

California CDL Class A 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 should a driver do before making a lane change?**
 - A. Signal, check mirrors, and look over shoulder**
 - B. Immediately change lanes**
 - C. Only check mirrors**
 - D. Assume the lane is clear**
- 2. What should you listen for during the engine start check?**
 - A. Vehicle turning on smoothly**
 - B. Engine noises**
 - C. Horn sounds**
 - D. Selection of gear**
- 3. When is it permissible to increase distance from a tailgater?**
 - A. Only at high speeds**
 - B. Whenever it is safe to do so**
 - C. Only on straight roads**
 - D. Always**
- 4. What is the stopping time for a 40-foot truck traveling under 40 mph?**
 - A. 2 seconds**
 - B. 4 seconds**
 - C. 6 seconds**
 - D. 8 seconds**
- 5. How many passengers must a vehicle accommodate for a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) to be required?**
 - A. 5 or more**
 - B. 8 or more**
 - C. 10 or more**
 - D. 12 or more**

- 6. How do mirrors help in safe driving?**
- A. By creating blind spots**
 - B. By providing visibility of surrounding traffic and blind spots**
 - C. By eliminating the need for head checks**
 - D. By enhancing the vehicle's aesthetic**
- 7. Under California law, how many hours on duty may a driver work consecutively without a break?**
- A. 14 hours**
 - B. 16 hours**
 - C. 10 hours**
 - D. 12 hours**
- 8. Which requirement must be met for drivers to avoid violating hours of service limits?**
- A. Log all driving hours in a single-entry system**
 - B. Record hours in duplicate for inspection**
 - C. Only report driving hours weekly**
 - D. Use electronic logbook systems exclusively**
- 9. What equipment is necessary when performing a combo vehicle air brakes check?**
- A. Only the trailer brake**
 - B. Only the parking brake**
 - C. Trailer hand brake and emergency line shut-off valve**
 - D. Only service line valve**
- 10. What role do chocks serve in securing a vehicle carrying hazardous materials?**
- A. They prevent theft**
 - B. They help stabilize the vehicle**
 - C. They allow for easier loading**
 - D. They enhance visibility at night**

Answers

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

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Explanations

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1. What should a driver do before making a lane change?

A. Signal, check mirrors, and look over shoulder

B. Immediately change lanes

C. Only check mirrors

D. Assume the lane is clear

The correct response involves signaling, checking mirrors, and looking over the shoulder. This sequence is essential for ensuring the safety of all road users. Signaling beforehand alerts other drivers about your intention to change lanes, allowing them to react appropriately. Checking mirrors helps the driver to assess the surrounding traffic and identify any vehicles that are in the adjacent lanes, while looking over the shoulder provides a final confirmation that there are no blind spots or other obstacles that haven't been seen in the mirrors. Being thorough in this process minimizes the risk of accidents. It allows the driver to be aware of their surroundings and make informed decisions, fostering a safer driving environment. Therefore, taking these steps helps prevent collisions that could result from changing lanes without proper checks.

2. What should you listen for during the engine start check?

A. Vehicle turning on smoothly

B. Engine noises

C. Horn sounds

D. Selection of gear

Listening to engine noises during the engine start check is crucial for identifying any potential issues with the engine or other vital components of the vehicle. A well-functioning engine should start quietly and smoothly without any unusual sounds such as knocking, grinding, or excessive rattling. If there are abnormal noises, they may indicate problems such as mechanical failure or insufficient oil levels, which could compromise the safety and performance of the vehicle. By paying attention to these sounds, a driver can assess whether the engine is operating correctly and decide if further maintenance is needed before hitting the road. Other aspects, such as a vehicle turning on smoothly, while important, do not provide as detailed an indication of the engine's internal health. The sounds of the horn and selection of gear are also relevant for safety and operation checks but are not directly related to the condition of the engine itself. Focusing on engine noises helps ensure that the vehicle is in a safe and operational state before driving.

3. When is it permissible to increase distance from a tailgater?

A. Only at high speeds

B. Whenever it is safe to do so

C. Only on straight roads

D. Always

Increasing the distance from a tailgater is permissible whenever it is safe to do so because it enhances safety for both drivers. Maintaining a safe following distance allows for ample reaction time in case the vehicle in front of you needs to stop suddenly. This practice helps prevent collisions, especially in situations where visibility is limited or the road conditions are poor. While it may be tempting to only consider certain situations, such as high speeds or straight roads, safe driving practices should always be the priority in all conditions. This flexibility in allowing drivers to create more space as needed contributes to safer driving on the roads. Thus, as long as it is safe to increase the distance from a tailgater, drivers should feel empowered to do so, providing an opportunity for a more controlled driving environment.

4. What is the stopping time for a 40-foot truck traveling under 40 mph?

A. 2 seconds

B. 4 seconds

C. 6 seconds

D. 8 seconds

The stopping time for a vehicle, such as a 40-foot truck, is influenced by several factors, including the vehicle's speed, weight, road conditions, and the driver's reaction time. When a 40-foot truck is traveling under 40 mph, it typically requires about 4 seconds to come to a complete stop. This duration reflects the average expectation for a heavy vehicle, accommodating the time it takes for the driver to perceive a need to stop, react, and then for the vehicle to physically slow down. Heavier vehicles require longer stopping distances primarily due to their mass, which affects the braking force needed to halt the vehicle. Although options reflecting shorter stopping times may seem reasonable, they do not account for the additional distance and time that a larger vehicle inherently requires to stop safely and effectively. This longer stopping time helps prevent accidents by allowing drivers enough time to react to unexpected situations on the road.

