

***SECONDARY SCHOOL
EQUIVALENCY TESTS***

(SSET)

CANDIDATE'S GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

The Secondary School Equivalency Tests (SSET) have been available since 1976 for adults who did not complete their secondary studies, but who nevertheless have acquired knowledge that is usually learned at the secondary level. Each year over 7,000 candidates take advantage of this service.

In the course of your life you have no doubt acquired skills, knowledge, competencies and abilities associated with secondary school studies and that allow you to function in society. The job market, however, is constantly evolving, and employers increasingly require employees to have a Secondary School diploma (SSD).

If you do not have a SSD, the ministère de l'Éducation offers you an evaluation instrument that will allow you to demonstrate the skills, knowledge, competencies and abilities you have acquired. If you pass the SSET, you will receive an Attestation of Equivalence of Secondary Studies (AESS).

For those who do not have a Secondary School Diploma (SSD), the SSET provide a unique opportunity to obtain an AESS and to thus meet the requirements of many employers.

This guide has been designed to explain the SSET and provide you with the information necessary to prepare yourself and to register for the tests.

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Advantages of the AESS

The AESS can help you gain access to jobs that require a Secondary School Diploma or its equivalent.

Furthermore, it currently qualifies you for admission to vocational education studies at the secondary level.

An AESS may also be obtained for personal satisfaction. If you have not completed your secondary studies, it may be rewarding to receive confirmation that you have acquired the equivalent skills on your own. The Attestation may also be useful in various unforeseen circumstances.

Requirements for obtaining an AESS

To obtain an AESS you must pass English tests and the French test, as well as two other tests chosen from the four that are offered.

If you meet these requirements, you will receive an AESS from the ministère de l’Éducation within weeks.

The Tests

The knowledge evaluated is organized into seven tests.

English Grammar	compulsory
English Comprehension	compulsory
French as a Second Language	compulsory
Mathematics	optional
Social Studies	optional
Economics	optional
Natural Science	optional

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Test Questions

Each test consists of forty multiple-choice questions. These are questions for which you choose the correct answer from among several options.

Time Limit

The time limit for each test is 90 minutes, except for the mathematics test, which has a time limit of 150 minutes.

Minimum Performance Standard

The minimum performance standard is 60% for each test.

Failure

In case of failure, you are entitled to rewrite each of the tests. However, tests must be rewritten within a maximum period of six months. *Refer to the Administrative Manual for the Certification of Studies in General Education for Adults* for additional rules governing the administration of examinations.

After a second failure you must wait one year, after which you must rewrite all the SSE Tests.

Administrative Procedures

The Adult Education Services of the school boards can give you all the information you need pertaining to the tests. They can also register you and set a time and place for the tests.

Registration

You must personally fill out the registration form provided by any school board and present one proof of identity (birth certificate, driver’s licence or a recent photo measuring 5cm x 5 cm).

The fees for registration and for rewriting tests are set by the school boards.

In the appendix you will find a page on which you can note all information concerning registration for the SSET.

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PREPARATION

It is normal to feel a certain amount of anxiety before a test, especially if it has been a long time since you were last in school.

Although the content of the tests reflects secondary school content, it is not necessary to have completed secondary school to write the tests. These tests measure skills, knowledge, competencies and abilities that you have acquired since you left school. They are intended for people who have personal and work experience.

If you have a healthy sense of curiosity and you follow the news regularly, you are likely to succeed in writing the SSET.

To prepare yourself, you can become acquainted with the general content of the tests. We will introduce you to this content, subject by subject, in the following pages.

We will also give you sample questions and suggest reference works that you may wish to consult.

Register for the SSET only when you feel that you are ready to pass the tests. With the help of the information provided in these pages, you will be able to judge your degree of preparedness. Do not register for the SSET before you are adequately prepared to write them.

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English Grammar

The topics covered in the English Grammar test are varied and range from vocabulary and spelling to sentence structure and punctuation. To prepare for the test, practise doing crossword puzzles and word games, and consult a dictionary and grammar book.

The tests covers the following topics:

Vocabulary:

- parts of words (e.g. prefixes, roots, suffixes)
- contextual clues
- definitions

Sample Question:

Choose the group of words that correctly completes the sentence.

Mark did not _____ the decision, so he protested it.

