Alabama CDL General Practice Test (Sample)

Study Guide

Everything you need from our exam experts!

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Introduction

Preparing for a certification exam can feel overwhelming, but with the right tools, it becomes an opportunity to build confidence, sharpen your skills, and move one step closer to your goals. At Examzify, we believe that effective exam preparation isn't just about memorization, it's about understanding the material, identifying knowledge gaps, and building the test-taking strategies that lead to success.

This guide was designed to help you do exactly that.

Whether you're preparing for a licensing exam, professional certification, or entry-level qualification, this book offers structured practice to reinforce key concepts. You'll find a wide range of multiple-choice questions, each followed by clear explanations to help you understand not just the right answer, but why it's correct.

The content in this guide is based on real-world exam objectives and aligned with the types of questions and topics commonly found on official tests. It's ideal for learners who want to:

- **Practice answering questions under realistic conditions,**
- **Improve accuracy and speed,**
- **Review explanations to strengthen weak areas, and**
- **Approach the exam with greater confidence.**

We recommend using this book not as a stand-alone study tool, but alongside other resources like flashcards, textbooks, or hands-on training. For best results, we recommend working through each question, reflecting on the explanation provided, and revisiting the topics that challenge you most.

Remember: successful test preparation isn't about getting every question right the first time, it's about learning from your mistakes and improving over time. Stay focused, trust the process, and know that every page you turn brings you closer to success.

Let's begin.

How to Use This Guide

This guide is designed to help you study more effectively and approach your exam with confidence. Whether you're reviewing for the first time or doing a final refresh, here’s how to get the most out of your Examzify study guide:

1. Start with a Diagnostic Review

Skim through the questions to get a sense of what you know and what you need to focus on. Your goal is to identify knowledge gaps early.

2. Study in Short, Focused Sessions

Break your study time into manageable blocks (e.g. 30 – 45 minutes). Review a handful of questions, reflect on the explanations.

3. Learn from the Explanations

After answering a question, always read the explanation, even if you got it right. It reinforces key points, corrects misunderstandings, and teaches subtle distinctions between similar answers.

4. Track Your Progress

Use bookmarks or notes (if reading digitally) to mark difficult questions. Revisit these regularly and track improvements over time.

5. Simulate the Real Exam

Once you're comfortable, try taking a full set of questions without pausing. Set a timer and simulate test-day conditions to build confidence and time management skills.

6. Repeat and Review

Don’t just study once, repetition builds retention. Re-attempt questions after a few days and revisit explanations to reinforce learning. Pair this guide with other Examzify tools like flashcards, and digital practice tests to strengthen your preparation across formats.

There’s no single right way to study, but consistent, thoughtful effort always wins. Use this guide flexibly, adapt the tips above to fit your pace and learning style. You've got this!

Questions

1. If your air tanks do not have an automatic drain, when should you drain the air tanks?

A. Every hour

B. When the warning light comes on

C. After every working day

D. At the end of the week

2. When the spring brakes are on, which action is appropriate?

A. Never press the brake pedal

B. Press the brake pedal gently to test

C. Use engine braking only

D. Use parking brake only

3. Excessive heat caused by overuse of the service brakes can cause the brakes to?

A. The brakes to fail catastrophically

B. The brakes to seize

C. The brakes to fade

D. The brakes to over-harden

4. What is the function of the brake camshaft in S-cam drum brakes?

A. It reduces air pressure

B. It rotates to spread the brake shoes against the drum

C. It monitors wheel speed

D. It pulls the slack adjuster

5. Spring brakes are?

A. A type of brake that uses airbags

B. Hydraulic brakes activated by air pressure

C. Powerful springs that are held back by air pressure. If the air pressure is removed, the springs put on the brakes. Typically if the psi drops too low

