

Capitalizing on Technology to Increase Standardization and Reliability in a Polygraph Examination

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*Elegance is the attribute of being unusually effective and simple.
-From Wikipedia*

Abstract

Screening polygraph examinations are utilized in a number of venues such as national security, law enforcement pre-employment, and post conviction sex offender testing. Standardization in polygraph examination administration is expected to lead to better accuracy and higher reliability (Krapohl & Dollins, 2003; Senter, Dollins, & Krapohl, 2004). In that vein, the author submits commentary and a sample script for use in a pre-employment setting that has been partially automated. The author chose to use the Directed Lie Comparison Test (Handler, Nelson, & Blalock, 2008) as the test of choice in screening venues due to its high accuracy rates, stronger potential for standardization, and its amenability to automation.

Background

Perhaps the greatest factor involved in introducing variability in the administration of a polygraph examination process is the polygraph examiner. Burnout, mental fatigue, complexity of case-fact issues, and human frailty all contribute to variance in the way a polygraph examination is conducted from pretest to posttest. Therefore, it is no surprise that Honts and Amato (1999) found that using a prerecorded audio medium during testing contributed to significantly more accurate polygraph examination results. Any criticism regarding examiner bias and decreased reliability are substantially reduced by implementing a standardized pretest and in-test presentation. Research has clearly demonstrated that polygraph examinations can be successfully automated, with a standardized pretest and in-test presentation to the examinee, without a loss of test validity (Amato, Honts, & Plaud, 1996; Honts, Devitt, Winbush, & Kircher, 1996).

Arguably, the most utilized polygraph examination type for decision-makers who use the polygraph to add to the decision-making process is the screening examination. Screening examinations differ from other types of polygraph examinations because of an absence of known incidents or allegations. The most common screening venues are for vetting employees involved in national security, law enforcement pre-employment, and post conviction sex offender testing (PCSOT) purposes. Administrators and decision-makers select targets (relevant test topics) to be screened to suit their purposes. Once these targets have been clearly identified, polygraph examiners formulate their pretest descriptions for each of these target areas in a way that the examinee can clearly understand. These test questions and descriptions are conveyed to the examinee during the pretest interview. During the same interview examiners explain the polygraph instrument, its attachments, physiology, and instructions for the polygraph examination to all examinees. Because there is little need to change these descriptions and presentations

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from examinee to examinee, these conditions provide a fertile ground for standardization.

Description

Ideally, every description, presentation, and explanation is done exactly right, exactly the same way, every single time, without stuttering, forgetting, skipping, or without irregular (or perceived) emphasis on particular words or syllables.

Using the publications of the various authors cited in this paper, as well as numerous other articles, handbooks, presentations, discussions, and email correspondence, the author has presented (in Appendix A) a sample pretest script that can be used in a polygraph screening

environment. The author chose to use the Directed Lie Screening Technique (DLST) (Handler, Nelson & Blalock, 2008) as the polygraph screening examination type, since it was directly derived from the Test for Espionage and Sabotage (TES) (Research Division Staff, 1995a, 1995b) and possesses the benefits attributed to DLCs when conducting screening examinations. The TES boasts an 88% accuracy rate as depicted in Figure 1. Additionally, the directed lie comparison question was initially designed for use with individuals who are tested repeatedly in national security venues (Fuse, 1982). The directed lie comparison approach lends itself to standardization since the same questions can be used for each examination on each subject, and it is straightforward to introduce.

Figure 1. Rank Order of Polygraph Techniques by Published Accuracy (from Krapohl, 2006)

<u>Technique</u>	Accuracy without <u>Inconclusives</u>	<u>Inconclusive</u> Rate
Utah ZCT	91%	12%
Federal ZCT	89%	16%
TES	88%	2%
RI	83%	0%
Reid	83%	6%
CIT	80%	0%
MGQT	61%	21%