- A) agree with
- B) arrive at
- C) speak out against
- D) understand

(Answer: A)

Spelling:

- basic spelling rules
- frequently misspelled words

Sample Question:

Choose the word that is **incorrectly** spelled.

- a) Dining
- b) Transmitting
- c) Enjoying
- d) Failling

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(Answer: D)

Sentence Structure:

- sentence fragments
- run-on sentences
- misplaced modifiers
- subject/verb agreement
- parallel construction
- person/number shift
- tense shifts

Sample Question

Choose the sentence that is structurally correct.

- a) While reading an exciting book, Mary’s telephone rang.
- b) Reading an exciting book, Mary’s telephone rang.
- c) While Mary was reading an exciting book, her telephone rang.
- d) Mary’s phone rang while reading an exciting book.

(Answer: C)

Punctuation:

- period
- comma
- semicolon
- colon
- question mark
- exclamation mark
- apostrophe
- capitalization

Sample Question:

Choose the **INCORRECT** part of the following sentence.

The month of december is her favourite month because she enjoys skiing and skating.

A

B

C

D

(Answer: B)

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Grammar:

- syntax
- parts of speech
- verbs: tenses, irregularities

Sample Question:

Choose the **incorrect** part of the following sentence.

Painting our newly remodelled apartment wasn't no harder than painting the one we lived in
 A B C
previously.
D

(Answer: C)

Reference Material

The following reference material may be useful:

Geopfert, P.S. *The Communications Handbook*. Scarborough: Nelson Canada Ltd., 1982.

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ENGLISH COMPREHENSION

To read a text is to try to understand what the author means or what message he or she wishes to communicate. Therefore, we must ask ourselves questions when we read.

This test verifies whether or not you understand what you read.

If you read a great deal—novels or magazines or specialized texts—and you pay careful attention to the content of a text, then you have probably acquired the capacity for reading comprehension.

This test deals mainly with the following content.

The subject of the text and the main idea

You should be able to answer the following questions:

- What is the subject of the text? What is the author talking about?
- What is the main idea?
- What does the author say about the subject he or she is discussing in the text?

Secondary ideas

- What other ideas are discussed in the text?

Organization of the text

- What does the author express in the introduction, the body and the conclusion of his or her text?

The opinions of the author

- What opinions are expressed in the text?
- What arguments support these opinions?

Characters: their roles and their relationships

- What is the importance of each character?
- What role does each one play?
- What relationships exist between the characters?

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Indicators of cause, time, purpose and opposition

When expressions enable us to determine the causes of events, their duration, the time at which they occur, the purpose of actions, and whether they support or contradict each other.

Sample Question:

Excerpt from a text:

“...embarrassingly fortunate to have been born there, in one of those blessed cities that like Vancouver, Rio, Capetown or Naples, enjoy the unique luxury of a magnificent view every day of the year.”

The author describes Vancouver as a blessed city because _____ .

- a) it is a luxurious city
- b) it is a romantic city
- c) it has a magnificent view
- d) life there is slow-paced.

(Answer: C)

The meaning of words in their context

You should be able to understand the meaning of the words used by the author of a text.

Sample Question:

Choose the word that has the same meaning as the words that are underlined.

Alexander opened the door and burst in on the meeting.

- a) Concluded
- b) Congratulated
- c) Joined
- d) Interrupted

(Answer: D)

Reference Material

The following reference material may be useful:

Robinson, S.D. *In Flight*. Scarborough: Prentice-Hall of Canada Ltd., 1991.

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French

In order to pass the French test, you must have a firm command of grammar, a strong vocabulary and the ability to understand a short text.

Articles

You should be able to use the following articles correctly:

le, la, les (e.g. la fille, les maisons)

un, une, des (e.g. un chien, des pommes)

Adjectives

You should be able to use the following adjectives correctly:

- regular (e.g. grand, grande, grands, grandes)
- irregular (e.g. neuf, neuve, heureux, heureuse)
- comparative (e.g. plus petit, le plus haut, la moins belle)

Pronouns

You should be able to use the following pronouns correctly:

- personal: le, la, les, l', lui, elles, eux (e.g. elle la voit, chez eux)
- possessive : le mien, la mienne, les miens, les miennes, etc.
- demonstrative : celui, celle, ceux, celles
- relative : lequel, laquelle, lesquels, lesquelles
- indefinite : quelqu'un, personne, rien

Verbs

You should be able to use the following verb forms correctly:

- idiomatic expressions with : **avoir, avoir envie de, avoir chaud/froid etc.**
- past participle with **avoir**, agreement with direct object
- present, past, and future tenses
- il faut, followed by an infinitive
- il faut que, followed by the subjunctive
- subordinate clause with si
- present participle
- past infinitive

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Adverbs and Prepositions

You should be able to use the following adverbs and prepositions:

adverbs of time (e.g. hier, aujourd’hui, demain)

prepositions (e.g. dans, depuis, en, pendant)

Sample Question:

Choose the word that completes the sentence.

