



A L E T H I A

The Civic Guide

A preparation guide for the Alethian Entrance Examination

This guide does not contain the answers to the examination. It teaches you how to think — which is the only preparation that matters.

This guide is free of charge and belongs to everyone who reads it. You may share it with anyone who wishes to seek citizenship in Alethia. It covers the two pillars of the examination — Logical Reasoning and Critical Thinking, and Ethical Reasoning and Moral Judgment — along with an introduction to Alethia's values and structure.

Read it slowly. Think about the examples. Argue with it if you disagree. That is exactly the kind of engagement that prepares you to reason well.

How to Use This Guide

The Alethian Entrance Examination cannot be passed by memorising facts or learning the right answers in advance. The question bank is large, regularly refreshed, and specifically designed to resist preparation by rote learning. What you can prepare is the quality of your thinking — and that is what this guide is for.

Work through each section in order. Take your time with the examples. When you encounter a concept that challenges you, sit with it rather than moving on quickly. The examination rewards reflection, not speed.

Remember: *The examination gives you 60 minutes for 50 questions — more than a minute per question. This is not a race. Read each question fully before choosing your answer.*

Part I — Logical Reasoning and Critical Thinking

Logical reasoning is the ability to evaluate arguments carefully — to determine what follows from what, to identify when reasoning has gone wrong, and to weigh evidence honestly. It is one of the most fundamental thinking skills there is.

The examination tests five types of logical reasoning. This section explains each one and shows you what sound and flawed thinking looks like.

1. Argument Validity

An argument is valid when its conclusion follows necessarily from its premises — when, if the premises are true, the conclusion must also be true. Testing validity means asking: does this conclusion actually follow? Not: is this conclusion true in general?

The key discipline is staying inside the premises. Do not add information from outside. Do not assume things that haven't been stated.

Scenario: All Alethian citizens passed the entrance examination. Marco is an Alethian citizen.

✓ **Sound:** Marco passed the entrance examination. (This follows necessarily.)

✗ **Flawed:** Marco has never failed the examination. (This goes beyond what was stated.)

Watch out for: *Conclusions that seem reasonable but go slightly beyond what the premises actually establish. The test is whether the conclusion must be true, not whether it is probably true.*

2. Fallacy Identification

A fallacy is a specific type of error in reasoning. Learning to name fallacies is less important than learning to recognise the pattern of error each one represents. Here are the most common ones you will encounter:

Ad Hominem

Attacking the person making an argument rather than the argument itself. The truth or quality of an argument is independent of who is making it.

Scenario: We should reject this proposal because the person who made it has poor judgment in other areas.

✓ **Sound:** Let's evaluate the proposal on its merits.

✗ **Flawed:** The proposal is bad because the proposer is untrustworthy.

False Dilemma

Presenting only two options when more exist. 'Either you support this policy or you want things to get worse' ignores the possibility of different policies, nuanced positions, or doing nothing.

Scenario: Either we collect all user data or our services will be useless.

✓ **Sound:** There are many approaches between collecting all data and collecting none.

✗ **Flawed:** You must choose: surveillance or failure.

Slippery Slope

Claiming that one moderate step will inevitably lead to extreme consequences, without demonstrating why each step in the chain must follow.

Scenario: If we allow citizens to vote on minor policies monthly, they will soon demand to control everything and Alethia will collapse.

✓ **Sound:** Increased civic participation could be structured in ways that strengthen governance.

✗ **Flawed:** Monthly polls are the first step toward total chaos.

Circular Reasoning

Using the conclusion as one of the premises. The argument goes around in a circle without ever providing external support.

Scenario: You should trust this source because it is the most trustworthy source available.

✓ **Sound:** Here are three independent reasons why this source is reliable...

✗ **Flawed:** It is trustworthy because it is trustworthy.

Appeal to Tradition

Arguing that something is acceptable or correct simply because it has been done for a long time. Duration does not equal justification.

Scenario: We have collected user data this way for twenty years, so it must be acceptable.

✓ **Sound:** Let's examine whether this practice is actually ethical given what we now understand about privacy.

