

In-tray and e-tray exercises: applied practice: open practice pack

20 untimed questions across 4 authored sections.

Detail	Value
Pack	applied-practice-in-tray
Source	applied-practice
Pack version	v1
Worksheet items	20
Authored hints	0
Worked explanations	20

This is untimed educational practice for one applied skill. It is not a clinical, diagnostic, employment, or professionally recognized assessment, it does not produce a score or credential, and for the judgement and safety families it is not a substitute for your employer's own policies, training, or legal duties.

The answer key and worked explanations in this file belong only to this public, untimed educational practice source. No active aptitude suite or Novus Reasoning Challenge answer key is ever included in any download.

Learner worksheet

Each item describes what is sitting in your tray and asks what you would do. Choose the most effective response, then read the explanation. It names the triage principle and shows what the most tempting alternative costs. Nothing here is timed; a real exercise adds a clock, but the reasoning is the part worth practising.

Choose one answer for each item. On a judgement item, more than one option is often defensible. Pick the one you would rate most effective, then check the worked explanation for why the runner-up is weaker.

Triage: what to deal with first

Warm up on ordering. Look for the item whose option disappears, not the item that shouts loudest.

1. in-tray-applied-s01-q01

You have thirty minutes before a meeting. Your tray holds: a supplier asking you to confirm a delivery slot by noon today or lose it; a colleague wanting feedback on a draft due Friday; an all-staff notice about parking; and a customer complaint received yesterday with no stated deadline.

- A. Confirm the delivery slot, because it is the only item whose option disappears today
- B. Answer the customer complaint, because it has waited longest
- C. Give the draft feedback, because a colleague is blocked on you
- D. Read the all-staff notice first, in case it changes the other items

Your answer: _____

2. in-tray-applied-s01-q02

One email is marked URGENT and states no deadline. Another, unmarked, asks for something needed for a meeting in two hours.

- A. Deal with the one marked urgent; the sender has told you it matters
- B. Work on both in parallel
- C. Reply to the urgent one asking what the deadline is, then start the other
- D. Deal with the two-hour item; a sender's flag describes their priority, not the actual deadline

Your answer: _____

3. in-tray-applied-s01-q03

A message in your tray can be dealt with completely in about two minutes. Several substantial pieces of work are also waiting.

- A. Always start with the substantial work; small items can always wait
- B. Clear it now if it releases somebody else or removes a deadline; otherwise schedule it with the rest
- C. Always clear anything that takes under two minutes as soon as you see it
- D. Batch every small item to the end of the day

Your answer: _____

4. in-tray-applied-s01-q04

Reading through your tray you notice two separate messages, from two different people, that are really about the same underlying problem.

- A. Answer each of them separately, as each was sent
- B. Answer the more senior of the two and let the answer filter down
- C. Answer them together with one consistent account, and tell each of them that the other is involved
- D. Wait for the two of them to discover each other

Your answer: _____

5. in-tray-applied-s01-q05

An item arrives in your tray that plainly belongs to another team.

- A. Deal with it yourself to save the sender the trouble
- B. Delete it; it is not yours
- C. Reply to the sender explaining that it is not your area
- D. Forward it to the right owner, tell the sender who now has it and why, and keep a note until you see it acknowledged

Your answer: _____

Deadlines, dependencies, and delegation

Order work by slack and by what it unblocks, not simply by the nearest date. Notice which items other work is waiting on.

6. in-tray-applied-s02-q01

Task A needs three days of work and is due in four. Task B needs one day and is due in two. Task C needs one day, is due in six, and cannot start until A is finished. What do you start now?

- A. B, because it has the nearest deadline
- B. A, because it has the least slack relative to its length and C cannot start until it is done
- C. C, to get the dependency out of the way early

- D. Split the time evenly across all three

Your answer: _____

7. in-tray-applied-s02-q02

You can hand exactly one of four items to a capable colleague. Which should it be?

- A. The one you least enjoy doing
- B. The one that only you have the background to do
- C. The one with a clear, checkable output that they already have the information to produce
- D. The most urgent one, to get the pressure off your own list

Your answer: _____

8. in-tray-applied-s02-q03

A meeting invitation lands on the only remaining slot in which you can finish something due that same day.

- A. Say you cannot attend, explain why, ask what input is needed, and offer it in writing or attend only for the part that concerns you
- B. Attend, and let the deliverable slip
- C. Decline without explanation
- D. Attend, and work on the deliverable during the meeting

Your answer: _____

9. in-tray-applied-s02-q04

A request arrives with no deadline stated at all.

