

AST Surgical Technologist Practice Exam (Sample)

Study Guide



Everything you need from our exam experts!

This is a sample study guide. To access the full version with hundreds of questions,

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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. Don't worry about getting everything right, 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, and take breaks to retain information better.

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.

7. Use Other Tools

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!

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Questions

- 1. What is the primary concern when using a gravity displacement sterilizer?**
 - A. Maintaining temperature solely**
 - B. Ensuring proper air removal**
 - C. Using steam as an agent**
 - D. Limiting exposure time**
- 2. What surgical position is typically used for procedures involving the thyroid and gallbladder?**
 - A. Trendelenburg**
 - B. Reverse Trendelenburg**
 - C. Prone**
 - D. Lateral**
- 3. Which of the following is a type of passive drain?**
 - A. Jackson-Pratt**
 - B. Penrose**
 - C. Hemovac**
 - D. Gravitational**
- 4. Which bacteria could be found in a penetrating wound caused by a rusty nail?**
 - A. Staphylococcus**
 - B. Vocal fold**
 - C. Tetanus**
 - D. Clostridium**
- 5. What is the main function of cerumen in the ear?**
 - A. Protect the tympanic membrane**
 - B. Enhance hearing**
 - C. Assist balance**
 - D. Transmit sound**

- 6. The surgical pack utilized to create the sterile field should be opened on the:**
- A. Operating room floor**
 - B. Surgeon's table**
 - C. Back table**
 - D. Scrub sink**
- 7. The cartilaginous nasal septum is anterior to which bone?**
- A. Maxilla**
 - B. Vomer**
 - C. Nasal bone**
 - D. Palatine bone**
- 8. Where is a Baker's cyst commonly located?**
- A. Ankles**
 - B. Elbow**
 - C. Popliteal fossa**
 - D. Knees**
- 9. In surgical procedures, which part of the instrument is critical for grasping tissue?**
- A. Handle**
 - B. Tip**
 - C. Jaw**
 - D. Body**
- 10. Chest rolls should span the distance bilaterally between which two anatomical structures?**
- A. Acromioclavicular joint to iliac crest**
 - B. Shoulder joint to lumbar spine**
 - C. Manubrium to greater tubercle**
 - D. Scapula to sacrum**

Answers

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

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Explanations

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1. What is the primary concern when using a gravity displacement sterilizer?

- A. Maintaining temperature solely**
- B. Ensuring proper air removal**
- C. Using steam as an agent**
- D. Limiting exposure time**

The primary concern when using a gravity displacement sterilizer is ensuring proper air removal. In gravity displacement sterilizers, steam is introduced into a chamber to achieve sterilization, but before effective sterilization can occur, all air must be expelled from the chamber. Air pockets can prevent steam from reaching the surfaces of the instruments, leading to inadequate sterilization. Proper air removal allows for the steam to penetrate and envelop the items being sterilized, ensuring that the sterilization process is effective. If air is not removed adequately, it can create a barrier, resulting in ineffective sterilization. Therefore, achieving complete air removal is crucial for ensuring that the steam can function correctly as a sterilizing agent and that the items will be safely sterilized. While maintaining temperature, using steam, and limiting exposure time are important elements of the sterilization process, they are secondary to the essential requirement of complete air removal in the context of gravity displacement sterilizers.

2. What surgical position is typically used for procedures involving the thyroid and gallbladder?

- A. Trendelenburg**
- B. Reverse Trendelenburg**
- C. Prone**
- D. Lateral**

The reverse Trendelenburg position is commonly used for surgical procedures involving the thyroid and gallbladder as it helps facilitate access to these organs while promoting optimal respiratory function. In this position, the patient's upper body is elevated while the legs are lowered, which can enhance the surgeon's line of sight and access to the operative field. This arrangement allows for manipulation of the neck during thyroid surgeries or the abdominal cavity during gallbladder removals, improving visibility and reducing the risk of complications related to the positioning of internal organs. While other positions have their specific uses, the reverse Trendelenburg ensures that vital structures are not compressed, thereby maintaining adequate blood flow and respiratory function, which is critical during these types of surgeries.

3. Which of the following is a type of passive drain?

- A. Jackson-Pratt
- B. Penrose**
- C. Hemovac
- D. Gravitational

The Penrose drain is considered a type of passive drain because it relies on gravity and natural tissue pressures to allow fluid to flow from the surgical site into the external environment without the assistance of suction. Once inserted, the Penrose drain facilitates gravity-dependent drainage, allowing fluids to move out of a wound or body cavity and thus helping to prevent fluid accumulation or potential infection. This is in contrast to active drains, which often use suction to actively remove fluid. For instance, drains like Jackson-Pratt and Hemovac utilize suction to promote fluid removal, while gravitational methods are not classified as drains but rather refer to the natural force facilitating the drainage process in passive systems. The distinction lies in how the drainage occurs—either through natural forces or assisted mechanisms.

4. Which bacteria could be found in a penetrating wound caused by a rusty nail?

- A. Staphylococcus
- B. Vocal fold
- C. Tetanus**
- D. Clostridium

A penetrating wound caused by a rusty nail is particularly associated with the bacterium that causes tetanus. When a person steps on a rusty nail, the nail can introduce dirt, feces, or saliva into the wound, all of which can contain *Clostridium tetani* spores. These spores thrive in anaerobic conditions, such as those often found in deep puncture wounds where there is limited oxygen. Tetanus manifested from this organism is characterized by muscle stiffness and spasms, which make it critical to recognize this risk with injuries sustained from objects like rusty nails. While *Staphylococcus* is a more common bacterium involved in a variety of infections, it is not specifically linked to the tetanus infection that occurs from a penetrating injury. The term "vocal fold" does not refer to any bacterial infection and is therefore unrelated. *Clostridium*, although it is a genus that includes *Clostridium tetani* which causes tetanus, the context of the question focuses directly on tetanus as the specific danger associated with a rusty nail injury rather than a non-specific infection potential.

