

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a polygraph examination?

Polygraph is an interview and then a recording of physical responses to determine if a person (the examinee) reacts while being asked a series of questions. The process is transparent and the equipment is modern. It is not what you may have seen in television and movies. There is no trickery.

How accurate is a polygraph exam?

Current polygraph research indicates that when a specific, single-issue polygraph exam is properly administered by a qualified and trained examiner, the accuracy rate is between 88% and 92%. Since 1980, a compendium of research studies -- encompassing 80 research projects, involving 6,380 polygraph examinations, and 12 studies of the validity of field examinations following 2,174 field examinations -- indicate an average accuracy rate of 98%.

How long does a polygraph exam take?

The process takes 2-3 hours. This includes an interview on biographical and health information; a discussion of the issues, questions, and process; a practice test; and the actual test. The charts are analyzed and the results reported to the examinee before s/he leaves the exam site. Follow up reporting can be done via email and/or a written report.

What types of questions are asked?

Typical polygraph exams just over a dozen questions, three or four of which are relevant to the topic at hand. "Did you [do whatever]..." is an example of a relevant question. Three of these questions is ideal, four is the absolute maximum. The other of the twelve questions guide your reactions.

Examinees (other than court-ordered ones) are welcome to prepare their own questions, which will be edited for the actual procedure. For example, there cannot be any compound questions that are linked with conjunctions such as "and" or "or". Questions about emotions or what someone contemplates they will do in the future cannot be included. Questions can only cover one topic (e.g., fidelity) and cannot span multiple topics. Sex offender questions are specified by a therapist or probation officer in advance.

Do you conduct infidelity exams?

Yes. Marital fidelity issues usually mean discussion and asking questions regarding sexual activities or behavior. As a result, be prepared to discuss sexual issues in a clinical manner. The examiner is trained on conducting Post-Conviction Sex-Offender Testing, so he works with clinical psychologists and sex addiction therapists to obtain information necessary to identify sexual and deviant behaviors. His interest in sexual issues is strictly clinical and not an inappropriate intrusion into your personal life.

Both parties involved in a dispute are welcome to be present during the question formulation process. However, if there is hostility between the parties, the examiner prefers to meet each party separately.

The examiner cannot ask “Do you love your spouse?” (because that’s an emotion and love can be defined in various ways), however a spouse may be asked if s/he has lied when s/he stated they loved you, for example. A spouse may also be asked if s/he has already been taking steps to leave someone.

Do you conduct exams in cases involving allegations of sexual assault or abuse of minors?

Yes. Examiners are obligated by law to report allegations of sexual abuse that may be discovered during polygraph testing to state Child Protective Services. The only waiver to this requirement is if performing the examination at the request of an attorney, in which case, the attorney-client privilege applies and the polygraph examination is protected from disclosure.

Anyone accused of Sexual Assault or a related crime is strongly urged to retain an attorney prior to taking a polygraph. Representation by an attorney will ensure the results of the private polygraph examination are protected from disclosure should the results not be favorable, for whatever reason, to your case.

If needed, you may wish to consult the Texas Criminal Defense Lawyer’s Association or similar website. Scroll down to “Need A Lawyer” to find one in your area.

Do you test pre-teens, teens, or adolescents?

Yes, if certain conditions are met. Anyone under the age of 18 must have written parental or guardian consent before they can be tested. The traditional minimum age for testing is 12 years-of-age.

However, the age of the pre-teen or adolescent is not as important as maturity, so it is important for the parents and examiner to determine if the individual is mature enough to clearly differentiate between right and wrong. If it can be established that the individual is mature enough and can describe these differences, and the parent or guardian provides written consent, the examiner may agree to perform the examination.

What if I’m nervous or stressed?

Being nervous is a normal reaction to taking a polygraph. Nonetheless, once a person arrives for testing they establish a new “baseline” of stress and the examiner is able to account for that new stress level. It is practical to still differentiate between “normal” stress and the physiological reactions that are exhibited when someone is being deceptive.

The examiner will treat you with respect. He will not antagonize or accuse anyone. The pre-test interview is a lengthy discussion of the issues, questions, and process. Most people usually calm down significantly after talking starts, so there is no need to worry.

It is important to inform the examiner if you have had a significant life-changing experience within 24-hours of your polygraph examination. For example, the examiner needs to know if you just came from an argument, were served with divorce papers, if a relative just died, if a favorite pet is missing, or any other situation that may be causing you abnormal stress or distraction. If that is the case, the examiner may ask you to re-schedule your appointment.

What if I’m pregnant, have a serious heart condition, or other series physical issue?