D. A type of disc brake used on tractors

6. In a dual air brake system, if one system loses air pressure, what will happen?

A. All brakes fail

B. Front brakes fail only

C. Rear brakes fail only

D. Either front or rear brakes will not be fully operational

7. Which condition should you avoid using the parking brake?

A. On level ground

B. If the brakes are very hot

C. On a steep incline

D. In a crowded area

8. To check the free play of manual slack adjusters on S-cam brakes you should:

A. Park on incline and apply the parking brakes

B. Visually inspect the slack adjuster

C. Start the engine and test brakes

D. Park on level ground, chock the wheels, and release the parking brakes

9. Brake lag distance at 55 mph is how many feet?

A. 44 feet

B. 20 feet

C. 10 feet

D. 32 feet

10. The three main brake systems in modern air brake setups are service brakes, parking brakes, and the _____ brakes.

A. Service brakes

B. Parking brakes

C. Emergency brakes

D. Trailer brakes

Answers

1. C
2. A
3. C
4. B
5. C
6. D
7. B
8. D
9. D
10. C

Explanations

1. If your air tanks do not have an automatic drain, when should you drain the air tanks?

A. Every hour

B. When the warning light comes on

C. After every working day

D. At the end of the week

Moisture forms in air tanks when air is compressed, so you must remove that water to keep the braking system clean and functioning. If there's no automatic drain, draining at the end of each day (after you've finished driving) is the standard practice. This daily drain prevents water from building up, which can cause rust inside the tanks or freeze in cold weather and contaminate the air lines. Draining every hour isn't necessary and wastes time. Waiting for the warning light means letting water accumulate before you take action, which can be risky. Draining only at the end of the week allows too much moisture to collect. Doing it after each working day keeps the system dry and safer.

2. When the spring brakes are on, which action is appropriate?

A. Never press the brake pedal

B. Press the brake pedal gently to test

C. Use engine braking only

D. Use parking brake only

When the spring brakes are on, the parking brakes are engaged by springs and hold the wheels in place. Pressing the brake pedal in this situation won't provide proper braking and can release the parking brakes, allowing the vehicle to move unexpectedly. That's why the appropriate action is to avoid using the foot brake while the spring brakes are on. In other words, wait until the parking brakes are released and the air system is charged before relying on the service brakes. The other options either attempt to test or rely on brakes that aren't effective or safe in this condition.

3. Excessive heat caused by overuse of the service brakes can cause the brakes to?

A. The brakes to fail catastrophically

B. The brakes to seize

C. The brakes to fade

D. The brakes to over-harden

Excessive heat from heavy or prolonged use of the service brakes reduces their effectiveness, a condition called brake fade. When brakes overheat, the friction material can glaze, and the pads may lose their bite, so the brakes don't grip as well and stopping distance grows. In hydraulic systems, heat can even cause the brake fluid to boil, creating vapor and further reducing braking power. This is why on long descents drivers use engine braking and apply the brakes intermittently to let them cool. The other outcomes—seizing, catastrophic failure, or over-hardening—aren't the typical result of normal overuse and heat buildup in brakes.

4. What is the function of the brake camshaft in S-cam drum brakes?

A. It reduces air pressure

B. It rotates to spread the brake shoes against the drum

C. It monitors wheel speed

D. It pulls the slack adjuster

In S-cam drum brakes, the brake camshaft's job is to convert the push from the brake chamber into outward movement of the two brake shoes. When air pressure is applied, the push rod turns the cam. The S-shaped cam then rotates and its lobes push the ends of the shoes apart, spreading them against the drum to create friction and slow the wheel. This is the essential action that produces braking force. It isn't about reducing air pressure, monitoring wheel speed, or pulling the slack adjuster—those are handled by other parts of the system.

5. Spring brakes are?

A. A type of brake that uses airbags

B. Hydraulic brakes activated by air pressure

C. Powerful springs that are held back by air pressure. If the air pressure is removed, the springs put on the brakes. Typically if the psi drops too low

D. A type of disc brake used on tractors

Spring brakes use strong springs to apply the brakes when air pressure that normally holds them back is removed. In normal operation, air pressure keeps the springs compressed and the brakes released. If the air pressure drops too low or is lost, the springs are released and push the brakes on, providing a fail-safe way to stop the vehicle. This system acts as the parking brake and emergency brake on heavy trucks and tractors. It's not an airbag system, not a hydraulic brake, and not a disc brake type.

