

About CBEST and CSET 2008-09

By NCLB and state law, candidates for California teaching credentials and some paraprofessionals must demonstrate both basic skills and subject area knowledge. Both requirements may (and in most cases must) be satisfied by examination, through the **California Basic Educational Skills Test (CBEST)** and examinations in the **California Subject Examinations for Teachers (CSET)** series.

Most credential programs expect official passing scores by their regular application deadlines: for Fall admission to CSU, test by or before March; for Spring admission, by or before October.

CBEST and CSET share some important attributes: each is given six times a year (see next page); there are no *scheduled* breaks; each section or subtest is scored and passed as a whole, no matter the distinct domains or question types it may contain; the highest score achieved on a section or subtest is the score that counts.

CBEST (<http://www.cbest.nesinc.com>) tests basic skills: **reading comprehension** (critical analysis, evaluation, & comprehension of passages and research skills) and basic **math** (estimation, measurement, & statistical principles, computation & problem solving, and numerical & graphic relationships), each with 50 multiple choice questions, and **writing** (two required formal essays, typically one persuasive and the other a personal narrative; structure, spelling, and punctuation do count).

The total testing time is **four hours** and the fee is **\$41.00** (add **\$64** for the new computerized version); you get all sections each time you register but need not take all.

CSET (<http://www.cset.nesinc.com>) exams test subject area knowledge. Most CSETs (but not all) consist of three subtests that combine multiple choice and constructed response questions. Most subtests (but not all) can be taken in whatever order one chooses; most constructed responses (but not all) are just one to two pages—not essays in the CBEST sense. Details of test structure, content, and scoring are on the Web site; click Test Guides and scroll to your area. The total testing time for each test session is **five hours**.

- **CSET single subject** exams are given in the session ending at 7 pm, except for the communication subtest in languages other than English and the ASL subtests (see below). Only a few subjects are tested on all dates and at all sites (see below). CSET may be waived given sufficient subject matter coursework.

- **CSET-Multiple Subjects (CSET-MS)** is given in the morning, ending at 1 pm. Three subtests test reading, language and literature plus history; science plus math; and PE, human development, and visual and performing arts. CSET-MS, unlike the MSAT it replaced, is not waived for Liberal Studies majors.

- **CSET-Writing** is CBEST's Writing section, offered only for CSET-MS takers. CSET-Writing is given in the afternoon on CSET dates: combining it with CSET-MS makes for a *very* long day. CBEST may still be more practical for hesitant writers (see Results below) or for aspiring substitute teachers.

In contrast to CBEST, you register, pay for, and get only the subtests you will take. The fees per subtest :

\$70 per subtest if the CSET comprises three subtests (Multiple Subjects, Agriculture, American Sign Language, Business, Cantonese, French, German, Health Science, Home Economics, Math including Foundational-level Math, Music, Physical Education, Science, Social Science, Spanish)

\$52 per English Subtest I or II (each is multiple choice)

\$53 per English Subtest III (two essays) or IV (four constructed responses)

\$105 per subtest if the CSET comprises two subtests (Art, Industrial & Technology Education, Arabic, Armenian, Farsi, Filipino, Hmong, Khmer)

\$35 for CSET-Writing

That is, the total cost for all subtests (except CSET-Writing) in a given area, taken once, is \$210.

RICA (<http://www.rica.nesinc.com>) examines elementary teachers' reading instruction competence, and is best taken after one has completed reading-instruction methodology classes in a credential program.

Registration. CBEST and CSET are given in alternating months (see below). Not all single subject CSETs are given at all test sites nor on all dates. Register for CBEST at <http://www.cbest.nesinc.com> and for CSET exams at <http://www.cset.nesinc.com>; don't wait till the last day.

For **alternative testing**—if you shouldn't sit or go without food for four to five hours, you have a learning or other disability, you're pregnant, or you need Sunday testing—apply by the regular registration deadline; instructions and forms are online, and you'll need documentation from a doctor or clergyperson.

Before signing up to **retake** CBEST or CSET, **wait for your scores**: the late-registration fee is automatically waived when you reregister promptly (and fearing you failed does not mean you failed).

Results. Scores for **CBEST** sections are reported on a scale from 20 to 80. The full passing score for each section is **41**, but a score as low as 37 will pass as long as your total is **123** or more; this is why CBEST may be better than CSET-Writing for those who struggle with essays. Passing and non-passing scores are reported as numerical scores. A passing CBEST score is **good for life**, so take the CBEST early—even as early as high school. The printed score report contains useful diagnostic information in the lower left.

Scores for **CSET** subtests, including CSET-Writing, are reported on a scale from 100 to 300; passing scores of 220 and above appear simply as “passed” on side 1 of the printed score report. Side 2—which goes only to you—gives diagnostic indicators to help retakers, broken out by domain and by constructed response. Passing results on CSET subject matter exams expire: if you haven’t filed for a preliminary credential **within five years of passing**, you’ll need to retake the subtest. Whether CSET-Writing scores expire is not clear.