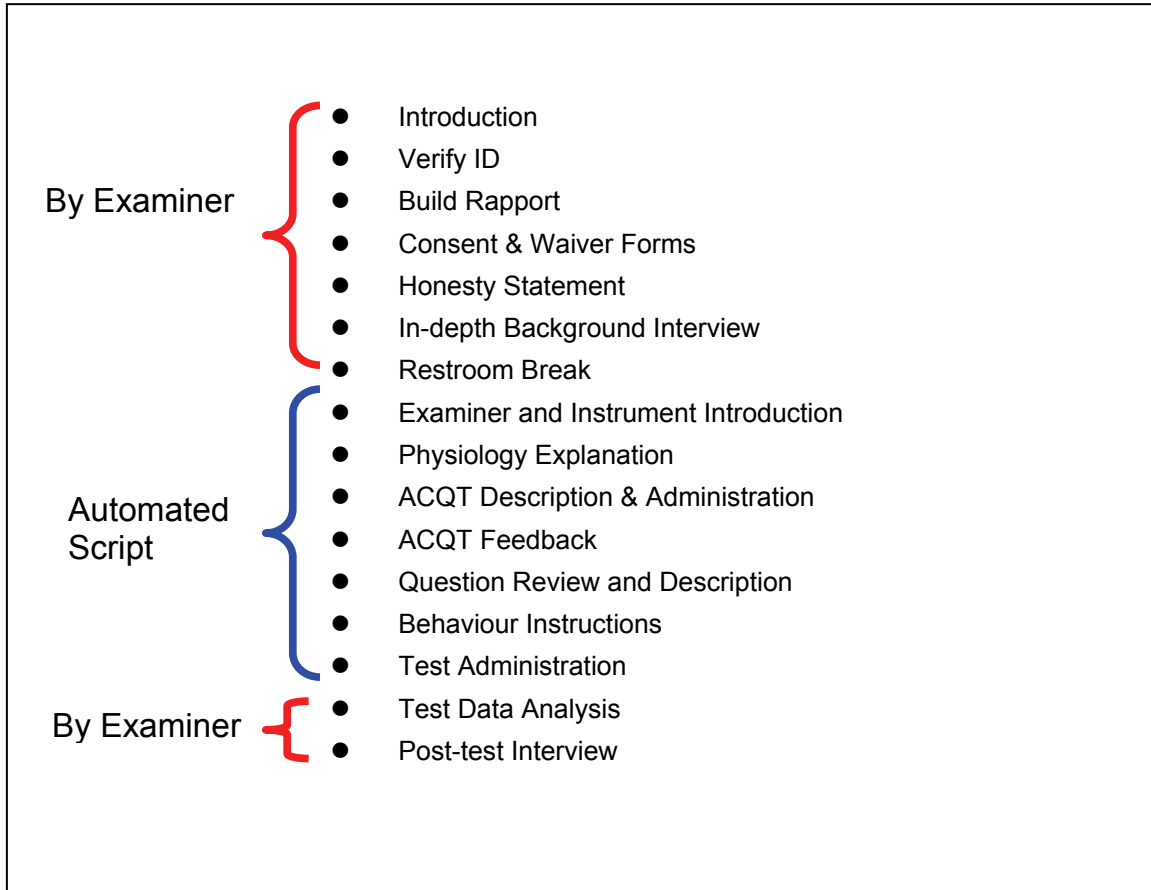
The script offered here is used only after introductions, verification of examinee identification, consent and waiver forms have been signed, a restroom break is given to the examinee, and an in-depth structured interview regarding the examinee's background has been conducted (see Figure 2).

To maximize standardization, the author purchased text-to-speech software and the voice "Paul" from FlameReader at <http://www.flamereader.com/purchase.html> to convert the script (Appendix A) into an audio file (mp3). Additionally, the author

converted each of the neutral, comparison, sacrifice relevant, and relevant examination questions into individual audio files (mp3). The author uses Windows Media Player (free download at <http://www.microsoft.com/windows/windowsmedia/player/9series/default.aspx>) to play the script audio file for the examinee, since it has pause, play, and stop buttons. External speakers are plugged into the author's computer so that the audio can be heard by both the examinee and examiner during the presentations. Finally, the individual examination question files are integrated into both Lafayette Instrument's (Lafayette Instrument Company, Lafayette,

Indiana) LXSoftware, as well as Limestone's Polygraph Professional Software (Limestone Technology, Inc, Bath, Ontario, Canada), so

that all test questions are presented using "Paul's" high quality synthesized speech during the testing phase.



