

# What are the Steps to Becoming a Police Officer?

The following is a brief description of each phase of the selection process. The selection process is a multi-tiered process. Applicants must successfully complete each phase of the process before proceeding to the next phase.

## Step #1 - Apply Online and Complete the Waivers

The first step in applying for the position of Police Officer with the City of Virginia Beach is to complete the online application at the city web site (WAVE): [Click here to access the online WAVE application](#).

Once you apply, you MUST submit the Credit Release Form and the Authorization of Release form. Both waivers can be found here: [Waivers: Bullet Point #2](#)

You will be screened for testing and contacted to reserve a seat at one of our monthly testing dates.

## Step #2 - Written Exam

The written exam contains multiple-choice questions which assess the skills and abilities outlined below. Each question may have as few as two or as many as five answer choices. Some questions may have pictures, diagrams, or graphs that must be interpreted or utilized in order to determine an answer. The test covers several critical areas that have been found to be important for law enforcement personnel. The list below defines these areas and provides examples of specific skills and abilities measured. It also provides examples of duties that law enforcement personnel perform that require or use the skills being measured within each area. Unsuccessful applicants must wait one year before reapplying. [Click here to access the Next Generation Law Enforcement Study Guide](#).

- **Practical Skills** refer to the ability to handle everyday changes and situations. Law enforcement personnel must be able to use good judgment and common sense, think clearly, quickly, and logically, and identify, analyze, and solve problems in complicated situations.
- **Interpersonal Skills** refer to the various abilities required to relate well and get along with others. Law enforcement personnel should demonstrate empathy, courtesy, a customer service orientation, and an ability to interact effectively with supervisors, co-workers, and others in daily work and communal living situation. Law enforcement personnel must be able to work cooperatively with diverse groups of people within the department and in the area in which they serve.
- **Emotional Outlook** refers to the ability to recognize and deal effectively with the emotions of one's self and others, handle problems and challenges with appropriate emotional responses, and act confidently and effectively in situations that are challenging, stressful, or dangerous. Law enforcement personnel must be committed to maintaining high standards of ethical conduct, dependable in meeting commitments, and hard working to complete assigned tasks.
- **Basic Educational Skills** refer to measures of acquired knowledge. Law enforcement personnel must have these abilities to succeed in the academy, as well as on- the-job training. They must be able to comprehend, learn, retain, and present the information necessary for performing the job.

### **Step #3 – Personal History Questionnaire (PHQ) and Polygraph Examination**

Once you have been notified that you have passed written exam, you will need to download a copy of the Personal History Questionnaire (PHQ). [Click here to access the online Personal History Questionnaire \(PHQ\)](#). Instructions for completion are on page two (2) of the PHQ. You should submit the PHQ with all required documents to the Virginia Beach Police Department Law Enforcement Training Academy, 411 Integrity Way, Virginia Beach, VA 23451. Once the academy staff receives and reviews your PHQ packet, you will be contacted to schedule polygraph testing.

### **Step #4 – Background Investigation and Prescreening Board**

This step of the process involves a thorough review of information obtained from but not limited to: PHQ, WAVE application, DMV History, consumer credit report, criminal history checks, and an interview with a background investigator who will also interview personal and employment references.

The prescreening board then reviews the background and polygraph information to determine which applicants will proceed to the Oral Interview. Applicants not selected must wait six (6) months to reapply and must complete the entire selection process again.

### **Step #5 - Oral Interview and Physical Ability Test (PAT)**

An oral review board conducts the oral interview. Successful applicants will be extended a conditional offer of employment and proceed to the final phase of the selection process. Applicants not successful must wait six (6) months to reapply, and must complete the entire selection process again.

Directly following the oral interview, the applicant will be allowed to change clothing and proceed to the PAT. This test consists of four components that measure upper and lower body muscular strength, muscular endurance, and anaerobic power. No candidate will be allowed to participate in this test without first providing the Physical Testing Medical Waiver, which will be provided on the date of the test. The Physical Ability Test battery is a two-tier test; the scores from each test are combined to determine the overall score. In addition, there are baseline or minimum scores that must be obtained for each test. These minimum scores are as follows:

- **Push-ups:** 11 completed using proper form
- **Sit & Reach:** 5.33 centimeters
- **Trunk Pull:** 72 pounds of pressure
- **300-Meter Run:** 112 seconds

Because the test is based on both minimum scores and a cumulative score, if an applicant only achieves the minimum or baseline score in each test, he/she will not have a successful overall score. Unsuccessful applicants must wait three (3) months to retest. [Click here for tips on the Physical Ability Test.](#)

- **Push-ups.** To assess upper body strength and endurance, the applicant will perform as many correct push-ups as they can in one minute.
- **Sit & Reach.** To assess the flexibility in the applicant's hamstrings, the applicant will sit on the floor with legs straight and feet flat against the sit & reach box and will reach forward with their hands, attempting to stretch as far as they can. The applicant will be given one practice trial, which is not scored. They will then conduct three (3) test trials with a 15-second rest between each trial.

- **Trunk Pull.** To assess the maximum force that can be generated by the torso muscles, the applicant will sit on the floor, knees straight, feet flat against a platform, hands grabbing a bar with palms towards the floor. On the command, the applicant will lean back while looking at the ceiling and pulling on the bar until the administrator tells them to stop. This test involves three (3) trials in which a maximal contraction is exerted on each trial for three (3) seconds. The applicant will be allowed a 30-second rest period between trials.
- **300-Meter Run.** To assess anaerobic power and lower body muscular endurance, the applicant will run 300 meters as fast as they can. Their score will be the time it takes them to complete the run.

### **Step #6 – Conditional Offer of Employment**

After successfully completing Steps 1 through 5, each applicant will be offered a conditional offer of employment. The conditions of this offer typically focus on successfully completing the remaining psychological and medical examinations, firearms checks, and fingerprint checks. Additional conditions to the offer of employment may be added on a case by case basis, for specific matters that need to be resolved or otherwise addressed prior to employment.

### **Step #7 – Psychological and Medical Examinations**

The applicant will participate in a psychological examination. Unsuccessful applicants must wait six (6) months to reapply and must complete the entire selection process again.

The applicant will receive a physical examination. Unsuccessful applicants must wait six (6) months to reapply and must complete the entire selection process

### **Additional Items to Be Completed:**

- **Firearms Check**  
The applicant's eligibility to possess a firearm is confirmed.
- **Fingerprint Check**  
The applicant's fingerprints are entered into a national database.
- **Resolution of Remaining Conditions of Employment**  
These conditions are unique to each applicant, but may include obtaining full citizenship, covering/removal of tattoos, waivers for items discovered during the selection process, etc.

### **Formal Offer of Employment**

Once all of the above items have been successfully completed, applicants will be provided with a formal offer of employment. Applicants will be assigned a hire date to coincide with the next available academy start date.