

THE ACCURACY AND UTILITY OF POLYGRAPH TESTING



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1.8 PRIMARY POLYGRAPH TESTING TECHNIQUES

The test formats taught at the Army Polygraph Training Facility include the following:

1.8.1 Zone Comparison Technique (ZCT)

The ZCT was developed by Cleve Backster in 1960. The ZCT is a modification of the control question concept developed in the 1940's and introduced two new safeguards against errors and inconclusive results. The safeguards are referred to as the sacrifice relevant and symptomatic questions. The sacrifice relevant question allows for dissipation of excessive general nervous tension or undue anxiety prior to the asking of the primary relevant questions. The symptomatic question provides a means to identify outside issues extraneous to the test issue(s) which may be of overwhelming significance to the examinee. Identification of such issues aids the examiner in structuring a reliable test that is not degraded by these external issues. The symptomatic question also helps the examiner to properly word the relevant questions. Backster's ZCT was adopted by the Army in 1961. It is the technique of preference for resolving criminal issues which are limited or easily defined. The ZCT, as used by the Army, permits the asking of questions pertaining to two primary issues in the body of the test. It also has a "SKY" phase utilized on one or two charts which helps determine the degree of the examinee's criminal knowledge, if any, of the primary relevant issue. Because of its demonstrated accuracy (Berish 1969), it has become one of the most popular and widely used techniques in government law enforcement.