5. What is the main function of cerumen in the ear?

A. Protect the tympanic membrane

B. Enhance hearing

C. Assist balance

D. Transmit sound

Cerumen, commonly known as earwax, plays a crucial role in protecting the ear, primarily by safeguarding the tympanic membrane (eardrum). It acts as a natural barrier against foreign particles, dust, and microorganisms, preventing them from entering the ear canal and potentially causing infections or damaging the delicate structures within the ear. Additionally, cerumen has properties that can help lubricate the ear canal, further contributing to its protective function. While earwax might have some secondary effects that could relate to enhancing hearing or maintaining ear health, its primary and most significant role is focused on protection. It does not directly aid in transmitting sound or assisting with balance, which are functions attributed to other parts of the ear and auditory system. Thus, the main function of cerumen is to ensure the integrity and safety of the tympanic membrane.

6. The surgical pack utilized to create the sterile field should be opened on the:

A. Operating room floor

B. Surgeon's table

C. Back table

D. Scrub sink

Opening the surgical pack on the back table is the most appropriate choice because the back table serves as a designated area for sterile instruments and supplies during a surgical procedure. By opening the pack on the back table, the surgical technologist ensures that the instruments and supplies remain uncontaminated and are easily accessible for the surgical team. The back table is designed to be part of the sterile field, allowing for efficient organization and management of surgical items. This practice helps maintain a sterile environment, which is critical for preventing surgical site infections and ensuring patient safety. In contrast, opening the surgical pack on other surfaces, such as the operating room floor or the scrub sink, would compromise the sterility of the items within the pack. The surgeon's table, while also part of the sterile field, is primarily reserved for the surgical procedure itself rather than for organizing and preparing surgical instruments and supplies prior to the procedure.

7. The cartilaginous nasal septum is anterior to which bone?

- A. Maxilla**
- B. Vomer**
- C. Nasal bone**
- D. Palatine bone**

The cartilaginous nasal septum is a structure made up primarily of cartilage that divides the nasal cavity into two nostrils. It plays a crucial role in maintaining the shape and function of the nasal passages. The bone that corresponds to the posterior part of the nasal septum is the vomer bone, which forms a part of the nasal septum and lies directly behind the cartilaginous portion. Understanding the anatomy, the vomer is located at the posterior and inferior part of the nasal cavity, making it correct to state that the cartilaginous nasal septum is anterior to the vomer. The other bones listed, such as the maxilla, nasal bone, and palatine bone, are situated in different regions of the facial skeleton and do not lie directly behind the cartilaginous nasal septum, which is why they are not the correct answer.

8. Where is a Baker's cyst commonly located?

- A. Ankles**
- B. Elbow**
- C. Popliteal fossa**
- D. Knees**

A Baker's cyst is commonly located in the popliteal fossa, which is the area at the back of the knee. This cyst is formed as a result of excess joint fluid being pushed into a bursa, often due to conditions like arthritis or a knee injury. The popliteal fossa is specifically associated with the structures of the knee joint and is the most frequent site for a Baker's cyst to develop, making it a reliable anatomical feature for identifying this condition. While Baker's cysts can affect the knee region, it is the specific location in the popliteal fossa that defines their typical presentation. Other areas such as the ankles and elbows do not commonly harbor Baker's cysts, and the knee itself is more about the joint involved. Therefore, understanding the anatomical relationship and pathophysiology helps clarify why the popliteal fossa is the correct choice.

9. In surgical procedures, which part of the instrument is critical for grasping tissue?

- A. Handle**
- B. Tip**
- C. Jaw**
- D. Body**

In surgical procedures, the tip of the instrument is critical for grasping tissue. The tip is designed to make contact with the tissue being manipulated, allowing for effective gripping and holding during the surgical process. This precision is vital, as it ensures that the tissue can be held securely in place without causing damage, which is essential for both the visibility of the surgical site and the protection of surrounding structures. The handle provides the surgeon with control and maneuverability but does not interact directly with the tissue. The jaw aids in facilitating the action of grasping, but it is the tip that directly engages with the tissue. The body of the instrument serves as the connecting structure between the handle and the working parts, contributing to the overall design and function but not directly involved in the grasping action itself. Thus, the focus on the tip reflects its primary role in the surgical scenario.

10. Chest rolls should span the distance bilaterally between which two anatomical structures?

- A. Acromioclavicular joint to iliac crest**
- B. Shoulder joint to lumbar spine**
- C. Manubrium to greater tubercle**
- D. Scapula to sacrum**

The correct response highlights the importance of proper positioning and support during surgical procedures. Chest rolls are utilized to provide lateral support to the thoracic region, ensuring the patient is positioned safely and comfortably during surgery. By spanning the distance between the acromioclavicular joint and the iliac crest, the rolls help maintain the alignment and prevent rotation or pressure on sensitive structures. This positioning is critical, particularly when working in a surgical field involving the shoulders and upper torso, as it ensures that the patient is stable and adequately supported. The other options, while they contain anatomical references, do not specifically address the appropriate areas for chest support in the context of surgical positioning. For instance, the shoulder joint to lumbar spine doesn't provide the necessary support for the chest, and the manubrium to greater tubercle or scapula to sacrum also fail to cover the crucial lateral support needed at the thoracic area. Thus, the acromioclavicular joint to iliac crest is the most anatomically relevant choice for ensuring patient safety and comfort during procedures.

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://ast-surgicaltechnologist.examzify.com>

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