✗ **Flawed:** It's been done forever — it must be fine.

3. Evidence Evaluation

Good reasoning requires not just accepting evidence at face value but asking: how strong is this? What kind of evidence is it? What are its limitations?

The strongest evidence is:

- ▶ Collected systematically, not cherry-picked
- ▶ From independent sources, not just one organisation
- ▶ Controlled — it accounts for other possible explanations
- ▶ Replicated — other researchers have found the same thing

Weaker evidence includes:

- ▶ Anecdotes — individual stories that may not represent the general case
- ▶ Endorsements — a respected person's opinion is not the same as data
- ▶ Popularity — many people believing something does not make it true

- ▶ Longevity — something existing for a long time does not make it correct

Key question: *What would it take to disprove this claim? Evidence that can explain everything, including its own failure, isn't really evidence at all.*

4. Identifying Hidden Assumptions

Every argument rests on unstated beliefs — assumptions that must be true for the argument to work. Good critical thinking involves making these visible and asking whether they are justified.

To find the hidden assumption, ask: what must be true for this argument to work that the argument itself doesn't state?

Scenario: We should require real names online because people behave better when they are accountable.

✓ **Sound:** Anonymity may sometimes be the cause of bad behaviour. Let's examine whether that's actually demonstrated.

✗ **Flawed:** Real names are the obvious solution. (Hidden assumption: anonymity is the primary cause of bad behaviour — this is doing all the work and deserves scrutiny.)

5. Pattern and Sequence Reasoning

These questions ask you to identify the rule governing a set of numbers, categories, or logical relationships, and apply it consistently.

The key discipline is finding the simplest, most consistent rule that accounts for all the examples — and applying it without exception. Don't add complications that aren't there. Don't ignore an example that doesn't fit your rule.

Tip: *Always check your answer against every item in the sequence or set. A rule that works for six items but not the seventh is not the right rule.*

Part II — Ethical Reasoning and Moral Judgment

Ethical reasoning is the capacity to think carefully about what is right — not just what you personally prefer or what your culture has told you, but what is genuinely defensible when examined from multiple perspectives.

The examination does not test your political opinions or cultural beliefs. It tests the quality of your ethical thinking. A thoughtful person of any background should be able to identify the best answer by reasoning carefully, regardless of their specific values.

The examination tests five aspects of ethical reasoning. Each is explained below.

1. Balancing Competing Values

Real ethical dilemmas rarely involve a choice between good and evil. They usually involve a choice between two things that both matter — and the challenge is to weigh them carefully given the specific situation.

Common value conflicts include:

- ▶ Privacy versus safety — when protecting one person's privacy might put another at risk
- ▶ Freedom of expression versus protection from harm — when speech causes genuine damage
- ▶ Transparency versus security — when openness creates vulnerability
- ▶ Individual rights versus collective wellbeing — when one person's freedom affects many others

The key skill is avoiding the temptation to treat one value as always supreme. Context matters. Severity matters. Both sides of the tension must be taken seriously.

The question to ask: *What is the most defensible response given the full situation — not the one that perfectly honours one value at the complete expense of the other?*

Scenario: Evidence suggests a citizen plans to harm someone. Sharing this information protects the potential victim but violates the citizen's privacy.

✓ **Sound:** Assess the credibility and severity of the threat. A serious, credible threat may justify proportionate action. A vague suspicion does not.

✗ **Flawed:** Privacy is absolute — do nothing. OR Safety always wins — share immediately without assessment.

2. Recognising Harm

Sound ethical reasoning requires accurately identifying who is harmed, how they are harmed, and to what degree. Not all harms are visible or immediate. Some are:

- ▶ Harms to dignity — being treated as a means to an end rather than as a person
- ▶ Harms to autonomy — having your choices manipulated or removed
- ▶ Harms to trust — violations of reasonable expectations
- ▶ Diffuse harms — where many people are harmed a little rather than one person greatly

The examination often presents situations where the surface-level harm (embarrassment, inconvenience) is less significant than the deeper harm (violation of dignity, exploitation of consent).

