

How to Prepare for the
ADVANCEMENT EXAM





PLAIN TALK FOR SAILORS

How to prepare for and take the Navy Wide Advancement Examination (NWAE)

On time advancement is the key to a successful career. It also is key to Navy retention programs, including Perform to Serve (PTS). Use the information provided on this page to prepare for and take your next Navy Wide Advancement Exam.

Let's start with some facts.

- Preparing for a Navy advancement exam can feel overwhelming.
- There is no quick way for you to prepare for the exam and expect to score well.
- You should not wait until the last minute to gather your materials and begin studying.
- This guide will help you develop a plan that will make the most of your time and effort.

What actions will help you succeed?

- Verify eligibility to take the exam with your Educational Services Officer (ESO).
- Obtain your Bibliography and references.
 - Log in to Navy Knowledge Online (NKO) at www.nko.navy.mil. Under the 'Career Management' heading, click the link for 'Navy Advancement Center'.
 - On the same page, view 'Rating Topics / Subtopics' for your rating and paygrade. Not all topics and subtopics appear on every exam, but this resource will help you organize your study material.
 - Nearly all of your references (unless the material is classified) can be downloaded by clicking the hyperlink provided on your BIB. (You may have to be logged into NKO.)
 - Many references are located on NKO enlisted rating pages. Use the 'Organizations & Communities' drop-down menu to select 'Navy Ratings'. When the page opens, locate your rating and click to view rating-specific information.
 - For all other references, request assistance from your LPO or LCPO.
- Develop your study plan.
 - Break information into manageable chunks.
 - Schedule and maintain a routine (plan for 30-60 minute study periods).
 - Start several months ahead of time and stick to your plan.
- Study.
 - Preview – Read – Summarize – Review
 - Study individually, with a partner, and/or with a study group.
 - Request on-the-job training (OJT) and demonstrations from subject matter experts.
 - Ask for help when you need it.
- Verify and sign your advancement worksheet.
- Verify exam date, time, location and required materials.
 - View the current NAVADMIN with exam dates and rating-specific information on the NPC website at: www.npc.navy.mil. Click 'New Messages' (on the right) and search for 'EXAMINATIONS'.
- Take the exam.
 - The day before your exam do something fun and relaxing, and then get a good night's sleep.
 - On the day of the exam you will have three hours to answer questions. Take your time, remain calm and deliberate, and trust your instincts.

Do you want more detail?

The steps provided above will help you prepare for and take your Navy advancement exam. For greater detail, more information, and recommended best practices, review the following pages.

The following pages provide detailed information that will help increase your opportunity to perform well on the advancement exam.

Verify your eligibility to take the Exam

- Prior to taking an advancement exam, you must meet all eligibility requirements for the next higher rate.
- You must meet your service in paygrade (SIPG) requirement and be recommended for promotion by your commanding officer (CO).
- Certain ratings and rates have additional mandatory requirements such as performance tests, leadership continuums, and warfare qualifications. If your rating requires a security clearance, your status must be current or your exam will be invalidated.
- Check with your Educational Services Officer (ESO) to verify that you meet eligibility requirements for taking your exam.

Obtain your Bibliography and References

What is a BIB?

Your Bibliography (BIB) provides a road map for developing your advancement exam study plan. A listing of all the references used to develop your advancement exam, your BIB is exam-specific, changes every six months, and is posted six months prior to exam administration (October for the March cycle, April for the September cycle).

Exam questions are developed by Fleet subject matter experts (SMEs) in your rating community during an Advancement Examination Readiness Review (AERR) Conference. For each question, Fleet SMEs reference the content to a published source from your rating's Advancement Exam Reference List or your Professional Military Knowledge (PMK) Advancement Exam Reference List. The item is verified to ensure the answer is correct, the content exists in print, and the information is generally available to all Sailors. Questions are then selected for an exam. Each reference used for a specific exam is compiled, and the entire list becomes your exam Bibliography.

Bottom-line: If a reference is listed on your BIB, then you can expect to see exam questions regarding information contained within the reference.

□ Obtain the current Bibliography for your rating and paygrade.

- Log in to Navy Knowledge Online (NKO) at www.nko.navy.mil. Under the 'Career Management' heading, click the link for 'Navy Advancement Center'.
- View the appropriate 'Bibliography for Advancement (BIBs)' for your upcoming exam.
- On the same page, view 'Rating Topics / Subtopics' for your rating and paygrade. Not all topics and subtopics appear on every exam, but this resource will help you organize your study material.

□ Obtain references listed on your BIB.

- Nearly all of your references (unless the material is classified) can be downloaded by clicking the hyperlink provided on your BIB.
 - Some references require that you be logged into NKO for the hyperlinks to work.
 - If no hyperlink is provided and you are unable to locate a reference, check with your supervisor or on your NKO rating community pages.
- To locate enlisted rating communities of practice in NKO, use the 'Organizations & Communities' drop-down menu to select 'Navy Ratings'. When the page opens, locate your rating and click the hyperlink to go to your community.

