

EPSO TAO Exam Platform

Candidate Survival Guide (Practitioner Version)

(by postgradsuccess.org Based on the official EPSO TAO public session – empirical features only)

1. Overall Exam Structure (Critical)

What candidates must know

- The exam consists of **three separate, timed reasoning tests**
- **Each test must be submitted before proceeding to the next**
- Once a test is submitted, **there is no return** to it

Implication

This is *not* one continuous session. Time management errors in one test **cannot be compensated later**. Candidates must mentally “reset” between tests.

⚠ Treat each test as a self-contained exam, not as a section of a larger one.

2. Navigation & Question Control (Better than feared)

Question Navigation Bar

- Always visible
- Shows:
 - Current question
 - Answered / unanswered status
 - Bookmarked questions
- Allows **jumping freely to any question within the same test**

Implication

- **Non-linear strategy is fully supported**
- Skipping hard questions early is not only allowed — it's rational

Bookmarking

- Questions can be flagged for later review
- Bookmarks persist during the test

Best practice

First pass: answer fast wins

Second pass: attack bookmarks

Final pass: review risky answers

3. Timing Rules (No ambiguity here)

- **Visible countdown timer**
- **Universal test-level timing** (not per question)
- **No auto-advance**
- **No disabled clicks**

When time expires:

- The screen goes dark
- The test is **automatically submitted**
- Only answers already given are counted
- Candidates are informed that submission has occurred
(exact wording of notice likely varies, but confirmation is provided)

Implication

- Leaving questions blank = zero mark
- There is no “last-question mercy”
- You should *always* fill something in before time runs out

Golden rule: *An imperfect answer beats an unanswered one.*

4. Answer Elimination Tool (Hidden but important)

- Accessible via the **Settings button**
- Allows candidates to **eliminate answer options**

What it does

- Visually marks options as eliminated
- Does **not** remove them automatically from scoring
- Acts as a **cognitive aid**, not a scoring mechanism

Why it matters

- Reduces cognitive load
- Prevents reconsidering already-rejected distractors
- Particularly useful in:
 - Verbal reasoning
 - Multi-step numerical problems

Caution Students should be told explicitly:

Eliminating an option does *not* select an answer.
They must still actively choose one option as final.

5. Calculator (Functional, not fancy)

- Embedded calculator
- **Draggable and resizable**
- Basic arithmetic only (no scientific functions)

Implication

- Designed for speed, not elegance
- No excuse for over-engineering calculations (hardly ever required in EPSO)
- Mental estimation remains valuable

6. Scratchpad (Numerical Reasoning Workhorse)

- Available for numerical reasoning
- Includes:
 - Pointer
 - Text box
 - Freehand drawing
 - Set box shapes
 - Eraser

Strength

- Scratchpad persists while navigating between questions
- Suitable for tables, rough diagrams, intermediate calculations

Best practice

- Use structure (boxes, alignment)
- Avoid artistic ambition — clarity beats beauty

7. Display, Adjustability & Accessibility

- **Display settings are adjustable**
- Candidates can modify:
 - Visual appearance
 - Readability
 - Layout comfort

Implication

- Candidates should adjust settings **before starting** the test
- No medals for visual suffering

8. Verbal Reasoning – Reading Aids (Underused but powerful)

Line Reader / Focus Aid

- Masks surrounding text

- Allows focus on a single line or section

Use case

- Long passages
- Dense argumentation
- Candidates prone to rereading the same paragraph three times

Highlighter Tool

- **PDF-style highlighting**
- Highlights persist when revisiting the text

Strategic value

- What to Mark:
 - Quantifiers (all, some, only)
 - Causal connectors
 - Exceptions
- Prevents misremembering details later

Highlight meaning, not decoration.

9. What the Platform Does *Not* Do (Equally Important)

- **✗** No auto-advance between questions
- **✗** No forced linear progression
- **✗** No per-question time limits
- **✗** No mercy review after submission
- **✗** No undo after test submission

This is a **candidate-controlled environment**, but responsibility sits squarely with the test-taker.

10. Final Tactical Advice for Candidates

1. **Master navigation early** — don't learn it under time pressure
2. **Exploit bookmarks** — they exist for a reason
3. **Answer everything** — time expiry is final
4. **Use tools selectively** — aids help thinking, not replace it
5. **Treat each test as terminal** — because it is

Closing remark (trainer's version)

The TAO platform is **more flexible than many candidates expect**, but also **less forgiving than they hope**. Success is not about discovering hidden tricks, but about **not being surprised on exam day**.