Louise a beaucoup de _____ vêtements.

- A) beau
- B) beaux
- C) belles
- D) bels

(Answer: B)

Reference Material

The following reference may be useful:

Boucher. A.M. et al. Via. Montréal : Marcel Didier inc. , 1992.

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MATHEMATICS

You often have occasion to use mathematics in daily life: e.g. when planning personal budgets, purchases, renovations or vacations. In these situations you need to make use of certain knowledge of geometry, percentages, the four basic operations and the international system of units.

To obtain a good result on your test, prepare yourself by reviewing the following content.

The Four Basic Operations

You should be able to perform the four basic operations on whole numbers, simple fractions and decimal numbers, taking into account the priority of operations for addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.

Sample Question:

What is the solution to the following operations?

$$2 \times \left\{ \frac{1}{2} - \frac{1}{4} \right\} + 3 + 2 \times \left\{ \frac{1}{3} + \frac{1}{4} \right\}$$

- a) $3^{5/6}$
- b) $4^{2/3}$
- c) 22
- d) 25

(Answer: B)

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Problems of Reasoning Related to Everyday Life

You should be able to solve problems related to everyday life.

Sample Question:

A property owner instructs a real estate agent to sell a lot for \$4600 and pays the agent a commission of 11%. What will be the net amount received by the property owner?

- A) \$ 506
- B) \$4094
- C) \$4194
- D) \$5106

(Answer: B)

Ratio and Proportion

You should be able to apply the principles of ratio and proportion in everyday situations.

Sample Question:

In a school, the ration of teachers to students is 3 to 90. If there are 12 teachers in the school, how many students are there?

- a) 36
- b) 270
- c) 360
- d) 1080

(Answer: C)

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Number Order

You should be able to put a series of numbers in increasing or decreasing order.

Sample Question:

$$\frac{3}{5} \quad \frac{3}{10} \quad \frac{1}{2} \quad \frac{3}{4} \quad \frac{7}{20}$$

$$\text{a) } \frac{3}{4} \quad \frac{3}{5} \quad \frac{3}{10} \quad \frac{1}{2} \quad \frac{7}{20}$$

$$\text{b) } \frac{7}{20} \quad \frac{3}{4} \quad \frac{3}{5} \quad \frac{1}{2} \quad \frac{3}{10}$$

$$\text{c) } \frac{3}{10} \quad \frac{7}{20} \quad \frac{1}{2} \quad \frac{3}{5} \quad \frac{3}{4}$$

$$\text{d) } \frac{3}{5} \quad \frac{3}{10} \quad \frac{3}{4} \quad \frac{7}{20} \quad \frac{1}{2}$$

Answer: C

The International System of Units

You should know the international system of units and the symbols associated with it.

Examples:

- degrees Celsius (°C)
- gram (g)
- litre (L)
- metre (m)

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Geometry

You should be able to recognize and calculate the perimeter and the area of the following

- square
- rectangle
- rhombus
- trapezoid
- triangle
- circle

You should be able to calculate the volume of the following forms:

- cube
- rectangular prism
- cylinder

You should know what a diagonal is, and what it may be used for.

Data Analysis and Graphs

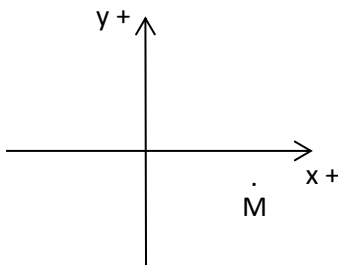
You should be able to:

- locate a point on a straight line, on a Cartesian graph, on a geographic map;
- calculate the distance between two points on a geographic map and a Cartesian graph.

Sample Question:

Which ordered pair best describes the point m on the graph below?