If pregnant, get an approval letter from a physician allowing you to take the exam. If you have a serious heart condition or other serious physical issue, consider also getting an approval letter from a physician allowing you to take the exam. If you have any questions please ask prior to scheduling, as deposits are non refundable.

What do I do if I'm taking a medication?

Please do not stop taking any existing medications, and do not start taking any new medications, within 24 hours of the examination. This applies to prescription or over-the-counter drugs.

Unless this is a pre employment exam, please bring with you a list of any medications that you are taking, including the name of the medication, the amount of the dosage, and the frequency of usage.

The use of recreational drugs (marijuana, etc.) or alcohol on the day of the examination may be cause to suspend the examination.

Can polygraph results be used in court proceedings?

The short answer is yes. Various entities may use exam results in court proceedings in different ways, including but not limited to:

- ✓ Police Agencies: Some law enforcement agencies accept the results of private polygraphs, but some don't because they want to perform their own tests.
- ✓ Child Protective Services: CPS usually accepts polygraph results done by either private examiners or police examiners as long as the examiner is certified to conduct sex offender polygraphs in child abuse cases.
- ✓ Courts: Most courts in Texas use polygraph testing as a condition of probation for sex offenders and others on probation, such as alcohol-related convictions. Courts may use the results to determine if the probationer stays on probation or goes to jail for violating conditions of probation.
- ✓ Grand Jury: Polygraph results can be used in Grand Jury proceedings because the standard of proof is "reasonable suspicion" that a crime has been committed.
- ✓ District Attorneys (DA): Some DAs use polygraph as a tool to determine whether to indict someone, or whether to present the case to a Grand Jury.
- ✓ Civil Cases: Polygraph results are admissible in civil proceedings (divorces, contested wills, and lawsuits).
- ✓ Criminal Trials: Polygraph results may be admissible in criminal proceedings if the defense attorney, the prosecution, and the judge all agree in advance.

How do I schedule an exam?

Everything is done by appointment. Walk-ins are not allowed, due to other appointments and travel. The examiner is usually booked a few days out, so that means he can usually perform your examination within a few days. Our online real-time scheduling is awesome; you select from when you can fit it into your schedule!

The examiner understands that you cannot take off from work, so he tries to perform polygraph examinations around your schedule. This means that, given at least 48-hours' notice and a pre-paid and confirmed appointment, he will often work in the evenings and weekends, and holidays, at no extra cost.

What do I bring to my exam appointment?

Please bring an official photo ID. The examiner will photograph your ID and you, and ask for your signature and fingerprint, so he can prove that it was you who took the examination.

Please do not bring children to the appointment. We cannot conduct an exam if children are present.

What does an exam cost?

The base fee is listed on the scheduling pages. The rate varies by exam type. This can increase for criminal matters, and if the exam is conducted on-site, such as at a workplace or inside a jail.

Most exams require a \$100 nonrefundable deposit in advance. These are done via credit card or PayPal. In person payment may be via cash, debit, and credit cards (Visa, Mastercard, American Express, Discover) or contactless payments (Apple Pay, Samsung Pay, Android Pay, Cash App). The balance must be paid in full upon arrival. PCSOT exams have no deposit; Pre Employment exams are paid by the employer.

The examinee needs to arrive on-time for scheduled appointment. An appointment is considered a “No Show” when the client fails to arrive within 15 minutes of their scheduled appointment without notifying the examiner that they will be late.

Any of the following will result in the complete forfeiture of a deposit:

- (i) Failure of the examinee to arrive on time for the scheduled appointment;
- (ii) Failure to pay the remaining balance at the time of the appointment;
- (iii) Failure to reschedule the appointment at least 24 hours in advance (a new deposit will be required to reschedule the appointment); or
- (iv) Failure of the examinee to show up for the scheduled appointment.

What are the examiner's credentials?

- ✓ Member of numerous professional polygraph associations to facilitate continuing education
- ✓ Latest computerized psychophysiological tools and graduated from an accredited training school
- ✓ Graduate of an approved Post-conviction Sex Offender Testing course
- ✓ Seventeen years of experience as a state police officer
- ✓ Professional approach and rapid unbiased result reports; easy online appointment process

What else should I know?

I know your issue is a serious concern. I believe that every polygraph, regardless of the outcome, affects people's lives. As a result, I do everything possible to give the examinee every opportunity to pass. This way, if the examinee fails the examination, I can be assured it was not because of something I failed to do, but rather, it was because the examinee was untruthful during the examination.

/s/ Michael Mitchell

RENDERING AN UNBIASED OPINION