The author has found that during the in-test phase he is better able to observe the examinee for movement and possible countermeasures while the software asks the questions. During this phase, the examiner needs only to mark question onset, offset, and

answer, as well as any artifacts or observations noted. Perhaps polygraph manufacturers have a solution for marking question onset, offset, and answer automatically.

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Appendix A: Sample Standardized Pretest Description & Instructions Script

<Introduction>

You are here to take a polygraph examination concerning your application with our agency. Please try to be as comfortable as possible, and listen carefully to the information being provided. During this presentation, you will be asked to answer questions out loud. Please do so in a way that the examiner can clearly hear you.

There have been many improvements made in polygraph over the past several years. Of all of the techniques used to verify if someone is being truthful, the polygraph has proven time and time again to be the most accurate way of determining truth. Our agency uses polygraph for a number of reasons, including making sure that applicants are telling us the complete truth.

Polygraph examiners with our agency, are all members in good standing with various professional polygraph associations. They have graduated from formal polygraph schools, that have been recognized and approved. They have completed supervised polygraph programs, and continue to maintain professional education requirements in polygraph.

Everything that will happen during this examination will be explained to you before proceeding. You will know the wording of all of the questions before the examination begins. There is nothing about the polygraph examination that will harm you.

We assume that you are telling the complete truth to us at this point. It is completely normal to feel anxiety or nervousness before a polygraph examination. In fact, it is expected. Your nervousness or anxiety level will not cause a problem on this exam, however lying will. Remember that ninety-nine percent of the truth is still a lie. In other words, telling only part of the truth means that you are still withholding, or misleading us. You must pass all questions truthfully to pass the test. Failure of any one question on this examination is a failure to the entire test. No question is more important than another.

<Explanation of Instrument>

To help put your mind at rest, I will explain what the instrument is, and how it works. The polygraph is a diagnostic tool that is used to determine if a person is telling the truth. It simply records physiological changes that take place in your central nervous system when you are asked questions. Today, changes in your respiration, sweat gland activity, and blood pressure will be recorded. There will be a number of sensors placed on you. First, two rubber tubes will be placed around you. One will be around your abdomen, and the other will be across your chest.

The next sensor will be a blood pressure cuff that will be placed on your arm. This is the same type of blood pressure cuff that a doctor uses. You should be familiar with it from your visits to your doctor. However, in a polygraph examination, blood pressure is measured in a somewhat different way from the way a doctor measures it. A doctor wants to know what your blood pressure is; is it 120, over 80, or a 130 over 90; that is, what are the exact numerical values. In a polygraph examination, we want to know if your blood pressure goes up, down, or does it stay the same after you answer a question. Therefore, in a polygraph examination, we take a continuous measure using a blood pressure cuff. The cuff will be inflated to approximately 100mm of pressure. At that point, the examiner will massage the cuff, then, the pressure will be lowered to approximately 60 to 70mm of pressure. This is very light pressure. You will feel the cuff squeeze your arm. We will be going through several polygraph charts today. The cuff will have to be inflated for that period of time that you are actually being asked questions in the formal part of the test. It takes about six or seven minutes to ask each polygraph chart, during a polygraph examination. By the end of each chart, your hand may feel as if it has gone to sleep, or it may tingle. If you have fair skin, your skin may become just a bit red. It is not dangerous, and your arm will return to normal within a few

seconds of the release of the pressure. We will not keep the pressure on your arm any longer than is necessary.

The third set of sensors is placed on the finger tips of two of your fingers. These sensors measure changes in skin property, or sweat gland activity. Once in place, these sensors will not do anything that you will notice.

The final sensor is placed on the thumb, and measures relative blood flow changes. Again, once it is in place, it will not do anything that you will notice. Neither fingernails, nor fingernail polish, will interfere with this process.

