

**UCI California Teach Science-Math Initiative**  
**Biological Science Administration, Suite 137**  
**Irvine CA 92697-5506**  
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**<http://www.gse.uci.edu/calteach/>**

## TIP SHEET

**Let's Talk About the  
CBEST, CSET & GRE!**

Now that you are seriously thinking about applying to a Teaching Credential program, what types of exams will you need to prepare for? You must take and pass the following in order to remain eligible to begin a Teaching Credential program.

### **Exams that must be completed related to the Teaching Credential Programs:**

- CBEST – California Basic Educational Skills Test
  - [www.ctcexams.nesinc.com](http://www.ctcexams.nesinc.com)
- CSET – California Subject Examination for Teachers
  - [www.cset.nesinc.com](http://www.cset.nesinc.com)
- GRE – Graduate Record Examination – General Test (*only if you intend on applying to the MAT Program*)
  - [www.gre.org](http://www.gre.org)

### **CBEST – California Basic Educational Skills Test:**

- Required for ALL students pursuing a Science or Math teaching credential
- Intended to show that prospective teachers have proficiency in the basic skills of reading, writing, and mathematics
- Is **NOT** an evaluation of your teaching methods and skills
- Contains 3 sections: Mathematics, Reading & Writing
- Is a 4 hour exam
- Costs \$41
- Is a Pass/No Pass exam
- The scaled scores used for reporting CBEST results range from 20 to 80 for each of the three sections of the test.
- A total score (the sum of Reading, Mathematics, and Writing scaled scores) of 123 is required for passing status.

### **CSET – California Subject Examination for Teachers:**

- Completing the Mathematics Subject Matter Preparation Program (SMPP), students have the option of waiving the CSET
- Required for ALL students pursuing a teaching credential
- Passing score satisfies state and federal subject matter competency requirements.
- Aligned with the most current California K-12 Student Academic Content Standards
- Costs \$70 per subtest for Science and Math
- Administered in the afternoon, test sessions are 5 hours in length
- Requires score of 220 out of 300 to pass

### **GRE – Graduate Record Examination:**

- The GRE General Test is only required if you plan on pursuing a Master of Arts in Teaching at UCI
- Computer-based test available six days per week
- Tests verbal reasoning, quantitative reasoning, and analytical writing
- Costs \$140
- Is a 2.5 hours exam
- Scores for Verbal and Quantitative Reasoning sections are reported on a 200-800 scale in 10-point increments
- Analytical Writing scores are reported on a 0-6 score scale in half-point increments

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## TIP SHEET

### **CBEST Test Preparation** **California Basic Educational Skills Test** www.ctcexams.nesinc.com

Now that you are thinking about applying to a Teaching Credential program, one of the exams you will need to prepare for is the CBEST. You must take and pass the CBEST in order to remain eligible to begin a Teaching Credential program.

#### **ABOUT THE CBEST:**

- Intended to show that prospective teachers have proficiency in basic skills of reading, writing, and mathematics
- Contains 3 sections: Mathematics, Reading & Writing
- Is a 4 hour exam
- Costs \$41
- Tests dates are held each even-numbered month during the year
- The scaled scores used for reporting CBEST results range from 20 to 80 for each of the three sections of the test
- A total score (the sum of Reading, Mathematics, and Writing scaled scores) of 123 is required for passing status

#### **PREPARING FOR THE CBEST**

The CBEST tests skills at a basic level and most students do well on the mathematics and reading portions. When practicing for the CBEST, it is important to review your mistakes until you understand your errors.

Many students find the writing portion to be a challenge. It is a good idea to practice writing **TWO** prompts under test conditions: time yourself and write without interruption. Away from your desk, review a CBEST topic, mentally plan your response, and talk your way through your essay.

#### **WRITING FOR THE CBEST**

Write two standard five-paragraph essays for the CBEST for each of the two topics: one calls for an analysis of a statement or general issue, and the other requires reflection on a personal experience.

**Planning: Do this first; take 10 – 15 minutes at least. Essays are effective because of your planning and content.**

**Read** the prompt carefully and note every aspect that must be discussed. Read it carefully again; check that you have understood the question and have found all the issues to which you must respond. Write each issue as a separate heading. Check your headings against the prompt for a final check.

**Brainstorm** ideas by writing everything down that occurs to you under the appropriate heading. No need to write in sentences, censor yourself, or make it pretty. Aim for twelve to fifteen ideas with at least three or four in each column. Practice brain storming topics until you get the feel for how much is enough for you to write your essay without running out of ideas.

**Group** your ideas logically into paragraphs. Number them in importance, if you wish, to make sure you make your strongest argument. Star the most important ideas in each column for use in your introductory paragraph. Eliminate or ignore any weak ideas.

**Put** the outline aside and plan the other essay in the same way.

**Place the** second outline aside also and do what you consider your strongest element on the test: mathematics or reading comprehension. While you are working, your essays will be 'cooking.' Add to your plan any ideas that occur to you while you are working elsewhere on the test.