- A. Assume it is urgent and do it now
- B. Assume it is not urgent and put it at the back of the queue
- C. Tell them you will get to it when you have time
- D. Ask when it is needed by and what it is for, then schedule it and say when it will be done

Your answer: _____

10. in-tray-applied-s02-q05

Adding up the week's commitments, you can see that they exceed the time available. Nothing has slipped yet.

- A. Work longer hours to absorb the overload
- B. Do everything, to a lower standard
- C. List the commitments with their deadlines, agree with whoever owns the priorities what moves, and confirm the revised plan
- D. Let the least important item slip without raising it

Your answer: _____

Stakeholders and competing demands

Harder items, where two reasonable people both want your next hour. Decide on consequence, and make the decision visible.

11. in-tray-applied-s03-q01

Two colleagues at the same level each need something from you today, and each has told you theirs is the priority.

- A. Deal with whoever asked first
- B. Deal with the one you work with most closely
- C. Do part of each so neither is left with nothing
- D. Tell both what you can do today, ask each what happens if theirs waits until tomorrow, and decide on the consequences

Your answer: _____

12. in-tray-applied-s03-q02

A senior stakeholder emails you directly asking you to drop your current priority for theirs, without involving your manager.

- A. Acknowledge it, say what it would displace, and confirm with your manager before changing the plan
- B. Reprioritise as asked; they are considerably more senior
- C. Decline, and tell them to take it up with your manager
- D. Reprioritise now and tell your manager at the next catch-up

Your answer: _____

13. in-tray-applied-s03-q03

You have to turn down a request from a colleague whose help you are likely to need next month.

- A. Agree to it and deliver late, which is softer than refusing
- B. Decline without giving a reason
- C. Decline the specific request, say what you could do instead or when you could do it, and be exact about both
- D. Say you will try, and leave it open

Your answer: _____

14. in-tray-applied-s03-q04

An angry escalation email arrives about your team's work, copied to four other people. Some of its claims look wrong to you.

- A. Reply to all immediately with the facts as you understand them
- B. Establish the facts first, then reply to the sender with the correction and a plan, copying the same people once
- C. Reply privately to the sender and leave the copied group as they are
- D. Leave it for your manager to answer

Your answer: _____

15. in-tray-applied-s03-q05

A stakeholder keeps adding small extras to a piece of work whose scope you agreed a fortnight ago.

- A. Treat each addition as a change: state its effect on the date or on what gets dropped, and get that confirmed

- B. Refuse any change to the agreed scope
- C. Absorb the extras; individually they are all small
- D. Escalate the behaviour to their manager

Your answer: _____

Replies that close the loop

Finish on what you send back. A reply that does not say who does what by when creates another item in somebody's tray.

16. in-tray-applied-s04-q01

What should a reply intended to close an exchange contain?

- A. All the relevant background, so the reader can reach their own conclusion
- B. An apology for the delay and an assurance that it is in hand
- C. The answer or decision, what happens next, who does it, and by when
- D. A clarifying question, so you do not answer the wrong thing

Your answer: _____

17. in-tray-applied-s04-q02

Answering one question properly needs information from four different people.

- A. Email all four asking for anything they have on the topic
- B. Ask each one the specific question only they can answer, with the deadline and why it is needed
- C. Ask the most senior of the four to collect it from the others
- D. Raise it in a group thread so everyone can see the whole picture

Your answer: _____

18. in-tray-applied-s04-q03

A twenty-message email chain is still running, and a new person needs to join it.

- A. Forward the whole chain so they have everything
- B. Bring them up to speed verbally when you next see them
- C. Ask them to read through it before contributing
- D. Send a short summary of what has been settled, what decision is outstanding, and the specific question for them, with the chain attached for reference

Your answer: _____

19. in-tray-applied-s04-q04

You are away for a week and several items in your tray are live.

- A. Hand each live item to a named person with its current state and deadline, and say in your absence message who to contact for what
- B. Set an out-of-office message giving your return date
- C. Try to clear everything before you leave
- D. Check your email each morning while you are away

Your answer: _____

20. in-tray-applied-s04-q05

You discover that a figure you sent out yesterday was wrong. Several people have it and at least one is already using it.