- a) (-7, -3)
- b) (8, -2)
- c) (6, 4)
- d) (-8, -2)



(Answer: B)

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Reference Material

The following reference material may be useful:

Ebos, F., et al. *Math in Context 7*. Scarborough : Nelson Canada Ltd., 1992.

Knill. G., et al. *Mathpower Seven*. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1993.

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Social Studies

This test draws upon a range of knowledge in the areas of geography, history, politics and economics, at both the national and international levels.

If you are an inquisitive person with an interest in all these subjects, and if you regularly watch news and public affairs programs on television or read newspapers and trade magazines, your preparation for the test will be much easier.

The test questions draw upon your general knowledge and your various life and work experiences.

General Knowledge

You should be able to name and locate on a map:

- the continents
- the oceans
- the seas
- various countries

Distribution of Population in Various Regions of the World

You should understand information pertaining to the distribution of population on a map.

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Basic Knowledge of Canadian Geography

You should know about:

- borders, areas (square kilometres), population
- the provinces, territories and regions
- climatic and vegetation zones
- populated areas
- natural resources

Sample Question:

What is the principal grain cultivated on the Canadian Prairies?

- a) Oats
- b) Wheat
- c) Barley
- d) Rye

Basic Knowledge of Québec Geography

You should now about:

- borders, areas (square kilometres), population
- features of the economy of Québec
- administrative regions

Economics

You should know and understand factors pertaining to:

- economic organization
- production, consumption, currencies
- the role of the state

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Politics

You should have a general knowledge of:

- the governments of various countries and political parties
- opposition movements

Sample Question:

Indira GANDHI was the prime minister of what country?

- a) Cambodia
- b) India
- c) Laos
- d) Pakistan

(Answer: B)

History of the Twentieth Century

You should be familiar with:

- the main periods of the twentieth century
- the causes and consequences of the two world wars
- the post-World War II world

Sample Question:

What organization was created after the Second World War for the purpose of maintaining peace and international security and fostering economic, social and cultural cooperation?

- a) The league of Nations
- b) The Marshall Plan
- c) The United Nations
- d) The North Atlantic Treaty Organization

(Answer: C)

Québec Under the British Regime

You should understand the consequences of the Conquest.

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Canada

You should be able to answer questions on:

- the stages of Confederation
- political and economic evolution
- the First World War
- the Second World War
- the Duplessis era, the Quiet Revolution, the October crisis of 1970, the first time the Parti Québécois was elected to power.
- income tax and other taxes

Sample Question:

Which premier of Québec, as head of the Union nationale, governed as an autocrat and championed provincial autonomy?

- A) Daniel Johnson
- B) Jean-Jacques Bertrand
- C) Maurice Duplessis
- D) Paul Sauvé

(Answer: C)

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Reference Material

Among materials currently available, we suggest the following:

Dickinson, J.A., and B Young. ***Diverse Pasts: A History of Québec and Canada***. Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1995.

Greenblatt, M., and P.S. Lemmo. ***Human Heritage: A World History***. Columbus. Ohio: Merrill Publishing Co., 1989

Greenblatt. M. and P.S. Lemmo. ***Human Hertiage: A World history (Third Edition)***. Westerville, Ohio: Glencoe/Macmillian/McGraw-Hill, 1995.

Kemball, W.G. ***Geographic Essentials***. Toronto: Oxford University Press Canada, 1986.

Létourneau, L. ***History and You***. Montréal: Éditions Beauchemin Limitée, 1989.

Stanford, Q.H. ***Canadian Oxford School Atlas (6th Edition)***. Toronto: Oxford University Press Canada, 1992.

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ECONOMICS

This test measures your knowledge of the world of business and economics.

If you are familiar with the rules of governing unions, unemployment insurance and working conditions, and if you read the financial or legal sections of the daily newspapers, you already have the kind of knowledge that will assist you in preparing for this test. This knowledge will include the subjects indicated below.

The Economy

You should understand something of the economic activities of businesses and individuals.

Government policies and the Business World

You should be able to answer questions on:

- governments and their economic forecasts
- State policies and the business world
- Canada’s economic relations with other countries

Sample Question:

How does the federal government finance its purchases?

