

# Certified Specialist of Wine (CSW) Practice Exam (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

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- 1. Which grape combination is typical for the Southern Rhône rosé from Tavel?**
  - A. Grenache and Cinsault**
  - B. Grenache and Mourvèdre**
  - C. Grenache and Syrah**
  - D. Grenache and Carignan**
  
- 2. How can climate change influence global wine regions?**
  - A. It always improves wine quality everywhere.**
  - B. Has no effect on wine regions.**
  - C. It can alter vintage timing, sugar and acidity balance, grape ripening, and style shifts toward riper or cooler climate characteristics.**
  - D. Only affects red wines.**
  
- 3. What are the single red Grand Cru of Côte de Nuit and the single white Grand Cru of Côte de Beaune?**
  - A. Cote Nuit-Musigny; Cote de Beaune-Montrachet**
  - B. Cote Nuit-Musigny; Cote de Beaune-Chassagne**
  - C. Cote Nuit-Musigny; Cote de Beaune-Beaune**
  - D. Cote Nuit-Musigny; Cote de Beaune-Corton**
  
- 4. Which major wine region is associated with Pinot Noir for reds and Chardonnay for whites, with emphasis on terroir?**
  - A. Bordeaux**
  - B. Burgundy**
  - C. Tuscany**
  - D. Rioja**
  
- 5. Which classification system was established in 1932, abolished and then brought back again?**
  - A. Cru Bourgeois**
  - B. Grand Cru Classe**
  - C. Premier Cru**
  - D. Vin de Bordeaux**

- 6. Which factor influences varietal characteristics besides the grape variety?**
- A. Climate alone**
  - B. Region, winemaking, and aging**
  - C. Packaging color**
  - D. Bottle size**
- 7. What aging-related flavor development is commonly observed in Bordeaux and Burgundy reds?**
- A. Secondary and tertiary flavors develop over time with age.**
  - B. Primary fruit aromas persist unchanged.**
  - C. Tannins disappear quickly with age.**
  - D. Color intensity increases with aging.**
- 8. What is meant by varietal labeling in wine?**
- A. Varietal labeling indicates aging method**
  - B. Varietal labeling includes the vintage year**
  - C. Varietal labeling highlights a predominant grape variety**
  - D. Varietal labeling is used to indicate geographic origin**
- 9. What is the term for stirring the lees to add texture and complexity?**
- A. Bâtonnage**
  - B. Racking**
  - C. Fining**
  - D. Cold stabilization**
- 10. What is terroir?**
- A. A single grape variety**
  - B. Climate only**
  - C. Topography only**
  - D. A combination of soil, climate, topography, and cultural practices that influence grape characteristics and wine style**

## Answers

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

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## **Explanations**

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**1. Which grape combination is typical for the Southern Rhône rosé from Tavel?**

- A. Grenache and Cinsault**
- B. Grenache and Mourvèdre**
- C. Grenache and Syrah**
- D. Grenache and Carignan**

For a Tavel rosé, the defining blend starts with Grenache as the main grape and pairs it with Cinsault. Grenache contributes the fruit, warmth, and body, while Cinsault adds lightness, high acidity, and floral lift, yielding the fuller yet crisp style that characterizes Tavel. Other grapes like Mourvèdre, Syrah, or Carignan may be used in smaller amounts for variation, but the traditional and most typical combination is Grenache with Cinsault.

**2. How can climate change influence global wine regions?**

- A. It always improves wine quality everywhere.**
- B. Has no effect on wine regions.**
- C. It can alter vintage timing, sugar and acidity balance, grape ripening, and style shifts toward riper or cooler climate characteristics.**
- D. Only affects red wines.**

Climate change reshapes wine regions by altering the conditions that govern how grapes develop. Warmer growing seasons can shift when grapes reach key stages, changing vintage timing and the overall harvest window. As temperatures rise, grapes accumulate sugars faster while acidity tends to decline, which alters the sugar-acid balance and can raise potential alcohol unless vintners adjust picking times or practices. Ripening can accelerate and become less uniform across a vineyard, influencing how flavors, tannins, and phenolic compounds develop and, in turn, the wine's style. All of these changes can push wines toward characteristics associated with warmer climates (riper fruit, fuller body, higher alcohol) or, in cooler regions, allow ripening to occur more fully than before. So the main effects are shifts in when grapes ripen, the balance of sugar and acidity, how ripening translates into flavor and structure, and the resulting shifts in wine style. It's not a universal boost, it's a set of interconnected changes that also applies to regions beyond red wines.