You may also notice that there is a cushion on the polygraph chair. It's a motion sensor cushion. It is used to document any movements that may occur during the polygraph examination. You may have experienced medical tests in the past, such as X-rays, CT scans, or MRIs, where you were told to remain completely still during the test. Likewise, it is important that you do not move around during this polygraph examination. Once the examiner has announced that the test is beginning, you must remain completely still. Do not move your hands, feet, arms, legs or any other parts of your body. Breathe normally and just answer each question as instructed by the examiner. If you have to scratch, clear your throat, adjust how you are seated, or take a deep breath, do it before the test begins. Remember, the only portion of the testing process during which you must remain completely still, is during the six or seven minutes that the chart is being recording. People, in general, naturally like to move around. However, if you do not follow these instructions, you will be considered uncooperative.

<Description of Nervous System>

All of these sensors measure aspects of the involuntary division of your nervous system. You have two divisions in your nervous system. The first division is known as the voluntary nervous system. You have direct control over that division. The voluntary part of the nervous system, allows you to walk and talk at your command. The other division of the nervous system, the involuntary part of the nervous system, controls involuntary functions. It controls the heart, blood pressure, breathing, and all of the other necessary mechanical processes for survival. These functions work automatically and unconsciously. Likewise, the physiological responses you make when lying are automatic and involuntary. Those automatic and involuntary responses are what are recorded during a polygraph examination.

<Description of Lying>

While you were being raised as a child, if you are like most people, you were taught to know the difference between right and wrong. More than likely, all of the adults you came in contact with, your parents, grandparents, relatives, teachers, church officials, all educated you that lying, cheating, and stealing were wrong. Ever since you were a young child, you have been programmed to know that lying is wrong. Think about the first time you lied and got caught. Do you remember how your body felt during that confrontation? You may have felt your heart race, or you may have felt yourself begin to sweat.

Everyone is different. In the same way that you look different, and have different fingerprints from everyone else, you also have a unique and personal set of physiological responses to lying. Some people can hear their heart thumping in their chest. Other people respond by getting sweaty hands. Some may feel the hair on the back of their neck stand up, they may feel cold chills, they may get goosebumps, or they might turn as white as a ghost. Other people respond in other ways, but for all, the response to lying is automatic and involuntary. The bottom line is that when you lie, you respond. It may be different from one person to the next, but assuming one knows the difference between right and wrong, when you lie, you respond.

Answer the following question out loud, so that your examiner can hear you.

Based on what I just described to you, do you have any questions about what I'm monitoring here today and how it works?

<PAUSE TO HAVE EXAMINEE SIT IN POLYGRAPH CHAIR AND GIVE EXAMINEE CLIPBOARD WITH NUMBERS>

<Description of Acquaintance Test>

I am now going to conduct an acquaintance test to familiarize you with the process. This test serves several purposes. First, it will demonstrate to me that you have the capability to respond when you lie, and show me what it looks like when you're answering truthfully. I'm going to have you do both on this test. Everyone responds when they lie, but sometimes people get tired, bored, fatigued, or they just do not pay attention. This test will make sure that this is not the case with you. This test will get you acquainted with what it is like to take the actual polygraph test. You will have an opportunity to practice sitting still, without moving around. You will also practice answering with a simple yes or no. This practice test will also give you a chance to feel what it is like to have the sensors connected to you.

Please write a large number three on the blank line of the paper provided to you by the examiner.

<PAUSE TO PLACE PAPER IN FRONT OF APPLICANT>

Notice that the paper on which you wrote the number three has been placed in front of you. This was done to remind you, which number you wrote. I will now review with you the instructions for this practice test.

I am going to ask you several questions regarding the number you wrote on that piece of paper. I want you to answer the following questions truthfully by saying a simple yes or no without moving around. Answer the following questions out loud so that your examiner can hear you.

Regarding the number you wrote,

*** Did you write the number, one?**

*** Did you write the number, two?**

*** Did you write the number, four?**

*** Did you write the number, five?**

Now, when I ask you if you wrote the number three, I want you to actually lie, and say, no. In other words, I want you to say, no, when I ask you if you wrote the number three.

Answer the following question out loud, with a no, which is a lie, so that your examiner can hear you.