**Writing: Follow your plan with 30 – 40 minutes of solid writing.**

Re-read the prompt and address it directly in a short concise sentence. Follow that sentence with another short concise sentence. Your aim is to provide the reader with the opportunity to ‘hear your voice’ and gain confidence in your ability to express yourself clearly, concisely, and accurately. Continue making the points you have decided to include in your introductory paragraph. Make as powerful a statement as you can at the beginning and end of your essay: readers remember paragraphs one and five much better than the body paragraphs. Before writing your concluding sentence, reread your opening sentences; see if there is an effective way of tying the two together.

**Style Points**

Do not use contractions.

Use standard punctuation.

Do not begin sentences with “And” or “But” or “Because.”

Avoid using a word you are not sure how to spell, especially in the first paragraph—use a synonym.

If you are not sure of the meaning of a word, don’t use it.

Write at least one complex sentence in a paragraph to show you are able to. Keep making your points clearly and logically with relevant supporting detail.

**Writing Points**

You may write your essay in pencil, but think ahead to avoid major erasures.

It is a writing exercise; it does not have to be true.

Take a position for or against an issue; avoid sitting on the fence, if appropriate.

Make it easy on yourself: compare and contrast yourself with your grandparent of the opposite sex rather than your same sex sibling.

You are allowed to enjoy writing!

**Proofreading: Allow 10 – 15 minutes. Use your finger to point to every word and read what you have actually written.**

You are allowed a few spelling errors, but aim to catch every mistake.

Make only minor changes in content at this stage. Your reader realizes you are writing under pressure with considerable time constraints and does not expect brilliance from you.

**English is a difficult language** to learn to write. The prepositions (in, by, to, and the other 50-odd of them) are particularly tricky, as are the articles: a, an, the. Examine every preposition. Check if you need a preposition at all and whether you have used the correct one. Examine every noun. If it is a singular noun, check whether it needs an article and if you have used the correct one. It is often easier to write plural noun forms, particularly for people when you can use the pronouns ‘they’ and ‘them’ rather than ‘he or she’ and ‘her or him.’

If you don’t understand a word in the prompt, try to avoid it; if it is a key word that must be addressed, define the word as you understand it and argue accordingly.

**ADDITIONAL HELP AND RESOURCES**

<http://www.cbest.nesinc.com/PDFs/CBESTUpdatedTestSpecs.pdf>

[http://www.cbest.nesinc.com/CA\\_viewPT\\_PDF\\_opener.asp](http://www.cbest.nesinc.com/CA_viewPT_PDF_opener.asp)

<http://www.readingcomprehensionconnection.com/lesson.php>

[http://www.expertstudyhelp.com/cbest\\_test\\_breakdown.htm](http://www.expertstudyhelp.com/cbest_test_breakdown.htm)

Courtesy of:  
Bhasha Leonard, Student Resource Center  
1121 Berkeley Place  
Department of Education  
bleonard@uci.edu

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## TIP SHEET

### CSET Test Preparation

California Subject Examination for Teachers  
[www.cset.nesinc.com](http://www.cset.nesinc.com)

Now that you are seriously thinking about applying to a Teaching Credential program, what types of exams will you need to prepare for? The following are exams that you must take and pass in order to remain eligible to begin a Teaching Credential program.

#### **CSET – California Subject Examination for Teachers:**

Fun Facts:

- Required for ALL students pursuing a teaching credential
- Passing score satisfies state and federal subject matter competency requirements.
- Aligned with the most current California K-12 Student Academic Content Standards
- CSET: Single Subject Examination fee is \$70 per exam
- Exams are administered in morning and/or afternoon test sessions that are 5 hours in length

#### **CSET TIPS for ALL SUBJECTS**

Do your strongest subtest first, followed by your next strongest. **First, PLAN** (don't write) answers to **ALL** the **constructed response** questions. **Next**, complete all the multiple choice questions, adding to your plans ideas occurring to you or that are stimulated by the multiple choice questions or answers. **Finally**, organize your response and write or copy it into the correct booklet.

#### **FOR ALL MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

THINK all about the question before reading through the answer choices.  
Find the answer you are expecting, work carefully, and reason it out.  
Stay with your original answers and avoid second-guessing yourself.  
There are no trick questions, nor are there penalties for wrong answers.

#### **FOR ALL CONSTRUCTED RESPONSE QUESTIONS**

Brainstorm and plan well-reasoned concise responses to the prompts.  
Use accurate academic language with well-chosen supporting evidence.  
Write/print in sentences clearly and legibly, filling ALL the available space.  
**Respond** with what you know, what's obvious, and guess, if necessary.