3. What are the single red Grand Cru of Côte de Nuit and the single white Grand Cru of Côte de Beaune?
- A. Cote Nuit-Musigny; Cote de Beaune-Montrachet
  - B. Cote Nuit-Musigny; Cote de Beaune-Chassagne
  - C. Cote Nuit-Musigny; Cote de Beaune-Beaune
  - D. Cote Nuit-Musigny; Cote de Beaune-Corton**

In Burgundy, Grand Cru vineyards are tied to specific subregions and, for white wines, to Chardonnay, while red Grand Cru sites highlight Pinot Noir. The red Grand Cru most closely associated with the Côte de Nuit is Musigny, renowned for its exceptional Pinot Noir and a defining red Grand Cru of that area. On the Côte de Beaune, the prominent white Grand Cru on the Corton hill is Corton (with the white expression often labeled Corton-Charlemagne in modern references). So the pairing Musigny for the red and Corton for the white aligns with the well-known Grand Cru sites of those subregions. The other options mix in whites from Montrachet-related vineyards or pair red sites with whites in ways that don't fit the typical regional designations.

4. Which major wine region is associated with Pinot Noir for reds and Chardonnay for whites, with emphasis on terroir?
- A. Bordeaux
  - B. Burgundy**
  - C. Tuscany
  - D. Rioja

This question tests how a region's signature grape varieties align with the idea of terroir-driven winemaking. Burgundy is renowned for Pinot Noir as the red grape and Chardonnay as the white, with wines that express a strong sense of place—the soils, slopes, and microclimates shaping character from village level to climats. Red Burgundy under Pinot Noir tends to be nuanced, red-fruited, and often lighter in style, while White Burgundy under Chardonnay ranges from precise, mineral-driven bottlings in Chablis to richer, oak-influenced whites in the Côte de Beaune, all highlighting terroir as a defining factor. This emphasis on terroir and the classic pairing of Pinot Noir for reds and Chardonnay for whites is what makes Burgundy the best answer. Bordeaux, Tuscany, and Rioja are known for different grape profiles and blending traditions, not the Pinot Noir-Chardonnay terroir-driven model Burgundy exemplifies.

5. Which classification system was established in 1932, abolished and then brought back again?
- A. Cru Bourgeois**
  - B. Grand Cru Classe
  - C. Premier Cru
  - D. Vin de Bordeaux

Cru Bourgeois is the Bordeaux classification created in 1932 to recognize quality among Médoc wines that were not part of the 1855 Grand Cru Classé list. It was later abolished and then reintroduced with a revised system in the 2000s, making it the only option here that fits the pattern of established, then abolished, and then brought back. The Grand Cru Classe designation comes from the 1855 ranking and hasn't followed that same cycle. Premier Cru is a term more closely tied to Burgundy, while Vin de Bordeaux is a broad wine designation, not a formal classification.

**6. Which factor influences varietal characteristics besides the grape variety?**

- A. Climate alone
- B. Region, winemaking, and aging**
- C. Packaging color
- D. Bottle size

Varietal characteristics are the flavors, aromas, and textures you associate with a grape, but how strongly and in what form they express themselves comes from how the wine is grown and made. The region or site shapes climate, sunlight, rainfall, soils, and slope, which together affect ripeness, acidity, and the development of aroma and flavor precursors. Winemaking decisions—how the wine is fermented, at what temperatures, how long it stays in contact with skins, what kind of yeast or bacteria are involved, whether oak or lees aging is used—directly influence which compounds are extracted or transformed and how the wine’s aroma and texture present those varietal traits. Aging further evolves the profile through chemical changes that soften tannins and blend flavors over time. Packaging color and bottle size don’t change the intrinsic flavor profile of the grape; they affect perception or storage more than the grape’s natural varietal character. So, the combination of region, winemaking decisions, and aging best explains how varietal characteristics are expressed beyond the grape variety itself.