6. In a dual air brake system, if one system loses air pressure, what will happen?

A. All brakes fail

B. Front brakes fail only

C. Rear brakes fail only

D. Either front or rear brakes will not be fully operational

Dual air brake systems split the air supply into two independent circuits, with each circuit powering different brakes. If one circuit loses air, the brakes connected to that circuit won't function as well, while the brakes on the other circuit keep working. So you'll end up with brakes that aren't fully operational on whichever side (front or rear) that circuit governs. It isn't all brakes failing, because the other circuit still has pressure and can operate. It also isn't guaranteed to be only the front or only the rear in every situation—the failure affects the brakes served by the failed circuit, which could be the front set or the rear set depending on the vehicle's layout.

7. Which condition should you avoid using the parking brake?

A. On level ground

B. If the brakes are very hot

C. On a steep incline

D. In a crowded area

Parking brakes are meant to hold a vehicle still after you've stopped, but using them when the brakes are very hot creates a real risk. The heat makes the brake components expand and can cause the friction material to fuse to the drum or the shoes to stick to the drum. That can lock or bind the brakes and make them hard to release when you're ready to move again, or cause uneven wear and possible damage. Let hot brakes cool before setting the parking brake, especially after heavy braking or downhill driving. In other conditions, such as on level ground or in other normal parking situations, using the parking brake is appropriate; the key danger here is applying it while the brakes are hot.

8. To check the free play of manual slack adjusters on S-cam brakes you should:

A. Park on incline and apply the parking brakes

B. Visually inspect the slack adjuster

C. Start the engine and test brakes

D. Park on level ground, chock the wheels, and release the parking brakes

Free play is the small amount of movement the slack adjuster push rod has before the brakes actually engage. For manual slack adjusters on S-cam brakes, you need the brakes to be released to measure this travel accurately. Park on level ground, chock the wheels to prevent any movement, and release the parking brakes. This setup removes tension from the system (no air pressure holding the brakes or the parking brake applied), allowing you to feel or measure the free travel of the push rod. If you don't release the brakes, you'll get readings that aren't true of the slack adjuster's normal free play. Visual inspection alone won't tell you how much travel occurs, and starting the engine or testing the brakes would inject air pressure and mislead the reading.

9. Brake lag distance at 55 mph is how many feet?

A. 44 feet

B. 20 feet

C. 10 feet

D. 32 feet

Brake lag distance is the distance the vehicle travels from the moment you press the brake until the brakes actually start to slow the vehicle. At 55 mph, the vehicle moves about 80.7 feet each second. If the brake system takes roughly 0.4 seconds to engage, you'd cover about 32 feet in that time before braking begins. So the brake lag distance is about 32 feet, which is why this option is the best choice. This distance is part of the overall stopping distance, occurring before braking forces take effect.

10. The three main brake systems in modern air brake setups are service brakes, parking brakes, and the _____ brakes.

A. Service brakes

B. Parking brakes

C. Emergency brakes

D. Trailer brakes

Air brake systems are built around three main braking modes: service brakes, parking brakes, and emergency brakes. The emergency brakes provide a fail-safe that engages if the air supply drops too low or a leak develops, so the vehicle can still be stopped even when the regular brakes can't be applied. In heavy trucks these are typically spring brakes that stay released by air pressure and automatically apply when pressure is lost. That backup function is why it's the missing piece in the trio. Trailer brakes exist as part of the overall system but aren't considered one of the three primary brake modes.

Next Steps

Congratulations on reaching the final section of this guide. You've taken a meaningful step toward passing your certification exam and advancing your career.

As you continue preparing, remember that consistent practice, review, and self-reflection are key to success. Make time to revisit difficult topics, simulate exam conditions, and track your progress along the way.

If you need help, have suggestions, or want to share feedback, we'd love to hear from you. Reach out to our team at hello@examzify.com.

Or visit your dedicated course page for more study tools and resources:

https://alabamacdlgen.examzify.com

We wish you the very best on your exam journey. You've got this!