed in English, just as they will be on the interview recording form used for the actual exam. As the candidate, you need to ask another individual (the witness) questions in Spanish that parallel each topic. That individual will give answers to you in Spanish. This will allow you to simulate the tasks to be performed during the qualification exam. For example, at the start of your practice interview, you would ask the other individual a question to uncover the first detail. The question could be, "What type of sporting event did you see?" However, you would ask the question in Spanish. When the witness responded, you would record their answer in the space to the right of the topic (Sporting Event Observed). You can take notes in Spanish, English, or a combination of the two. Then you would proceed to your next question about the day of the week the event took place. You would continue through all ten topics asking the related question in Spanish and recording details about the Spanish response in the space provided.*

DESCRIPTION OF THE SPORTING EVENT	
Sporting Event Observed	
Day of the Week and Time of Day it Occurred	
Duration of Event	
Teams Involved	
Final Score	
Did anything unusual happen?	
DESCRIPTION OF THE HOME TEAM	
Color of Uniform	
Mascot	
# of Players	
Description of the Coach	

*Once you finish the practice interview (in Spanish), repeat back all details to the person assisting you – first in Spanish and then in English. Your helper should check to make sure you were specific in recounting every detail during your two summaries.*

*Following this example, you can perform additional practice interviews selecting a different situation and new set of topics for each interview. Finally, for the 20-minute interview during the qualification exam, you will receive a recording form with approximately 30 topics. Thus, you will need to pace yourself to gather at least one and a half sets of details per minute during the interview. Good luck!*