**7. What aging-related flavor development is commonly observed in Bordeaux and Burgundy reds?**

- A. Secondary and tertiary flavors develop over time with age.**
- B. Primary fruit aromas persist unchanged.
- C. Tannins disappear quickly with age.
- D. Color intensity increases with aging.

Red wines from Bordeaux and Burgundy gain complexity as they age by developing flavors beyond the fresh fruit they show when young. This shift moves from primary fruit aromas toward secondary flavors—those that come from fermentation and oak, such as spice, vanilla, cedar, and tobacco—and then toward tertiary flavors that emerge from long bottle aging, including earth, forest floor, leather, mushroom, and sometimes truffle. The fruit notes fade and the wine takes on a more nuanced, layered character. Tannins may soften and integrate but don’t disappear quickly, and the color tends to become lighter and more brick-ruby with time rather than becoming more intense. So the aging-related flavor development commonly observed is the emergence of secondary and tertiary flavors as the wine matures.

## 8. What is meant by varietal labeling in wine?

- A. Varietal labeling indicates aging method
- B. Varietal labeling includes the vintage year
- C. Varietal labeling highlights a predominant grape variety**
- D. Varietal labeling is used to indicate geographic origin

Varietal labeling communicates the grape that is the main component of the wine. It tells you which predominant variety the wine is built around, and that name on the bottle is a hint about the flavors, aromas, and style you can expect. It's different from indicating aging method, which would relate to oak or bottle age; from the vintage year, which is about when the grapes were harvested; and from geographic origin, which points to where the wine comes from. In practice, wines labeled with a grape name—like Chardonnay or Pinot Noir—signal that the named variety is the lead ingredient in the blend. The label typically requires the named grape to comprise the majority of the wine (for example, many regions require around 75% or more of that grape), ensuring the label reflects the main variety used.

## 9. What is the term for stirring the lees to add texture and complexity?

- A. Bâtonnage**
- B. Racking
- C. Fining
- D. Cold stabilization

Stirring the lees to add texture and complexity is called batonnage. After fermentation, the wine is kept in contact with the lees (dead yeast cells) and occasionally stirred to keep the lees suspended. This autolysis releases compounds like amino acids and polysaccharides that enhance mouthfeel, body, and add nuanced aromas such as brioche, bread, or nutty notes, enriching the wine's texture without drastically changing its primary fruit character. It's especially common with white wines like Chardonnay to increase creaminess and richness. Racking would move the wine away from the lees, fining would clarify or smooth, and cold stabilization prevents tartrate crystals—none of those achieve the texture-building effect of batonnage.

## 10. What is terroir?

- A. A single grape variety
- B. Climate only
- C. Topography only
- D. A combination of soil, climate, topography, and cultural practices that influence grape characteristics and wine style**

Terroir is the integrated fingerprint of a place on its grapes and wine, arising from the combination of environmental factors and human practices. It's not just one element. Soil affects drainage, nutrient availability, and mineral character; climate governs sugar development, acidity, and phenolic maturity; topography—slope, elevation, and aspect—shapes sun exposure, wind, and drainage. Add in how the vines are managed and how the wine is made—canopy management, irrigation, harvest timing, fermentation choices, oak aging—and you get a distinctive wine expression tied to a specific place. This blend of natural conditions and human influence explains why wines from the same varietal can vary with site and why a region's wines carry a recognizable character.

## 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](mailto:hello@examzify.com).**

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

**<https://specialistofwinecsw.examzify.com>**

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

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