

# How I Studied for the Introductory Sociology CLEP Exam

by Annie Margarita Yang

I took sociology back in high school since I was in the social science research major and was required to take electives in that area of study. It's been a while, so I needed a refresher when I took this CLEP exam. A score above 50 qualifies for 3 college credits and I got a 61 on this exam.

The first and most important thing I did was I had to figure out what was on the actual exam. The College Board provided the information, which I'm copying and pasting below.

## *Description of the Examination*

The Introductory Sociology examination is designed to assess an individual's knowledge of the material typically presented in a one-semester introductory sociology course at most colleges and universities. The examination emphasizes basic facts and concepts as well as general theoretical approaches used by sociologists. Highly specialized knowledge of the subject and the methodology of the discipline is not required or measured by the test content.

The examination contains approximately 100 questions to be answered in 90 minutes. Some of these are pretest questions that will not be scored. Any time candidates spend on tutorials and providing personal information is in addition to the actual testing time.

## *Knowledge and Skills Required*

Questions on the Introductory Sociology examination require candidates to demonstrate one or more of the following abilities. Some questions may require more than one of these abilities.

- Identification of specific names, facts, and concepts from sociological literature
- Understanding of relationships between concepts, empirical generalizations, and theoretical propositions of sociology
- Understanding of the methods by which sociological relationships are established
- Application of concepts, propositions, and methods to hypothetical situations
- Interpretation of tables and charts

The subject matter of the Introductory Sociology examination is drawn from the following topics. The percentages next to the main topics indicate the approximate percentage of exam questions on that topic.

- 20% Institutions, Economic, Educational, Family, Medical, Political, Religious

- 10%, Social Patterns, Community, Demography, Human ecology, Rural/urban patterns
- 25% Social Processes, Collective behavior and social movements, Culture, Deviance and social control, Groups and organizations, Social change, Social interaction, Socialization
- 25% Social Stratification (Process and Structure), Aging, Power and social inequality, Professions and occupations, Race and ethnic relations, Sex and gender roles, Social class, Social mobility
- 20% The Sociological Perspective, History of sociology, Methods, Sociological theory

The College Board also provided eight free sample questions.

<https://clep.collegeboard.org/exam/sociology>

Then I studied using the following resources:

I watched these recorded lectures given by Ann Swidler, a professor at UC Berkeley. Some lectures felt very slow, so I watched them in 1.25x speed. While watching these lectures, I took notes so I could review them later rather than re-watching the videos.

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL2C26C949DB5332DB>

I read through all of the sociology study guide notes on Cliff Notes and then wrote my own notes. This website provided a good summary of every topic in sociology. Something I wish this site elaborated more upon was population and urbanization. They do write about it, but it was hard for me to grasp. I had a lot of these questions on my practice tests and kept getting them wrong. Thank god there were barely any questions on this topic on the actual exam.

<https://www.cliffsnotes.com/study-guides/sociology>

After that, I read *CLEP Sociology - 2012: Condensed Summary and Test Prep Guide* by David and Michael Haus, which I borrowed from the library. This small book that provided a summary of all the information I needed to know in outline/bullet point format. Because it was so short and brief, it was a great way for me to tie in and connect all the concepts I learned. This book was excellent for learning about famous sociologists and their contributions— a huge section in the first part of this book was dedicated to just this. From this book, I was also able to see whether there were some concepts I still didn't understand.

<https://www.amazon.com/CLEP-Sociology-Condensed-Summary-Guide/dp/1611046009/>

I purchased the REA CLEP® Introductory Sociology Online Test Package. This online package included one diagnostic test and two full-length practice tests, timed. This was helpful in that I got a feel for what the actual CLEP exam would be like and I got to see what I got right/wrong. For the questions that I got wrong, I read the detailed explanations for why my answer was wrong and why another answer was the right one instead. I could say that doing this got me thinking from the shoes of the test makers.

<http://store.rea.com/0738682241.html>

The last thing I did was I bought an InstantCert subscription. This resource costs \$20 a month, but it is well worth the investment since they allow you to study more than one topic at a time. That means that even though I was studying sociology at the time, technically, I could study for other subjects like math and science, as long as my membership didn't expire yet. InstantCert is a good source to use for testing your knowledge because they use flashcard style techniques and make you fill in the blank instead of picking an answer from multiple choice. The fill-in-the-blank questions made me actively use my brain.

<http://www.instantcert.com/>

Some afterthoughts... Part of the reason I passed this exam was that I paid attention in my other classes at community college. There was information I needed to know in order to make educated guesses, such as forms of marriage and gender stratification from anthropology, mortality and aging rates from biology of aging, and health insurance discussed during microeconomics class. I can say knowing this definitely helped a lot in making the connections to sociology. Everyone's exam is different, so I can only say this about the particular version of the sociology exam I took.

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