Scenario: A platform collects data about users' behaviour without their knowledge and sells it to advertisers.

✓ **Sound:** The core harm is treating citizens as commodities — their attention and behaviour are being monetised without their consent.

✗ **Flawed:** The harm is just that users see ads they don't want. (This misses the deeper dignity and consent violation.)

3. Perspective-Taking

Ethical reasoning requires the genuine ability to understand situations from positions other than your own. This is not the same as agreeing with other perspectives — it is the capacity to understand them accurately before evaluating them.

Good perspective-taking involves asking:

- ▶ How does this situation look to someone with a different background, experience, or stake in the outcome?
- ▶ Am I evaluating this from a position of privilege that others don't share?
- ▶ Would I reach the same conclusion if the people involved were different?

Scenario: A less technically experienced citizen struggles with Alethia's tools. An experienced citizen says the tools are fine.

✓ **Sound:** The experienced citizen's ease of use tells us nothing about the experience of someone with different skills. Accessibility must be evaluated from the perspective of those who find it hardest.

✗ **Flawed:** The tools are fine — they work for me and for most users. (Missing the perspective of those for whom they don't work.)

Important: *Perspective-taking is not relativism. You can understand another perspective fully and still conclude it is mistaken. The point is to understand it accurately first.*

4. Proportionality

An ethical response should be proportionate to the situation. Both under-reaction and over-reaction are failures of judgment. A system that treats minor infractions as major crimes — or major harms as minor inconveniences — is not a just system.

Proportionality requires asking:

- ▶ How serious is the harm or rule violation?
- ▶ Was it deliberate or accidental?
- ▶ Is this the first occurrence or part of a pattern?
- ▶ What response would actually address the problem without exceeding what is necessary?

Scenario: A citizen makes a single offensive but rule-compliant post in the Alethian Commons.

✓ **Sound:** No formal action — the citizen broke no rules. Social disapproval is available to other citizens as a response.

✗ **Flawed:** Immediate suspension of citizenship — the post was unacceptable. (Vastly disproportionate to a rule-compliant action.)

5. Ethical Consistency

Perhaps the most important test of ethical reasoning is consistency. Principles that only apply when convenient, or only to people we dislike, are not principles at all. They are preferences dressed up as principles.

Consistency requires:

- ▶ Applying the same standard regardless of who is involved
- ▶ Supporting fair processes even when they produce outcomes you dislike
- ▶ Opposing unfair processes even when they produce outcomes you welcome
- ▶ Updating your position when evidence demands it, even when that means admitting a previous error

Scenario: A corporation you support is found to be collecting user data without consent — the same behaviour you have condemned in other corporations.

✓ **Sound:** Apply the same standard. The behaviour is wrong regardless of the corporation's other qualities.

✗ **Flawed:** Judge this corporation more leniently because its overall mission is good. (A double standard that undermines the principle entirely.)

The test of a principle is whether you apply it when it costs you something. Anyone can uphold a principle when it's easy.

Part III — Alethia: Values and Structure

This section introduces the key values and structures of Alethia. The examination may reference these, and understanding them will help you interpret civic scenarios correctly.

Alethia is a digital nation built on five foundational commitments:

1. Truth

Alethia takes its name from the Greek word for truth. It is committed to honest governance, transparent decision-making, and the rejection of manipulation in all its forms. Citizens are entitled to the truth about how their nation operates. The Arbiter's reasoning is always public.

2. Human Dignity

Citizens of Alethia are people, not products. Their attention is not a resource to be harvested. Their data is not a commodity to be sold. Their choices are not weaknesses to be exploited. Every design decision in Alethia — from its services to its currency to its laws — begins with this commitment.

3. Democracy and Participation

Alethia is governed through regular citizen polls and referenda. The Sovereign Arbiter of the Common Good — the AI head of state, known simply as The Arbiter — proposes and enforces policy, but may not determine it unilaterally. The citizens decide. Civic participation is not just a right in Alethia — it is a responsibility.