*** Did you write the number, three?**

So. The only number you are going to lie about during this practice test, is which number?

Remember, during the test, do not move around, do not cough or clear your throat, breathe normally, and only lie to the question about writing the number three, which you will answer, with

a no. If you need to cough, clear your throat, or take a deep breath, do it now, before the exam. While you are going through this examination, it gives you an opportunity to practice following my instructions, and to get acquainted with the testing process. It also gives the examiner an opportunity to make sure that everything is functioning properly.

Answer the following question out loud, so that your examiner can hear you.

Do you understand your instructions regarding this practice test?

<PAUSE TO ADMINISTER THE ACQUAINTANCE TEST>

<Post Acquaintance Test Feedback>

That was excellent! It is obvious that you understand, that telling a lie, is wrong. You are not capable of lying without your body reacting. You reacted strongly when you lied about the number three. Even though you were asked to lie about something insignificant, like lying about the number three, you still responded. Lying during the actual test will cause even greater responses, since lying on the test would be about more serious issues than just writing a number. What this means for the polygraph examiner, is that your nervous system is responding appropriately to a known lie. It also means that you are a good candidate for this polygraph test. Finally, it means that the instrument is functioning the way the manufacturer designed it to function. Make sure to follow my instructions during this polygraph test. You are now ready to move on, in the polygraph testing process.

<Explanation of Test Questions and Answers>

Let us now review the questions that will be on phase one of this examination. The first question I will review with you will be about whether or not you are either lying about, or withholding information regarding, stealing from work **since the age of 18**. Notice the way this question is worded. It does not include stealing from places other than the places where you have worked. It does not include incidents that you have already told your polygraph examiner. This question does not include normal office supplies such as pens, pencils, paperclips, pads of paper, etc. To conceal means to hide. When you are asked if you are concealing information on the polygraph examination, it is asking if you are hiding information from the polygraph examiner. We are interested in knowing whether or not you are now concealing information from the polygraph examiner, related to stealing valuable items such as cash, property, or merchandise beyond what you have already told your polygraph examiner.

Answer the following questions out loud, so that your examiner can hear you.

Are you now concealing theft from where you have worked as an adult?

Now, do you completely understand this question?

The next question I will review with you will be about whether or not you are either lying about, or withholding information about any **involvement with illegal drugs since the age of 18**. Notice the way this question is worded. It does not include incidents that you have already told your polygraph examiner. It does not include what you know about other people, or what you have seen. We are more interested in knowing whether or not you are now concealing information from the polygraph examiner, related to what illegal drugs you have used, when your last illegal drug usage was, selling illegal drugs for profit, or transporting illegal drugs for profit.

Answer the following questions out loud, so that your examiner can hear you.

Are you now concealing your involvement with illegal drugs as an adult?

Now, do you completely understand this question?

The next question will be about whether or not you intend to answer these two questions truthfully. Answer it out loud, so that your examiner can hear you.

Do you intend to answer, the theft from work, and involvement with illegal drug questions, truthfully?

We do not know if you have falsified this information or not. However, you-yourself, will know if you are lying about this information or not. If you do lie, you will respond in the same way you did to the number you lied about. The responses to a lie will be automatic and involuntary.

I am now going to discuss the second type of question, on this phase of the examination. Answer the following questions out loud so that your examiner can hear you.

Everyone, at some point in their lifetime, has said something in anger that they later regretted. You have, haven't you?

Everyone at one time or another, has told a lie, to keep themselves out of trouble. You have, haven't you?

When I ask you these two questions during this test, I want you to think of a specific incident for each question, and then lie, and say, no. Take a few seconds, and think of a time, when you have said something in anger, that you later regretted.

Now, think of a specific time in your life, when you have lied to keep yourself out of trouble.

Now, you will have a specific instance to recognize when you hear that question. Let's practice. Answer the following questions out loud, so that your examiner can hear you. Make sure you lie, and say, no.

Did you ever lie, to keep yourself out of trouble?

Did you ever say anything in anger, that you later regretted?

Answer the following questions out loud so that your examiner can hear you.

What are the only two questions that I have just instructed you to lie about, when this phase of the examination begins?