- A. Correct it in the next regular update, which is due on Friday
- B. Send a correction now to exactly the people who received the original, saying plainly what was wrong and what the right figure is
- C. Correct it privately with the person you know is using it
- D. Say nothing; the difference is small

Your answer: _____

Authored hints

This applied practice source does not publish separate authored hints: the rationale is attached to each item as a worked explanation instead. Every item is therefore listed as missing a hint, and no hint text is generated or inferred.

20 worksheet items do not have an authored hint. No hint text was generated for them.

Answer key

The answer key and worked explanations in this file belong only to this public, untimed educational practice source. No active aptitude suite or Novus Reasoning Challenge answer key is ever included in any download.

In-tray and e-tray exercises: applied practice: open practice pack answer key

Item	Choice	Answer
in-tray-applied-s01-q01	A	Confirm the delivery slot, because it is the only item whose option disappears today
in-tray-applied-s01-q02	D	Deal with the two-hour item; a sender's flag describes their priority, not the actual deadline
in-tray-applied-s01-q03	B	Clear it now if it releases somebody else or removes a deadline; otherwise schedule it with the rest
in-tray-applied-s01-q04	C	Answer them together with one consistent account, and tell each of them that the other is involved
in-tray-applied-s01-q05	D	Forward it to the right owner, tell the sender who now has it and why, and keep a note until you see it acknowledged
in-tray-applied-s02-q01	B	A, because it has the least slack relative to its length and C cannot start until it is done
in-tray-applied-s02-q02	C	The one with a clear, checkable output that they already have the information to produce
in-tray-applied-s02-q03	A	Say you cannot attend, explain why, ask what input is needed, and offer it in writing or attend only for the part that concerns you
in-tray-applied-s02-q04	D	Ask when it is needed by and what it is for, then schedule it and say when it will be done
in-tray-applied-s02-q05	C	List the commitments with their deadlines, agree with whoever owns the priorities what moves, and confirm the revised plan

in-tray-applied-s03-q01	D	Tell both what you can do today, ask each what happens if theirs waits until tomorrow, and decide on the consequences
in-tray-applied-s03-q02	A	Acknowledge it, say what it would displace, and confirm with your manager before changing the plan
in-tray-applied-s03-q03	C	Decline the specific request, say what you could do instead or when you could do it, and be exact about both
in-tray-applied-s03-q04	B	Establish the facts first, then reply to the sender with the correction and a plan, copying the same people once
in-tray-applied-s03-q05	A	Treat each addition as a change: state its effect on the date or on what gets dropped, and get that confirmed
in-tray-applied-s04-q01	C	The answer or decision, what happens next, who does it, and by when
in-tray-applied-s04-q02	B	Ask each one the specific question only they can answer, with the deadline and why it is needed
in-tray-applied-s04-q03	D	Send a short summary of what has been settled, what decision is outstanding, and the specific question for them, with the chain attached for reference
in-tray-applied-s04-q04	A	Hand each live item to a named person with its current state and deadline, and say in your absence message who to contact for what
in-tray-applied-s04-q05	B	Send a correction now to exactly the people who received the original, saying plainly what was wrong and what the right figure is

Worked explanations

in-tray-applied-s01-q01: Only one of these four items stops being possible at a fixed time, and everything else can still be done well this afternoon. The complaint is the strongest alternative because age feels like urgency, but it is still fully actionable in two hours, while the delivery slot is not.

in-tray-applied-s01-q02: A stated time beats an assertion of importance, because only one of them can be checked. Replying to ask for the deadline is the reasonable-looking middle path, and it spends part of a two-hour window on correspondence about priority rather than on the thing that is due.

in-tray-applied-s01-q03: The test is what the two minutes buys. An unblocked colleague or a closed deadline is worth the interruption, and a tidy inbox is not. Clearing everything short on sight is the familiar rule and the one that fails at volume: small items arrive faster than they can be cleared, so applied unconditionally it lets the trivial displace the important all day.

in-tray-applied-s01-q04: One account given to both prevents the two answers from drifting apart, and connecting the senders often removes the problem entirely. Answering separately is the responsive-looking option, and it is how an organisation ends up with two slightly different official positions on the same question.

in-tray-applied-s01-q05: Routing it, naming the new owner, and holding a note until it is picked up is the difference between a handover and a hand-off. Replying that it is not your area is the defensible-sounding answer: technically correct, and it returns the sender to exactly where they started, a day later than when they wrote to you.