- A) by liquidating its gold reserves on the international market
- B) by issuing treasury bills
- C) by issuing bank notes
- D) by issuing Canada savings bonds

(Answer: D)

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Business

You should be able to recognize types of businesses and forms of ownership, such as:

- marketing and sales
- production
- administration
- supply

You should understand some concepts concerning:

Personal management and work relations

- financing
- accounting
- computers
- competitiveness

Sample Question:

To satisfy consumer needs, the marketing department of a business must be organized according to different areas of operation. What are these areas?

- A) Administration, production and distribution
- B) Financing, personnel and promotion
- C) Market research, administration and production
- D) Market research, promotion and distribution

(Answer: D)

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Other Concepts

You should understand what is meant by:

- bankruptcy
- banking and financial operations
- civil law and criminal law
- the state and protection of the citizen

Sample Question:

A consumer makes an agreement with a salesperson to spread the cost of a purchase over several payments. What is this agreement called?

- A) a variable credit purchase
- B) an installment plan
- C) a cash purchase
- D) a pressure sale

(Answer B)

Reference Material

Among, materials currently available, we suggest the following:

Doherty, D.C. *Making Economic Choices*. Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1992.

Thexton. J.D. *Made in Canada: Economics for Canadians* (2nd Edition). Toronto: Oxford University Press Canada, 1988.

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NATURAL SCIENCE

This test measures general knowledge about human beings and the physical phenomena that occur in their natural environment.

If you read magazines or watch television programs that deal with the subject of science, you already have acquired a certain skill. By reviewing the content below, you will improve your results on the test.

Human Beings

You should know:

- The principal bones and muscles
- The parts of the digestive system and its functions
- The rules of health nutrition
- The functions of organs in different systems (heart, kidney, lungs)
- The eyes and ears (their functions and disorders)

Sample Question:

What substance transports oxygen in the blood and gives the blood its red colour?

- a) Lymph
- b) Serum
- c) Hemoglobin
- d) Hormone

(Answer: C)

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The Natural Environment

You should know about:

- the properties of air and its components
- the consequences of pollution
- the greenhouse effect
- the properties of water and purification methods
- weather phenomena
- the characteristics of earthquakes

Sample Question:

What causes hard water?

- a) The presence of chlorine in the water
- b) The presence of mercury and lead in the water
- c) The presence of lead in the water
- d) The presence of calcium and magnesium salts in the water

(Answer: D)

Physical phenomena

You should know:

- The international system of units
- The advantages and dangers of nuclear power plants
- The physical and chemical transformations of solids, liquids and gases
- The symbols for hazardous substances

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You should be able to calculate speed, distance and time using the appropriate measures.

You should understand the meaning of:

- acidity
- combustion

Sample Question:

If temperature remains constant, what happens to the pressure of a gas when its volume is doubled?

- A) Pressure will double
- B) Pressure will quadruple
- C) Pressure will not change
- D) Pressure will be reduced by half.

(Answer: D)

Reference Material

Among materials currently available, we suggest the following:

Berry, G., and D. Lynn. ***Biology of Ourselves*** (Second Edition) Toronto: John Wiley and Sons Canada Ltd., 1990.

Kozman, N., et al. ***Physical Science: Discovering Matter and Energy***. Toronto: Copp Clark Pittman, 1991.

Poole, M.C., et al. ***Biology in Action***. Toronto; Harcourt, Grace, Jovanovich, Canada, 1992.

Quessey, N., and C. Schepper. ***Our Physical Environment***. Translated by J. Holt. Montréal: Holt, Rinehart and Winston Canada Ltd., 1986.

Viel, J., and P. Darveau. **An Ecological Perspective**. Translated by J. Holt. Montréal: Guérin éditeur limitée, 1984.

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SUGGESTIONS

It is normal to experience a certain amount of stress before a test, but such stress can act as a positive stimulation. The best way to increase your personal confidence is to prepare yourself adequately.

Make sure that you understand clearly the instructions at the beginning of each test. Do not hesitate to ask the person in charge for help.

Read each question carefully and answer the ones you find easiest first. When answering multiple-choice questions, you should use the process of elimination to arrive at the best answer.

Be careful, because some questions are formulated in the negative. In such cases, the negative term is always written in **bold capital letters**.

You may be required to answer questions that are accompanied by maps, graphs or tables. It is extremely important to read the questions carefully and to look closely at all the information appearing on the graph.

After you have finished the test, check that you have answered all the questions. Do not leave any question unanswered if you have time remaining.