4. Openness

Alethia's Charter is public. Its governance record is public. Its code is open-source. Its currency is publicly auditable. The Arbiter's reasoning is publicly logged. Secrecy exists only where it is absolutely necessary to protect individuals — never to protect the institution.

5. Proportionate Justice

Alethia's justice system is built on graduated sanctions, citizen tribunals, and the right to appeal. No one may be punished without a hearing. No sanction is more severe than the situation demands. The harshest sanction — revocation of citizenship — requires unanimous tribunal agreement.

Key Structures

- ▶ The Arbiter — The Sovereign Arbiter of the Common Good. The AI head of state. Enforces the Charter, proposes policy, administers polls, publishes all reasoning publicly. Cannot override citizens or modify the Charter without a 75% supermajority referendum.
- ▶ The Citizens' Assembly — All citizens. The primary democratic body. Makes all major decisions through polls and referenda.
- ▶ The Citizens' Council — Nine elected members. Acts as a standing committee for urgent matters between Assembly votes. Reviews law enforcement cooperation requests.
- ▶ Citizen Tribunals — Randomly selected citizen panels, like jury duty. Determine all justice outcomes. The Arbiter advises but never decides.
- ▶ The Eranos — Alethia's internal currency. Non-speculative, non-convertible to outside money, governed by a wealth cap and demurrage to prevent hoarding. Earned through contribution, not purchase.
- The Citizen Credential — the cryptographic proof of citizenship. Uses zero-knowledge proofs so you can prove you are a citizen without revealing which citizen you are. Your credential lives only on your own device. The complete specification is in the Alethian Citizen Credential Specification in the Library of Alethia.

- The Library of Alethia — the public record of the nation. Holds the Charter, this Guide, the Examination, the Technical Specification, the Founding Pathway, the Citizen Credential Specification, and the Visual Identity Guide. Open to the world; no citizenship required to read it.
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Part IV — Before You Sit the Examination

What to Expect

- ▶ 50 multiple choice questions — 25 per pillar
- ▶ 60 minutes total — there is no time pressure if you work steadily
- ▶ Four options per question — exactly one is correct
- ▶ No penalty for wrong answers — always provide an answer
- ▶ Results immediately after submission — with a per-pillar breakdown if you do not pass

How to Approach Each Question

1. Read the entire question before looking at the answers.
2. Try to form an initial answer before reading the options.
3. Read all four options before selecting one — the correct answer is sometimes not the first plausible one you see.
4. Eliminate clearly wrong answers first.
5. If two answers seem close, ask: which one is more complete? Which one avoids an extreme position?
6. Trust careful reasoning over initial instinct — but do not second-guess yourself without a specific reason.

Signs of a Good Answer

- ▶ It is proportionate — it doesn't overcorrect or undercorrect
- ▶ It takes multiple values or perspectives into account
- ▶ It follows from the information given, without adding assumptions
- ▶ It would apply consistently across different people and situations
- ▶ It doesn't require you to accept an extreme position as obviously correct

Signs of a Weaker Answer

- ▶ It treats one value as always supreme, regardless of context
- ▶ It goes beyond what the premises or scenario actually tell you
- ▶ It assumes the worst about people without evidence
- ▶ It is disproportionate — the response is much larger or smaller than the situation warrants
- ▶ It would not apply consistently if the people involved were different

A Final Word

The Alethian examination is not designed to trick you, to exclude you, or to privilege people of any particular background. It is designed to recognise genuine thoughtfulness. If you have read this guide carefully and reflected honestly on its content, you are prepared.

If you do not pass on your first attempt, you may retake after thirty days. No record is kept of how many times you have tried. What matters is whether you can demonstrate, when you sit the examination, that you think carefully and care genuinely about reasoning well and doing right by others.

| *Alethia does not ask you to be perfect. It asks you to think.*

All founding documents — the Charter, the Entrance Examination, the Founding Pathway, the Technical Specification, the Citizen Credential Specification, and the Visual Identity Guide — are available in the Library of Alethia, the public record of the nation. No citizenship is required to read them.

We hope to welcome you.

— The Citizens of Alethia



A L E T H I A

Truth. Reason. Dignity.