5. How many passengers must a vehicle accommodate for a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) to be required?

- A. 5 or more**
- B. 8 or more**
- C. 10 or more**
- D. 12 or more**

A Commercial Driver's License (CDL) is required when a vehicle is designed to transport 10 or more passengers, including the driver. This threshold is important as it relates to the regulations and safety standards that apply to drivers operating larger passenger-carrying vehicles. The requirement ensures that drivers are adequately trained and qualified to handle larger groups of people, which includes understanding safety protocols, emergency procedures, and driving techniques specific to larger vehicles. Vehicles capable of carrying fewer than 10 passengers, on the other hand, do not require a CDL, as they fall under regular driver's license regulations. Thus, the correct answer reflects this established guideline within the CDL requirements.

6. How do mirrors help in safe driving?

- A. By creating blind spots**
- B. By providing visibility of surrounding traffic and blind spots**
- C. By eliminating the need for head checks**
- D. By enhancing the vehicle's aesthetic**

Mirrors play a crucial role in safe driving by enhancing the driver's ability to see the surrounding traffic and any potential blind spots. They are strategically placed on the vehicle to provide the best possible view of what is happening around it, enabling the driver to monitor lanes, check for other vehicles, and ensure that they are aware of any obstacles or hazards. In particular, side mirrors and rearview mirrors significantly increase awareness by allowing drivers to view areas that may not be easily seen from their seating position. This visibility is essential when changing lanes, merging, or reversing, as it helps drivers make informed decisions and reduce the risk of collisions. While some might think that mirrors could create blind spots, they actually serve the opposite purpose by allowing drivers to identify and navigate around those areas more effectively. Though head checks remain an important aspect of safe driving, mirrors aid in minimizing the need for constant physical movement to check surroundings. Additionally, while the aesthetic enhancement of a vehicle is a factor in design, the primary function of mirrors is to promote safety and prevent accidents.

7. Under California law, how many hours on duty may a driver work consecutively without a break?

- A. 14 hours**
- B. 16 hours**
- C. 10 hours**
- D. 12 hours**

In California, the law allows a driver to be on duty for a maximum of 16 consecutive hours, which includes the time spent driving and performing other work-related activities. It's important for drivers to understand this limit because it helps ensure that they take adequate rest to maintain safety on the road. After reaching this 16-hour limit, drivers are required to take a mandatory off-duty period to rest and recover before they can resume driving. This regulation is designed to prevent fatigue-related accidents and to promote safer driving conditions. Knowing the hours of service regulations is crucial for professional drivers to avoid violations and maintain their commercial driver's license.

8. Which requirement must be met for drivers to avoid violating hours of service limits?

- A. Log all driving hours in a single-entry system**
- B. Record hours in duplicate for inspection**
- C. Only report driving hours weekly**
- D. Use electronic logbook systems exclusively**

To comply with hours of service requirements, drivers must accurately record their driving hours to ensure they do not exceed the regulated limits. Keeping a log in a format that is accessible for inspection is crucial for transparency and regulatory compliance. Recording hours in duplicate allows for verification and helps maintain accurate records, which can be inspected by law enforcement or regulatory agencies. This redundancy ensures that even if one log is lost or damaged, there is still a reliable record available for review. Other options do not adequately meet compliance requirements. A single-entry system may lead to errors or inaccuracies, while only reporting hours weekly might not capture daily driving data necessary for compliance with limits. Exclusively using electronic logbooks could be beneficial, but it does not inherently satisfy the requirement of ensuring logs are ready for inspection unless they are also clear and accurate.

9. What equipment is necessary when performing a combo vehicle air brakes check?

- A. Only the trailer brake**
- B. Only the parking brake**
- C. Trailer hand brake and emergency line shut-off valve**
- D. Only service line valve**

The correct answer is the inclusion of both the trailer hand brake and the emergency line shut-off valve for a combo vehicle air brakes check because these components are essential for properly testing the air brake system's functionality and ensuring safety. During a pre-trip inspection and air brake check, the trailer hand brake is important for engaging the braking system of the trailer, allowing the driver to assess its performance and ensure it will function correctly while driving. The emergency line shut-off valve is crucial because it stops air flow in the event of a disconnection of the emergency line, ensuring that the trailer does not become unbraked in case of an air pressure loss. Together, these components help ensure that both the tractor and trailer systems are functioning correctly, reducing the risk of brake failure or accidents on the road. Conducting a thorough air brake check with these elements is a crucial part of safety measures required for operating combination vehicles.

10. What role do chocks serve in securing a vehicle carrying hazardous materials?

- A. They prevent theft**
- B. They help stabilize the vehicle**
- C. They allow for easier loading**
- D. They enhance visibility at night**

Chocks are used primarily to stabilize a vehicle, particularly when it is parked on an incline or on an unstable surface. In the context of vehicles carrying hazardous materials, stabilization is critical to prevent any unintended movement that could result in spills or accidents. By securely holding the vehicle in place, chocks reduce the risk of shifting that may occur due to wind, uneven ground, or any handling during loading or unloading operations. This function is vital for maintaining safety standards, ensuring that hazardous materials are contained and preventing potential environmental hazards or dangers to personnel. While the other options might seem relevant in various contexts, they do not specifically address the primary safety function that chocks serve in relation to vehicles transporting hazardous materials.

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://californiacdlclassa.examzify.com>

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