□ Verify references used to create your exam questions.

- Make sure you have every reference listed for your rating and paygrade.
- If specific chapters are listed for the reference, study that chapter only! (If you do study extra material, you will become more knowledgeable in your rating but you will do nothing to improve your test score.)
- Occasionally, a reference may be updated or deleted. Revisit NKO periodically to verify that



your BIB has not changed. If your BIB has changed, you will see a revision date in red at the top of your BIB. If this occurs, compare your original BIB with the revised one and adjust your study plan as needed.

Change is coming.

Commencing with September 2012 Navy-wide examinations, the number of exam questions will decrease from 200 to 175. The new exam structure for all paygrades will consist of 25 professional military knowledge (PMK) questions and 150 rating technical questions. This change will increase your opportunity to demonstrate greater rating knowledge than your peers.

Current exam model Rating-specific/PMK	Paygrade	New exam model Rating-specific/PMK
150/50	E4	150/25
135/65	E5	150/25
115/85	E6	150/25
100/100	E7	150/25

Study for your Advancement Exam

Human beings learn in different ways, so it is important that you develop a study plan that is both comfortable for you and effective. The recommendations listed below can be used when you study by yourself, when you study with a partner, and/or when you study with a group. You should engage all methods that enable you to be knowledgeable, confident and prepared on the day of your exam.

Develop your study plan.

- Review references and determine how much time you need to cover each one.
- Organize references into similar topics and subtopics.
- Break information into manageable chunks.
- Determine whether you intend to study alone and/or with a study group.
- Use a calendar to schedule individual and/or group study periods leading up to the exam.
- Plan short study periods (no more than one hour each) and schedule regular breaks to reduce fatigue and to keep your mind sharp.
- Schedule your most difficult material for times when you are mentally at your best; schedule easier material for when you are mentally less efficient.



Create a positive study environment.

- Choose a location where you can concentrate.
- Study at the same time and in the same place.
- Eliminate distractions, such as loud music, TV or other people.
- Dress comfortably.
- Eat light meals and drink water instead of highly caffeinated drinks.
- Take regular breaks (at least one per hour), stand up and stretch, jog in place, complete a few push-ups, anything to keep your energy level up and your mind alert.



Use proven study methods.

Preview

- Preview the chapter by reading just the title, headings, and subheadings.
- Examine pictures, diagrams, tables, or graphs.
- Read the introductory and concluding paragraphs and the summary, if one is included.
- Turn each title, heading, and subheading into a question about the material you will be reading.
- When creating questions, think like exam writers (who are Chief Petty Officers from your rating) and imagine what you should know to perform in the next higher paygrade.

Read

- Do not try to read a reference from cover to cover.
- Focus on one topic at a time.
- Focus on underlined, *italicized*, or **bold** words.



- Highlight important information in your reference.
- Try to answer each question that you developed in the preview phase.
- Make notes about the text in your own words.
- Read out-loud to yourself to increase understanding and retention of hard topics.
- Reread sections that contain difficult or confusing information.
- Write down questions about information that you do not understand and ask for help when information is confusing or difficult.



Summarize

- Review what you have read at the end of each section in the chapter.
- Create a summary sheet of highlighted material and review frequently.
- Recall the questions you developed and see if you can answer them from memory. If you can't answer a question, look back and find the answer.
- Try to anticipate additional questions from the material that might appear on an exam.
- Make flashcards from your notes or create a study sheet to help memorize formulas, numbers, vocabulary, and so forth.
- Associate what you've read with something familiar. (Relating new ideas to what you already know helps improve understanding and retention.)
- Create a song or a poem to help you recall hard-to-remember information.
- Ask your LPO or LCPO for help understanding your material.



Review

- Study the easy things first and then move to more advanced topics.
- Review summary sheets frequently.
- For intensive memorization, use flash cards. Stick in your pocket and study on your own or with a shipmate when you have a few minutes of free time.
- Using your flash cards, notes and summary sheets, develop questions for a "practice exam" that you can give to yourself and/or to members of your group.
- While performing your normal duties, review and discuss your study material with others.
- Request on-the-job training (OJT) to reinforce the information you have learned from BIB references and study sessions.
- Request demonstrations from your LPO and LCPO.
- Request training from subject matter experts for Topics /Subtopics that you need to understand better.
- Take advantage of command-sponsored training for warfare qualifications, damage control, or rating-specific Personnel Qualification Standards (PQS).

Tips for Group Study

- Often it is helpful to study with other shipmates from your rating and paygrade. Together, you can help each other stay on task and focused.
- Divide information and have group members teach sections from your BIB.
- Begin each study session with a review of information you studied in your last session.
- Review flashcards you and your shipmates have developed.
- Make it fun! Use a game style format to study information.
- Ask your LPO or LCPO to work with your study group when you encounter difficulties.



Maintain a positive attitude.

