



CSE REVIEWER · STUDY GUIDE

Clerical Ability

Filing & Records · Spelling & Written Accuracy

VOLUME V

A complete, self-contained study guide to the Clerical Ability subtest of the Philippine Civil Service Exam — Sub-Professional. Built to be the only material you need for this section.

WHAT THIS GUIDE TEACHES

Apply the rule, every time.

The clerical exam rewards the careful, consistent application of clear rules — for ordering, filing, and spelling. This guide teaches the rules and drills them until they are automatic.



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TOPIC 1.1

Alphabetizing Rules

Clerical Ability begins with the most fundamental office skill: putting things in alphabetical order correctly. It sounds simple, and the basic idea is — but the CSE tests the cases where ordinary intuition fails: names with prefixes, identical surnames, abbreviations, and titles. A clerk who alphabetizes by feel will miss these; a clerk who knows the rules will not.

This topic sets out the standard rules of alphabetic ordering used in filing and records work. Master them and the filing topics that follow become straightforward, because filing systems are built on exactly these rules.

Lesson

The unit-by-unit principle

Alphabetizing is done one unit at a time. A name is broken into indexing units, and you compare the first unit of each name letter by letter. Only when the first units are identical do you move to the second unit, and so on. The guiding rule is often summarized as 'nothing comes before something' — a name with fewer units comes before a longer name that begins with the same units.

For personal names, the standard indexing order is surname first, then first name, then middle name. So 'Maria Santos' is indexed as Santos, Maria — the surname Santos is the first unit that decides its place.

Comparing letter by letter

Within a unit, compare letter by letter from the left. The first point at which two names differ decides their order. 'Cruz' comes before 'Cruzado' because after C-r-u-z the first name has nothing more while the second continues — nothing comes before something. 'Reyes' comes before 'Rivera' because at the second letter, e comes before i.

Surname prefixes

Surnames that begin with a prefix — De, Dela, Del, Della, Di, Mac, Mc, San, Santa, Van, Von — are alphabetized as a single unit, with the prefix joined to the rest of the surname. Spacing and capitalization inside the prefix are ignored for ordering purposes.

- 'Dela Cruz' is treated as one unit: Delacruz. It files among the D names, not the C names.
- 'San Juan' is treated as Sanjuan, filing among the S names.
- 'Mc' and 'Mac' are alphabetized exactly as spelled — 'Mc' before 'Md', 'Mac' before 'Mad' — letter by letter, with no special treatment.



Identical surnames

When two people share the same surname, move to the next unit — the first name — and compare letter by letter. If the surname and first name are both identical, move to the middle name. 'Santos, Ana' comes before 'Santos, Benito'; 'Santos, Ana C.' comes before 'Santos, Ana D.'

Abbreviations and titles

- An abbreviation is alphabetized as if it were spelled out in full. 'St.' is ordered as 'Saint'; 'Co.' as 'Company'.
- A title or a seniority term — Dr., Atty., Jr., Sr., III — is generally the last unit considered, used only to break a tie when everything else is identical.
- Numbers in names, when written as figures, are usually ordered as if spelled out — '7th Avenue Office' as 'Seventh'.

NOTHING COMES BEFORE SOMETHING

The single rule that resolves the trickiest cases: when one name's unit runs out while another continues, the shorter one files first. 'Cruz' before 'Cruzado', 'Lim' before 'Lima'. A blank always sorts ahead of any letter.

Worked Example 1

Which name should come **FIRST** in alphabetical order?

- A. Reyes, Carlo
- B. Reyes, Carla
- C. Reyes, Carmen
- D. Reyes, Carl

REASONING

1. Compare the first indexing unit. All four share the surname 'Reyes' — identical. Move to the next unit, the first name.
2. Compare the first names letter by letter. All begin with C-a-r. At the fourth letter: 'Carl' has nothing more, 'Carla' has a, 'Carlo' has o, 'Carmen' has m.
3. Apply 'nothing comes before something'. 'Carl' ends after C-a-r-l while 'Carla' and 'Carlo' continue. 'Carl' has the shortest matching start, so it files first.

ANSWER

D — Reyes, Carl. With identical surnames, the first names are compared; 'Carl' runs out first, and nothing comes before something.



END OF FREE PREVIEW

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