Preparation. For information about the tests, private and group tutoring, and classes, check www.testmaven.com or contact Linnea Lagerquist (see bottom of page). The student services office of schools of education, like that of SDSU (619-594-6320, <http://edweb.sdsu.edu/ceac/home.htm>) and Cal State San Marcos (760-750-4277, coesc@csusm.edu), can be helpful. Preparation **courses** may be offered through SDSU’s Extended Studies, National University, Mesa College, and others. Fees vary.

For CBEST and CSET-MS, **practice tests** are free to download from the CBEST or CSET Web sites, as self-scoring Java applets or as huge pdf texts. The wise test taker will at least look them over.

Of course **preparation guides** are in most bookstores. Look for ones that fit your needs, keep your interest, and (for CBEST) mention test-score interpretation, added to the CBEST for 2002-3. For CSET-SS, test-specific preparation materials are relatively scarce, but that’s not necessarily bad news. Undergrad textbooks and AP preparation materials can be helpful; so can the Internet. (Try Googling “__ applet”.)

The best way to prepare for the CBEST Essay Writing section or for CSET-Writing is simply to write formal essays; better yet, get your essays evaluated by someone who is skilled and gentle but critical.

Confirm all test dates and find updates at <http://www.cbest.nesinc.com> or <http://www.cset.nesinc.com>.

Test Dates and Deadlines through July 2009

<i>Paper-based* CBEST (and RICA) given</i>	<i>Registration/ withdrawal deadline</i>	<i>Late registration deadline (\$18 fee) Add/ change deadline (no fee)</i>	<i>Emergency registration deadline (\$35 late fee)</i>	<i>CBEST unofficial scores to Internet</i>	<i>CBEST score reports mailed</i>
Aug. 9, 2008	July 11, 2008	July 29, 2008	Aug. 5, 2008	Aug. 25, 2008	Aug. 28, 2008
Oct. 4, 2008	Sept. 5, 2008	Sept. 23, 2008	Sept. 30, 2008	Oct. 20, 2008	Oct. 23, 2008
Dec. 6, 2008	Nov. 7, 2008	Nov. 25, 2008	Dec. 2, 2008	Dec. 22, 2008	Dec. 29, 2008
Feb. 7, 2009	Jan. 9, 2009	Jan. 27, 2009	Feb. 3, 2009	Feb. 23, 2009	Feb. 26, 2009
Apr. 18, 2008	Mar. 20, 2009	Apr. 7, 2009	Apr. 14, 2009	May 4, 2009	May 7, 2009
June 13, 2009	May 15, 2009	June 2, 2009	June 9, 2009	June 29, 2009	July 2, 2009

*CBEST-CBT is given in a six-day window each month; see http://www.cbest.nesinc.com/CA14_testdates_cbt.asp.

<i>CSET given</i>	<i>Registration deadline</i>	<i>Add/ change/ withdraw deadline (no fee)</i>	<i>Late registration deadline (\$18 late fee)§</i>	<i>Emergency registration deadline (\$35 late fee)§</i>	<i>CSET-MS scores online/ reports mailed</i>	<i>CSET-SS scores online/ reports mailed</i>
July 19, 2008	June 20, 2008	The late-regis- tration deadline for the earlier of the test dates being changed	July 8, 2008	July 15, 2008	Aug. 11, 2008	Aug. 18, 2008
Sept. 13, 2008	Aug. 15, 2008		Sept. 2, 2008	Sept. 9, 2008	Oct. 6, 2008	Oct. 14, 2008
Nov. 1, 2008 [¶]	Oct. 3, 2008		Oct. 21, 2008	Oct. 28, 2008	Nov. 24, 2008	Dec. 1, 2008
Jan. 10, 2009	Dec. 12, 2008		Dec. 30, 2008	Jan. 6, 2009	Feb. 2, 2009	Feb. 9, 2009
Mar. 14, 2009	Feb. 13, 2009		Mar. 3, 2009	Mar. 10, 2009	Apr. 6, 2009	Apr. 13, 2009
May 16, 2009 [£]	Apr. 17, 2009		May 5, 2009	May 12, 2009	June 8, 2009	June 15, 2009
July 18, 2009	June 19, 2009		July 7, 2009	July 14, 2009	Aug. 10, 2009	Aug. 17, 2009

CSET-MS, CSET-Writing, and CSET exams in English, Math, Science and Social Science are given on all CSET dates.

§No late or emergency registration for CSET-SS Art Subtest II or CSET-SS Music Subtest II.

£Foreign languages other than French and Spanish (including American Sign Language) tested in November and May **only**.

¶On these dates **no exams** in Art, Agriculture, Business, French, Health Science, Home Economics, Industrial & Technology Education, Music, PE, or Spanish are offered; exams in these areas are offered in September, January, March and May **only**. **To be sure your test is offered on a given test date, check http://www.cset.nesinc.com/CS13_testselection.asp.**