- Stick to your study plan.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Think of the rewards that advancement will bring, whether it's increased responsibility, a salary raise, or new opportunities.

Take the Advancement Exam

Review your Advancement-in-Rate or Change of Rating Worksheet.

- Prior to exam day you will go to your Educational Services Officer (ESO) and/or your Personnel Support Detachment (PSD) to review, verify and sign your worksheet.

- It is critical that you verify all information on your worksheet, since it affects your Final Multiple Score.
- On exam day, you will receive a computer-generated Worksheet from which you will transfer information to your exam answer sheet.

□ **Verify exam date, time, location and required materials.**

- Every exam is announced by a Naval Administrative Message (NAVADMIN). Go to the NPC website at: www.npc.navy.mil. Click 'New Messages' (on the right) and search for 'EXAMINATIONS'.
- The current NAVADMIN will identify required and optional items that you must bring to the testing site, such as log tables, slide rules, and calculators.
- Typically, the command Plan of Week (POW) or Plan of the Day (POD) will indicate when and where your exam will be administered.
- Bring your military ID and leave your cell phone behind (it is not allowed in the exam area).
- At most exam sites, you must wear the Uniform of the Day (ensure it is inspection ready).

□ **Take your exam.**

- The day before your exam do something fun and relaxing, and then get a good night's sleep. Be certain to eat a light breakfast.
- The examination session lasts exactly 3 hours (180 minutes). It starts on time, and it ends on time. If you are late, you will not be allowed to take your advancement exam.
- Throughout your exam, take your time, be calm and deliberate, trust your instincts and believe that your study plan has prepared you to answer questions correctly.



Tips for completing your exam

- Navy examinations are made up of multiple-choice questions.
- Each question has four numbered responses.
- Each question has only one correct answer.
- There is no penalty for guessing.
- Read each exam question carefully.
- Try to answer the question in your own words first, then read your answer choices.
- Use the process of elimination to remove choices and increase your odds of selecting the correct answer.
- Answer the easy questions first. Answer the hard questions last.
- If you find the answer, mark your choice and move to the next question.
- If you do not find the answer, do not waste time and build anxiety. Instead, go to the next question. (Sometimes information included in a question, diagram, or answer choice will help you answer a difficult question that you skipped, or one you will encounter later in the exam.)
- Mark the skipped question in your exam booklet or write it on your scratch paper so you'll remember to come back later.
- Trust your knowledge and do not watch for answer patterns.
- Be careful about changing a multiple-choice answer without good reason. Your first intuition is often your best and you should change your answer only if you have sound reasoning for the change.
- If you change an answer, make sure you completely erase the answer bubble.
- If you have time, double-check your answer sheet.
- Make sure you answered all questions.
- Make sure the number on your answer sheet matches the number of the question you answered.
- Make sure you marked only one answer per question.
- Make sure you answered every question on your exam (there is no penalty for guessing).

Review your Exam experience

Competition for advancement is tough, and only gets tougher the higher you advance. It is possible that you will take the exam several times. You can increase your score by performing the following:



□ **The Brain Dump**

- Within 24 hours of taking the exam, you should scan through your references and highlight material that you remember being asked about.
- Although every exam will ask different questions, the major categories of information tested are frequently repeated. Chances are, if you were questioned about a specific topic during one exam, you may be questioned about the same topic during the next exam.
- You can use these notes next time you study, as long as the reference is listed in your new Bibliography.

□ **Review your study plan.**

- Ask yourself whether your plan was effective and what you could have done differently.
- Make notes for improvement and use when revising your study plan based on a new BIB.

View Advancement results

□ **Obtain results of your Advancement Exam.**

- Advancement results are posted on BUPERS Online (BOL) at www.bol.navy.mil.
- 24 hours prior to releasing results on BOL, the Navy Advancement Center (NAC) will post an announcement on Facebook at: www.facebook.com/#!/pages/Navy-Advancement-Center/213190711299.
- One hour after E4 to E6 advancement exam results and E7 Selection Board Eligibility (SBE) results are released on BOL, you can view them on Facebook.



□ **Download your Profile Sheet from NKO.**

- Log in to Navy Knowledge Online (NKO) at www.nko.navy.mil. Under the 'Career Management' heading, click 'Navy Advancement Center'.
- Scroll down and click 'Advancement Profile Sheet' (CAC required).

□ **Review your Profile Sheet.**

- Your profile sheet provides feedback regarding how well you performed on the exam compared with others in the same rating (e.g., a BM3 compared to all other BM3 test takers who took the same exam).
- Your profile sheet DOES NOT tell you what to study for the next exam. Only your current BIB tells you what reference you should study.

If you are not selected for Advancement

□ **Request a Career Development Board**

- Commands should conduct a Career Development Board (CDB) on all non-selects for advancement, concentrating on what you need to work on for your continued development and how to better prepare for the next advancement cycle. This single event could be the most important part of the entire advancement cycle, ensuring you have the proper tools to plan and study effectively in the future.