

## Promotional Preparation To-Do List

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Are you planning on taking a promotional examination in the future? If so, it is critical to not just prepare for the test itself, but to prepare for the position you are aspiring to.

Even more important is to prepare for one position above the position you currently aspire to. For example, if you are currently a firefighter and are preparing to take the captain's exam, I would encourage to not only prepare to be a captain, but to prepare to be a battalion chief, even if you don't currently want to be a battalion chief. Why?

For a variety of reasons. While you may not now want to be a battalion chief, it is possible you may change your mind in the future. Also, it is common in some departments to have people act in a higher rank, regardless of whether you are qualified or have the desire to. And lastly, it allows you not only to be a better captain in this case, but to also have an idea of what your battalion chief will expect of you.

Here are some suggestions (in no specific order) for you, to help prepare yourself for your next promotional examination and more importantly the position you aspire to. Not every suggestion may be applicable to your situation, but hopefully they should help cover some bases you may not have thought about.

- Obtain the job flyer from the last promotional exam your department (or the department you are testing for) used.
- Update your resume, have it ready for the next exam.
- Obtain a copy of the last used (or current) application so you have all of the required information ready to go.
- Make sure you meet the minimal (and desirable) qualifications for the position you aspire to.
- Complete your two-year degree.
- Complete your four-year degree.
- Get the reading list for the written examination.
- Obtain the books from the reading list, start building your library.
- Sign up for e-mail mailing list notifications.
- Ensure your dress uniform is up-to-date.
- Remember everyone is watching you; remain on your best behavior from this point on. You can't change the past, but you can sure attempt to improve it.
- Choose your station assignments carefully.

- Find out what types of exercises are typically found on your promotional exam.
- Create your opening statement for the oral interview.
- Create your closing statement for the oral interview.
- Figure out what the most commonly asked oral interview questions may be and start creating possible answers.
- Develop personnel expectations for your personnel so you're ready to go your first day.
- Get involved in your department.
- Get involved in your community.
- Start thinking like the position you aspire to; ask questions of your superiors and let them know you're interested in promoting.
- Know how you are going to deal with progressive discipline; have a plan of action and determine what you're boundaries are.
- Know your department-specific manuals inside and out.
- Attend at least one fire related seminar a year.
- Attend at least one fire conference a year.
- Have your plan of action of how you will manage an incident, from start to finish. Practice your size-ups, report on conditions, company assignments, etc.
- Start getting involved as an instructor – inside and outside of your department.
- Get your State certifications in various disciplines (officer, instructor, investigation, prevention, etc.
- If you don't know the names, the titles, and the specific job functions of each person assigned to your administrative section, start learning them; you never know when you'll need them.
- Create a mentor network of people in and above the position(s) you aspire to.
- Start taking ownership in your current position, being the best you can be.
- Become the subject matter expert in something; the go-to person.
- Life is about the future, lose your baggage and any bitterness you may still hold onto for whatever reason. Trust me; most chief officers don't spend time thinking how they can screw you or your career up. We have better things to do.
- Subscribe to at least one fire trade publication.
- Read as many fire service trade publications as you can to stay abreast of the fire service.

- Start looking at promotional flyers from other departments to start seeing trends of what is being required in the way of education, experience and/or training.
- Document at least three strengths and at least three weaknesses. Figure out how to improve those weaknesses and start working on improving them!
- Become a member of at least one fire service professional association or organization. Your current IAFF membership is great, but everyone has that. Get involved in something unique or at least something not everyone else is involved in.
- Be familiar with your Mass Casualty Incident Plan.
- Be familiar with your Local EMS Protocols.
- Be familiar with the State and Local Mutual Aid Plan.
- Be familiar with how to ask for resources and what resources you get.
- Be familiar with the capabilities / resources of your local / regional departments.
- Be familiar with the key elected / appointed political officials in your community.
- Understand the difference between 2 in / 2 out and Rapid Intervention Teams.