

Sample Reading Passage

Read this text and answer the sample questions.

How Shall Employees Conduct Themselves?

Guidelines for Conducting Business with Those outside Our Company

Our employees are the most effective advertisement of our values, beliefs, and abilities. Always keep in mind that when you are acting in your capacity as our employee, you are contributing materially to the public image and the ultimate success of this company.

Gifts for Influence

No payment or gift of money, goods, or services should be given or received to influence government or business decisions. Accurate and complete records for all accounts will be strictly monitored for everyone's protection.

If it becomes apparent to you in the course of the performance of your business responsibilities that a payment of some kind is expected by your business associate, please contact your division president.

Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest can be described as a situation where a person has a vested interest in two areas of the business world that may give him or her an unfair advantage in business dealings. Our employees should be sensitive to any relationship that creates such a relationship--or even creates the appearance of such a relationship.

Keep these rules in mind:

- *Throughout your employment period, be vigilant about potential conflicts of interest between this company's interests and your personal or immediate family's interests.*
- *Don't use your position with this company to obtain a personal benefit of any kind.*
- *Avoid any action or relationship that creates, or even creates the appearance of, a conflict of interest. For example, having an interest in a nonpublic company that competes or does business with our company or any of its affiliates might create the appearance of a conflict of interest and might prompt accusations and/or an investigation.*

Disclosure

This company respects your privacy, as well as your right to conduct your personal affairs without interference; however, you must make prompt, complete, and continuing disclosure of all facts relating to any factual or potential conflict of interest.

Investigations

Inquiries or investigations may be undertaken at this company's direction by its attorneys, investigators, internal auditors, or independent public accountants. Employees should regard this vigilance as the company's commitment not only to fair competition but also to the protection of its employees. Your cooperation is needed for your protection as well as that of this company, and it is a condition of your employment.

This excerpt is a composite of information from several business documents.

Sample Questions

Directions: choose the one best answer to each question.

Question 1

Based on the information in this excerpt, what would be the company's policy about accepting gifts or entertainment from people representing your competitors?

Accepting gifts or entertainment from people representing competitors would be considered

- 1) *dangerous*
- 2) *practical*
- 3) *reasonable*
- 4) *unacceptable*
- 5) *good business*

Answer: 4

The clear statement in this section of the excerpt "Gifts for Influence"-is that this kind of business dealing is unacceptable to this company.

Question 2

Based on the information in this excerpt, when is it permissible to give money that might be considered a bribe or a tip to a government official in order to facilitate business?

- 1) *It is never permissible to give a gift or other payment to influence government or business decisions.*
- 2) *It may be necessary in certain foreign countries where it is expected.*
- 3) *Payments to government officials can be made at any time with prior approval of the division president.*
- 4) *Modest gratuities can be offered at any time.*
- 5) *All payments or gratuities must be worth their fair trade value.*

Answer: 1

This level of comprehension question is slightly more difficult than the previous question because the answer is implied but not stated. Alternatives (3) and (4) are distractors requiring that you read the passage with accuracy and precision.

Question 3

What is the meaning of the phrase "or even creates the appearance of" (lines 14-15)?

- 1) *an actual conflict of interest*
- 2) *a conflict between the company's interests and your personal or immediate family's interest*
- 3) *a situation that is not truly a conflict of interest but may appear to be*
- 4) *the company's high standards for employee personal appearance and behavior*
- 5) *a situation that is within your personal affairs*

Answer: 3

This analysis question requires you to closely read a specific line in the text integrated with the context.

Question 4

What is an example of a conflict of interest?

- 1) *Your cousin works for the same company.*
- 2) *You have given gratuities to foreign government officials.*
- 3) *You often meet with the employee's union representative.*
- 4) *You have cheated on your income tax.*
- 5) *Your spouse owns stock in one of the company's competitors.*

Answer: 5

This question requires you to analyze the rules about conflict of interest to conclude that alternative (5) would be an example of this issue.

Question 5

While this excerpt is discussing a very serious topic, it tries to maintain a feeling of sincere interest in the employee.

Which of the statements below most clearly reflects that feeling?

- 1) *"No payment or gift of money, goods, or services should be given or received to influence government or business decisions" (lines 6-7).*
- 2) *"...records for all accounts will be strictly monitored . . ." (lines 7-8).*
- 3) *"Don't use your position with this company to obtain a personal benefit of any kind" (line 19).*
- 4) *"This company respects your privacy, as well as your right to conduct your personal affairs without interference" (lines 25-26).*
- 5) *"Your cooperation . . . is a condition of your employment" (lines 32-33).*

Answer: 4

With the exception of alternative (4), all of the other alternatives use a similar instructional tone as in most of the excerpt. Alternative (4) is the only example of the milder language that appears occasionally in the excerpt to soften the strong tone.

Question 6

How is this excerpt organized?

- 1) *statements of fact supported by personal stories*
- 2) *specific topics followed by explanations*
- 3) *rules for behavior supported by warnings of consequences*
- 4) *general policy statement without specific performance standards*
- 5) *debate of public versus personal philosophies*

Answer: 2

The strongest distractor for this question is alternative (3) because it references "rules for behavior," which is an attractive choice. However, the excerpt does not contain any warnings or consequences, which the second half of this distractor mentions.

Question 7

Earlier in this document, the company describes how employees of this company are to behave toward each other. It includes a statement about complete and enforced intolerance for discrimination in any form.

Based on this information and the information in this excerpt, why might a potential employee want to read all this company's rules and regulations for employee behavior carefully?

- 1) *One mistake with this company could cost an employee his or her job.*
- 2) *Competitors have several options for securing their rights.*
- 3) *Employees and their managers must interact carefully.*
- 4) *Unfair labor practices will not be tolerated.*
- 5) *This company has high expectations for employee behavior.*

Answer: 5

This is another example of a synthesis question. As described in Question 7, the stem of the question gives an additional piece of information that you must consider with the information from the passage. In this case, the new information covers a completely different area of employee behavior. The conclusion must be drawn that the company is very strict about employee behavior in at least these two discrete areas. The clear implication is that employees are probably held to high expectations in all areas, and a prudent prospective employee might want to be forearmed with this information.

Question 8

If you were running this company and you wanted to hire someone to enforce these rules, what primary characteristic would you want in this potential employee?

- 1) *knowledge about the company's product*
- 2) *honesty and integrity*
- 3) *communication skills*
- 4) *human relations skills*
- 5) *familiarity with your employee*

Answer: 2

The stem for this question casts the excerpt in a completely new light. Now you must consider the rules from the point of view of the owner who wishes to enforce them, rather than the employee who wishes to obey them. Furthermore, the employer wants to identify a person to enforce the rules and is considering the characteristics that person must possess.