

Gillette Police Department



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Explanation of Polygraph Examination

You are here to take a polygraph examination concerning your application with our agency. Please try to be as comfortable as possible, and listen carefully to the information being provided during the examination. The polygraph examination is just one of several steps that you must pass to be employed with our agency.

There have been many improvements made in polygraph over the past several years. Of all the techniques used to verify if someone is being truthful, the polygraph has proven time and time again to be the most accurate way of determining truth. Our agency uses polygraph for a number of reasons including making sure applicants are telling us the complete truth and that they have the characteristics that we believe make a good employee.

Polygraph examiners with our agency are all members in good standing with various professional polygraph associations. They have graduated from formal polygraph training which has been recognized and approved. They have completed supervised polygraph programs, and continue to maintain professional education requirements in polygraph.

Everything that will happen during this examination will be explained to you before proceeding. During this presentation, you will be asked to answer questions out loud. Please do so in a way that the examiner can clearly hear you. You will know the wording of all of the questions before the examination begins. There is nothing about the polygraph examination that will harm you. We assume that you are telling the complete truth to us at this point.

It is completely normal to feel anxiety or nervousness before a polygraph examination. In fact, it is expected. Your nervousness or anxiety level will not cause a problem on this exam. **Lying will.**

Remember that ninety-nine percent of the truth is still a lie. In other words, telling only part of the truth means that you are still withholding information or being misleading. You must pass all questions truthfully to pass the test. Failure of any of the questions on this examination is a failure. No question is more important than any other.

Explanation of Instrument

To help put your mind at rest, we will explain what the instrument is and how it works. The polygraph is a diagnostic tool that is used to determine if a person is telling the truth. It simply records physiological changes that take place in your central nervous system when you are asked questions. Today, changes in your respiration, sweat gland activity, and blood pressure will be recorded.

There will be a number of sensors placed on you. First, two rubber tubes will be placed around you. One will be around your abdomen; the other will be across your chest. Those two sensors measure your breathing pattern.

The next sensor will be a blood pressure cuff that will be placed on your arm. This is the same type of blood pressure cuff that a doctor uses. You should be familiar with it from your visits to your doctor. However, in a polygraph examination, blood pressure is measured in a somewhat different way from the way a doctor measures it. A doctor wants to know the exact values of what your blood pressure is such as 120 over 80 or 130 over 90. In a polygraph examination, we want to know if your blood pressure goes up, or down, or stays the same after you answer a question. Therefore, in a polygraph examination, we take a continuous measure from a blood pressure cuff. The cuff will be inflated to approximately 100 mm of pressure. At that point, the examiner will massage the cuff and then the pressure will be lowered to approximately 60 to 70 mm of pressure. This is very light pressure. You will feel the cuff squeeze your arm. We will be going through several polygraph charts today. The cuff will have to be inflated for that period of time that you are actually being asked questions in the formal part of the test. It takes about five minutes to ask each set of polygraph questions. By the end of each chart, your hand may feel as if it has gone to sleep, or it may tingle. If you have fair skin, your skin may become just a bit red. It is not dangerous, and your arm will return to normal within a few seconds of the release of the pressure. We will not keep the pressure on your arm any longer than is necessary.

The third set of sensors is placed on the fingertips of two of your fingers. These sensors measure changes in skin property, or sweat gland activity. Once in place, these sensors will not do anything that you will notice.

You may also notice that there is a cushion on the polygraph chair. It is a motion sensor cushion. It is used to document any movements that may occur during the polygraph examination. You may have experienced medical tests in the past, such as X-rays, CT scans, or MRIs, where you were told to remain completely still during the test. Likewise, it is important that you do not move around during this polygraph examination. Once the examiner has announced that the test is beginning, you must remain completely still. Do not move your hands, feet, arms, legs or any other parts of your body. Breathe normally, and just answer each question as instructed by the examiner. If you have to scratch, clear your throat, adjust how you are seated, or take a deep breath, do it before the test begins.

Remember, the only portion of the testing process during which you must remain completely still is during the five minutes that the chart is recording. People, in general, naturally like to move around. However, if you do not follow these instructions, you will be considered uncooperative.

Description of Nervous System

All of these sensors measure aspects of the involuntary division of your nervous system. You have two divisions in your nervous system. The first division is known as the voluntary nervous system. You have direct control over that division. The voluntary part of the nervous system allows you to walk and talk at your command. The other division of the nervous system, the involuntary part of the nervous system, controls involuntary functions. It controls the heart, blood pressure, breathing, and all of the other necessary mechanical processes. These functions work automatically and unconsciously. Likewise, the physiological responses you make when lying are automatic and involuntary.

Description of Lying

While you were being raised as a child you were taught to know the difference between right and wrong. More than likely, all of the adults you came in contact with, your parents, grandparents, relatives, teachers, church officials, all educated you that lying, cheating, and stealing, were wrong. Ever since you were a young child, you have been programmed to know that lying is wrong. Think about the first time you lied and got caught. Do you remember how your body felt during that confrontation? You may have felt your heart race, or you may have felt yourself begin to sweat.

Everyone is different. In the same way that you look different and have different fingerprints from everyone else, you also have some unique and personal set of physiological responses to lying. Some people can hear their heart thumping in their chest. Other people respond by getting sweaty hands. Some may feel the hair on the back of their necks stand up, they may feel cold chills, they may get goose bumps, or they might turn as white as a ghost. Other people respond in other ways, but for all, their response to lying is automatic and involuntary. There are however certain physiological responses that people have in common when they tell a lie. These automatic and involuntary responses are what are recorded during a polygraph examination.

Remember, during the test, do not move around, do not cough or clear your throat, and breathe normally. Repetition of questions is a normal part of administering polygraph examinations. Some of the questions reviewed with you will be repeated. The questions will appear in no specific order. If you happen to think of anything during the exam, mention it to the examiner after the chart is completed and not during the test.

One final point regarding answering questions during the examination. Do not answer questions, until each question has been asked in its entirety.

Explanation of the Polygraph Process

First the examiner will review the instrumentation and how the polygraph works. The examiner will verify the personal information you have placed on your application form. During this process the examiner may ask you some additional questions pertaining to your answers on the application and Personal History Statement. The examiner will then have you sign a waiver form, which states that you are willing to submit to the polygraph examination. You cannot be forced to submit to a polygraph examination but it is a condition of employment with our agency.

The examiner will then ask you questions from a pre-employment polygraph questionnaire. These questions will be similar to the ones that you were asked on the Personal History Statement. This will be your opportunity to provide the examiner with any information that you may have remembered since completing your application and the Personal History Statement. You will also have the chance to explain any answers on your application or Personal History Statement that you feel you need to. Your answers to this set of questions will be the basis for the questions you will be asked during the actual examination.

Based upon your answers to these questions the examiner will decide exactly what questions will be asked during the examination. Due to the number of areas that will be covered during the examination you can expect there will be at least two to three different sets of questions asked. Each set of questions will be reviewed with you prior to being asked. Each set of questions will be asked several times with the order of the questions being changed.

During the examination, it is not uncommon for people to remember information that they had forgotten. For this reason, you will be asked several times during the examination if you have remembered any new information. This will be done automatically and is not based on anything the examiner may have seen on your polygraph charts. If you have remembered any new information it is important that you provide the examiner with this information as it can affect the outcome of your examination and your ability to be hired by our agency.