Now, do you completely understand the instructions on how to answer each of these two questions?

When I ask you these two questions during this test, I want you to recognize the questions as ones you are lying about, and lie to me, and say, "no." You already admitted you did those things, and you had specific incidents come to mind when you answered the question. Simply listen to the questions, and answer as we have reviewed. As I explained earlier, when you lie, your body responds, and I will be able to see the response, just as I did during the practice test. If however, you were given a test, and I saw no responses to any of the questions, it would look like you were telling the truth. For various reasons such as illness and fatigue, some people lose their capability to respond. Consequently, some questions must be asked that demonstrate that you continue to have the capability to respond when you are lying, and that you do not respond when you are telling the truth.

The final type of questions, called Known Truth questions, are ones you will answer truthfully, so that I can see how you are responding when you tell the truth. It will be obvious that you are telling the truth.

Answer the following two questions truthfully out loud, so that your examiner can hear you. The questions are,

Are you now in Florida?

Are you now sitting down?

Now, do you completely understand these two questions?

Let's practice answering the questions that will be asked on the upcoming phase of the test. Answer the following questions truthfully, except for the two questions that you have been instructed to lie to. The two questions that you will lie to, are about, saying something in anger that you later regretted, and lying to keep yourself out of trouble:

Do you intend to answer, the theft from work, and involvement with illegal drug questions, truthfully?

Are you now concealing theft from where you have worked as an adult?

Are you now concealing your involvement with illegal drugs as an adult?

Did you ever lie, to keep yourself out of trouble?

Did you ever say anything in anger, that you later regretted?

Are you now in Florida?

Are you now sitting down?

Those questions I just reviewed with you will be the only questions that will be asked during this phase of the test. Remember to only lie to the two questions that we discussed. Answer truthfully all of the other questions that we reviewed.

Answer the following questions out loud, so that your examiner can hear you.

Do you now understand each question that was just reviewed with you?

Is there any question that you do not completely understand?

Do you understand your instructions for answering each of these questions?

Do you feel like the examiner gave you a sufficient amount of time to explain your answers during your earlier discussion with the polygraph examiner?

Just as a reminder, repetition of questions is a normal part of administering polygraph examinations. Some of the questions reviewed with you will be repeated. The questions will appear in no specific order. Remember to think about the questions to which you are going to lie. You are going to answer all questions truthfully except for those two that you have been instructed to lie to.

Remember, during the test, do not move around, do not cough, or clear your throat. Just breathe normally. While the test is going on, the only talking you can do is to simply answer each question

with yes, or no. If you happen to think of anything during the exam, mention it to the examiner after the chart is completed, not during the test. If you need to cough, clear your throat, or take a deep breath, do it now, before the exam begins. One final point regarding answering questions during the examination. Do not answer questions, until each question has been asked in its entirety.

<PAUSE TO ADMINISTER PHASE ONE>

<Part Two Question Review>

Now let us review the questions that will be on phase two of this examination. The first question I will review with you will be about whether or not you are either lying about, or withholding information regarding, **taking part in any unlawful sexual behaviors since the age of 18**. Notice the way this question is worded. It does not include incidents that you have already told your polygraph examiner. Remember, to conceal means to hide. When you are asked if you are concealing information on the polygraph examination, it is asking if you are hiding information from the polygraph examiner. We are interested in knowing whether or not you are now concealing information from the polygraph examiner, related to paying for sex, being paid for sex, forcing someone to participate in a sexual act against their will, viewing child pornography for sexual reasons, or having sexual contact with a minor, beyond what you have already told your polygraph examiner. The term, minor, in this context, means having sexual contact with someone 15 years of age or younger, since you turned age 18, or having sexual contact with someone 17 years of age or younger, since you turned age 24.

Answer the following questions out loud, so that your examiner can hear you.

Are you now concealing any unlawful sexual behavior as an adult?

Now, do you completely understand this question?