in-tray-applied-s02-q01: A has one spare day against three days of work and gates C; B has one spare day against one day of work and gates nothing. Earliest-deadline-first is a good default and the reason B is tempting, but it ignores both the amount of work behind each date and the fact that delaying A delays C as well.

in-tray-applied-s02-q02: Delegation works when the outcome is definable and the person has what they need, because then a misunderstanding shows up in the output rather than at the deadline. Handing over the

most urgent item is the instinct under pressure and the worst choice: it gives the other person the least time to ask the questions that would prevent a wrong result.

in-tray-applied-s02-q03: Offering the input in another form gives the meeting what it actually needed from you and protects the commitment you already made. Attending and working through it is the option that appears to solve both, and it reliably does neither: the contribution is thin, the deliverable is worse, and everyone in the room can tell.

in-tray-applied-s02-q04: Two short questions convert an unbounded request into something you can place in a week, and what it is for often changes what is actually needed. 'When I have time' is the honest-sounding reply and gives the sender nothing to plan around, which is why it produces a chasing message three days later.

in-tray-applied-s02-q05: Surfacing the arithmetic now, while every option is still open, is the only version where somebody else can help you choose. Letting the least important thing slip silently is the option that feels like taking responsibility, and it fails twice: your ranking may not match theirs, and the person expecting that item finds out on the day it was due.

in-tray-applied-s03-q01: The question that separates them is what breaks if it waits, and the people who know the answer are the two asking. First-come-first-served is the fairest-looking rule and has no relationship to consequence: it settles the tie by an accident of timing rather than by what a delay costs.

in-tray-applied-s03-q02: Naming the displaced work turns an instruction into a trade the two of them can settle, and it takes about a minute. Simply complying is the deferential answer and quietly breaks your manager's plan without their knowledge, and they are the person who will be asked why the displaced work is late.

in-tray-applied-s03-q03: A precise no with an alternative lets them make another plan today and costs almost no goodwill, because it is respectful of their time. 'I'll try' is the option that feels like preserving the relationship, and it spends more of it than the refusal would have: they wait, plan around you, and find out late.

in-tray-applied-s03-q04: Getting it right before replying costs an hour; getting it wrong in front of five people costs considerably more, and a single corrected reply to the same audience closes it. Replying privately is the calmer-looking option and leaves everyone who was copied holding the incorrect version, which is where the story then settles.

in-tray-applied-s03-q05: Pricing each change keeps the work flexible while keeping the date honest, and it lets the stakeholder decide whether the extra is worth what it costs. Absorbing them is the cooperative answer and is how deadlines slip with no visible cause. Nothing ever showed a price, so the additions continue.

in-tray-applied-s04-q01: Decision, action, owner, date is the minimum set that leaves nothing for anyone to chase. Sending the full background is the thorough-looking alternative and generates one more message, because a reader given context but no decision has to write back to ask what you want them to do.

in-tray-applied-s04-q02: A specific question addressed to one person is answerable in two minutes and is obviously theirs to answer. The group thread is the transparent-looking option and is where diffusion of responsibility happens: with four recipients and no named owner, each one reasonably assumes somebody better placed will reply.

in-tray-applied-s04-q03: Summarising costs you five minutes and saves them an hour of reconstruction, and it tells them what their contribution is for. Forwarding the chain is the complete-looking answer and transfers that hour to them; it is the usual reason a new joiner's first message reopens something settled at message four.

in-tray-applied-s04-q04: Named owners plus current state is what lets the work continue rather than queue, and the absence message then routes people rather than just informing them. The out-of-office alone is the standard answer and does only half the job: it tells people you are unavailable without telling them what to do

instead, so the items simply wait for you.

in-tray-applied-s04-q05: Same audience, same day, stated plainly is what stops the wrong number propagating any further. Correcting it only with the person you know about is the proportionate-looking option, and you cannot know who else has quoted or forwarded it, so it leaves two versions of the figure in circulation with no way to tell them apart.

This is untimed educational practice for one applied skill. It is not a clinical, diagnostic, employment, or professionally recognized assessment, it does not produce a score or credential, and for the judgement and safety families it is not a substitute for your employer's own policies, training, or legal duties.

The answer key and worked explanations in this file belong only to this public, untimed educational practice source. No active aptitude suite or Novus Reasoning Challenge answer key is ever included in any download.

Source: <https://learn.novusstreamsolutions.com/aptitude/skills/in-tray>