#### **FOR CONSTRUCTED RESPONSES FOR SS SCIENCE & MATHEMATICS and MS SUBTEST II: SCIENCE; MATHEMATICS**

Define **all** the terms mentioned in scientific or mathematical terminology.  
Use clear accurate **diagrams, tables, or graphs** to illustrate your responses.  
Respond to all parts of the prompt in a logical, well-organized manner.  
Use an alternative method or explanation, if you know one

**LASTLY, STOP BY THE CAL TEACH RESOURCE & ADVISING CENTER TO CHECK OUT PREPARATION BOOKS AND STUDY GUIDES SPECIFIC TO THE CSET AND ITS SUB-TESTS!**

Courtesy of:

Bhasha Leonard, Student Resource Center, 1121 Berkeley Place, Department of Education, [bleonard@uci.edu](mailto:bleonard@uci.edu)

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## TIP SHEET

### GRE Test Preparation

Graduate Record Examination  
www.gre.org

If you are thinking about applying to the Master's in Teaching with a Teaching Credential program, one of the exams you will need to prepare for is the GRE.

#### GRE – Graduate Record Examination:

- Only the GRE General Test is required if you plan on pursuing a Master's Degree while pursuing a Teaching Credential
- Examination fee is \$140
- Examination is about 2.5 hours.
- Computer-based test composed of analytical writing, verbal, and quantitative sections

#### TEST-TAKING STRATEGIES

The GRE's verbal section is significantly harder than SAT (more big words), and the GRE's math section is slightly easier. The GRE is approximately three hours long. **Only 2½ hours count** toward your score; the experimental section is not scored. The experimental section can be a verbal section or a math section. You won't know which section is experimental. You will know which type of section it is, though, since there will be an extra one of that type. Knowing that the experimental section can be disproportionately difficult, if you do poorly on a particular section you can take some solace in the hope that it may have been the experimental section. In other words, do not allow one difficult section to discourage your performance on the rest of the test.

#### GET TO KNOW THE TEST

Carefully study the test at [www.gre.org](http://www.gre.org) to become fully familiar with format and test content. Free GRE preparation software includes two computer-based GRE General Tests, sample analytical writing topics, scored sample essays and reader commentary, test-taking strategies, a math review, and test tutorials sent to you when you register for the computer-based GRE General Test or available for downloading [[www.gre.org/pracmats.html](http://www.gre.org/pracmats.html)].

#### PACE YOURSELF

Although time is limited on the GRE, **working too quickly** can damage your score. Many problems hinge on subtle points, and most require careful reading of the setup. Students miss questions because they either **misread** the problems or **overlook** subtle points.

#### ANALYZE QUESTIONS & NOTE SUBLETIES

For the vast majority of people, the key to performing well on the GRE is the **percentage they solve correctly**. On the GRE, the first question will be of medium difficulty. If you answer it correctly, the next question will be a little harder. If you answer it incorrectly, the next question will be a little easier. If your GRE skills are strong and you are not making any mistakes, you should reach the medium-hard or hard problems by about the fifth problem. Although this is not exact every time, it can be quite helpful on average. Once you have passed the fifth question, you should be alert to subtleties in any seemingly simple problems.

#### KEY TEST QUESTIONS

Because of the importance of the first five questions to your score, you should read and solve these questions slowly and carefully. Allot nearly one-third of the time for each section to the first five questions. Then work progressively faster as you work toward the end of the section. On the test, you cannot skip questions; each question must be answered before moving to the next question; however, if you can eliminate even one of the answer-choices, guessing can be advantageous. Unfortunately, you cannot return to previously answered questions.

## **DON'T GET STUCK**

Often students become obsessed with a particular problem and lose lots of time trying to solve it. To get a top score, learn to cut your losses and move on. The exception to this rule is the first five questions of each section; you should read and solve these questions slowly and carefully.

### **Practice, Practice, Practice!**

Below are some links containing practice tests, test taking tips, or study guides. Take advantage of all resources at your disposal to improve your test performance!

<http://www.ets.org/Media/Tests/GRE/pdf/gre%20practice%20general%20test.pdf>

[http://mati.eas.asu.edu:8421/p1000/gre\\_data/index.html](http://mati.eas.asu.edu:8421/p1000/gre_data/index.html)

[http://www.testprepreview.com/gre\\_practice.htm](http://www.testprepreview.com/gre_practice.htm)

<http://www.studyguidezone.com/gretest.htm>

<http://www.syvum.com/gre/>

<http://www.number2.com>

<http://www.mygretutor.com/>

<http://questions-answers.topgre.com/>

[http://education.yahoo.com/college/essentials/practice\\_tests/gre/](http://education.yahoo.com/college/essentials/practice_tests/gre/)

[http://www.wtamu.edu/academic/anns/mps/math/mathlab/gre/gre\\_test1.htm](http://www.wtamu.edu/academic/anns/mps/math/mathlab/gre/gre_test1.htm)

<http://www.studyguidezone.com/gretest.htm>

<http://www.catprep.com/exams/gre/gre-exam-software.html>

<http://www.mathforum.org>

<http://www.gre.prepedge.com>

## **TESTING LOCATION**

Prometric Testing Center offers testing appointments 6 days a week and answers your GRE questions.

1290 Hancock Street, Suite 250  
Anaheim, CA 92807  
(714) 695-1801

**“Most people are better off preparing thoroughly for the test, taking it one time and getting their top score.”**

Courtesy of:  
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