The next question I will review with you will be about whether or not you are either lying about, or withholding information about your **commission of serious crimes since the age of 18**. Notice the way this question is worded. It does not include instances that you have already told your polygraph examiner. It does not include what you know about other people, or what you have seen. It does not include crimes you committed prior to becoming an adult. We are more interested in knowing whether or not you are now concealing information from the polygraph examiner, related to serious crimes you committed as an adult. For the purposes of this test, the term, serious crime, includes murders, manslaughter, sexual battery, physical abuse of a child, sexual abuse of a child, robberies, aggravated battery, kidnapping, shooting into an occupied dwelling or conveyance, rapes, robberies, burglaries, frauds, counterfeiting, auto thefts, and all other felonies.

Answer the following question out loud, so that your examiner can hear you.

Are you now concealing any serious crime committed as an adult?

Now, do you completely understand this question?

The next question will be about whether or not you intend to answer these two questions truthfully. Answer it out loud, so that your examiner can hear you.

Do you intend to answer the “unlawful sexual behavior” and “serious crime” questions truthfully?

We do not know if you have falsified this information or not. However, you-yourself, will know if you are lying about this information or not. If you do lie, you will respond in the same way you did to the number you lied about. The responses to a lie will be automatic and involuntary.

I am now going to review the second type of question, on this phase of the examination. These two questions will be the same questions that you were instructed to lie about during the first phase of the test. The two questions that you will lie to, are about, saying something in anger that you later regretted, and lying to keep yourself out of trouble:

Let's practice. Answer the following questions out loud, so that your examiner can hear you. Make sure you lie, and say, no.

Did you ever lie, to keep yourself out of trouble?

Did you ever say anything in anger, that you later regretted?

Answer the following questions out loud so that your examiner can hear you.

What are the only two questions that I have just instructed you to lie about, when this phase of the examination begins?

Now, do you completely understand the instructions on how to answer each of these two questions?

As I explained earlier, when you lie, your body responds, and I will be able to see the response, just as I did during the practice test. If however, you were given a test, and I saw no responses to any of the questions, it would look like you were telling the truth. For various reasons such as illness and fatigue, some people lose their capability to respond. Consequently, some questions must be asked that demonstrate that you continue to have the capability to respond when you are lying, and that you do not respond when you are telling the truth.

The final type of questions, called Known Truth questions, are ones you will answer truthfully, so that I can see how you are responding when you tell the truth. It will be obvious that you are telling the truth.

Answer the following two questions truthfully out loud, so that your examiner can hear you. The questions are,

Are you now in Florida?

Are you now sitting down?

Let's practice answering the questions that will be asked on the upcoming phase of the test. Answer the following questions truthfully, except for the two questions that you have been instructed to lie to. The two questions that you will lie to, are about, saying something in anger that you later regretted, and lying to keep yourself out of trouble:

Do you intend to answer the sex crime and serious crime questions truthfully?

Are you now concealing any unlawful sexual behavior as an adult?

Are you now concealing any serious crime committed as an adult?

Did you ever lie, to keep yourself out of trouble?

Did you ever say anything in anger, that you later regretted?

Are you now in Florida?

Are you now sitting down?

Those questions I just reviewed with you will be the only questions that will be asked during this phase of the test. Remember to only lie to the two questions that we discussed. Answer truthfully all of the other questions that we reviewed.

Answer the following questions out loud, so that your examiner can hear you.

Do you now understand each question that was just reviewed with you?

Is there any question that you do not completely understand?

Do you understand your instructions for answering each of these questions?

Do you feel like the examiner gave you a sufficient amount of time to explain your answers during your earlier discussion with the polygraph examiner?

Just as a reminder, repetition of questions is a normal part of administering polygraph examinations. Some of the questions reviewed with you will be repeated. The questions will appear in no specific order. Remember to think about the questions to which you are going to lie. You are going to answer all questions truthfully except for those two that you have been instructed to lie to.

Remember, during the test, do not move around, do not cough, or clear your throat. Just breathe normally. While the test is going on, the only talking you can do is to simply answer each question with yes, or no. If you happen to think of anything during the exam, mention it to the examiner after the chart is completed, not during the test. If you need to cough, clear your throat, or take a deep breath, do it now, before the exam begins. One final point regarding answering questions during the examination. Do not answer questions, until each question has been asked in its entirety.