

CERTIFIED SPECIALIST OF WINE (CSW) PRACTICE EXAM (SAMPLE)

STUDY GUIDE



Prepare with structure. Pass with confidence



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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 pairing correctly matches a fortified wine style with its characteristic trait?**
 - A. Sherry (Spain) – tropical fruit and bright pineapple notes
 - B. Port (Portugal) – ripe dark fruit and chocolate
 - C. Madeira (Portugal) – minimal oxidation and fresh herbs
 - D. Port (Portugal) – citrus notes and high acidity
- 2. Which grapes are typical in Touraine for red wines?**
 - A. Sauvignon Blanc
 - B. Gamay/Pinot
 - C. Merlot
 - D. Cabernet Franc
- 3. Which Alsace wine style indicates late harvest grapes?**
 - A. Vendange Tardive
 - B. Selection de Grains Noble
 - C. Edelzwicker
 - D. Crémant d'Alsace
- 4. 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
- 5. Which is the driest level of champagne sweetness?**
 - A. Extra Brut
 - B. Brut
 - C. Sans Dosage
 - D. Demi-Sec

- 6. What is a common fault related to sulfur compounds in wine, and how does it present?**
- A. H₂S or sulfur off-odors (rotten egg, burnt rubber) or reductive aromas.
 - B. No sulfur faults occur in wine.
 - C. Sulfur faults produce only sweet aromas.
 - D. Sulfur compounds enhance fruity aromas.
- 7. What role do sulfur compounds play in wine, both positive and negative?**
- A. Sulfites are irrelevant to wine quality.
 - B. Sulfites inhibit spoilage and oxidation, preserving freshness; excessive or certain interactions can produce harsh aromas or reduced fruit character.
 - C. Sulfites add sweetness.
 - D. Sulfites promote rapid fermentation.
- 8. How do Old World and New World wine styles generally differ in terms of flavor profile and winemaking emphasis?**
- A. Old World emphasizes ripe fruit and accessibility; New World emphasizes terroir and tradition
 - B. Old World emphasizes terroir, restraint, tradition; New World emphasizes ripe fruit, accessibility, and showier styles
 - C. They are identical in style
 - D. They differ only in bottle shapes
- 9. In sparkling wine production, what does dosage refer to?**
- A. Sugar added after disgorgement to adjust sweetness.
 - B. Fermentation temperature control.
 - C. Carbon dioxide content.
 - D. Aging duration.
- 10. The upper end Left Bank reds (Médoc) are known for which type of blends?**
- A. Merlot-dominated blends
 - B. Petit Verdot-dominated blends
 - C. Malbec-dominated blends
 - D. Cabernet-dominated blends

Answers

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

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Explanations

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1. Which pairing correctly matches a fortified wine style with its characteristic trait?

- A. Sherry (Spain) – tropical fruit and bright pineapple notes
- B. Port (Portugal) – ripe dark fruit and chocolate**
- C. Madeira (Portugal) – minimal oxidation and fresh herbs
- D. Port (Portugal) – citrus notes and high acidity

Fortified wines gain their distinct profiles from how they're aged and how fermentation is stopped. Port, produced in the Douro Valley, is fortification that preserves ripe fruit characters and often sweetness. The most typical and widely recognized trait for Port is ripe dark fruit flavors—think blackberry, plum, fig—with chocolate accents in some aged examples. This combination reflects Port's rich, fruit-forward style and its higher alcohol level, which helps preserve those intense flavors. Sherry, made in Spain, is known for oxidative aging or biological aging that yields nutty, dried fruit, caramel, and sometimes saline or roasted notes—hardly tropical fruit aromas like pineapple. Madeira is deliberately oxidized and often heated during aging, producing flavors such as toasted nuts, caramel, and dried fruit, not minimal oxidation or fresh herbs. Citrus notes and high acidity are not characteristic hallmarks of Port either; that kind profile isn't typical for fortified Port. So the pairing that correctly matches a fortified wine style with its characteristic trait is Port with ripe dark fruit and chocolate.

2. Which grapes are typical in Touraine for red wines?

- A. Sauvignon Blanc
- B. Gamay/Pinot**
- C. Merlot
- D. Cabernet Franc

Touraine red wines are typically built from lighter, early-ripening varieties that suit the cooler Loire climate. The grapes most characteristic for red wines across the Touraine are Gamay and Pinot Noir. Gamay brings bright red fruit, lively acidity, and soft tannins, making fresh, early-drinking reds, while Pinot Noir contributes finesse, delicate berry aromas, and a more restrained structure. This combination reflects the region's style of red wines, which often favor drinkability and approachability. Cabernet Franc is a key red grape in some Loire subregions, but across Touraine as a whole the Gamay/Pinot pairing is the more representative choice. Merlot is more associated with Bordeaux climates, and Sauvignon Blanc is a white grape, so it doesn't apply to red wines.

3. Which Alsace wine style indicates late harvest grapes?

- A. Vendange Tardive**
- B. Selection de Grains Noble
- C. Edelzwicker
- D. Crémant d'Alsace

Late harvest grapes are signaled in Alsace by the label Vendange Tardive. This designation means the grapes were picked later than normal, which concentrates sugars and flavors and often results in a fuller-bodied wine with some sweetness depending on the style. It emphasizes harvest timing and ripeness rather than botrytis. The other styles point to different concepts: Selection de Grains Noble refers to grapes affected by noble rot for very sweet dessert wines; Edelzwicker is just a generic blend; Crémant d'Alsace is sparkling wine made by the traditional method. So Vendange Tardive best indicates late harvest grapes.

4. 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.

5. Which is the driest level of champagne sweetness?

- A. Extra Brut
- B. Brut
- C. Sans Dosage**
- D. Demi-Sec

The amount of sweetness in champagne is controlled by the dosage, the sugar solution added after disgorgement. Sans Dosage means no sugar is added, so it yields the driest possible style. Extra Brut and Brut introduce small amounts of sugar, making them very dry but slightly less austere than Sans Dosage. Demi-Sec adds more sugar, producing a noticeably sweeter wine. Since no sugar is added in Sans Dosage, it is the driest among these options.

6. What is a common fault related to sulfur compounds in wine, and how does it present?

- A. H₂S or sulfur off-odors (rotten egg, burnt rubber) or reductive aromas.**
- B. No sulfur faults occur in wine.
- C. Sulfur faults produce only sweet aromas.
- D. Sulfur compounds enhance fruity aromas.

Sulfur-related faults are common in wine and show up as noticeable sulfur aromas when present in excess. The most typical fault is hydrogen sulfide, which smells distinctly like rotten eggs, and this can be accompanied by reductive notes such as burnt rubber, struck matches, or garlic. These aromas arise from sulfur compounds produced during yeast metabolism or from storage under low-oxygen, reductive conditions, often linked to inadequate yeast nutrition or stress during fermentation. They dull fruitiness and can make the wine feel shallow or unclean. While trace sulfur compounds can contribute certain fruity or smoky nuances in some wines at very low levels, a fault is defined by these off-putting sulfur aromas rather than any positive effect. Management focuses on preventing sulfur buildup through proper yeast nutrition, careful handling to avoid reductive conditions, and, if needed, fining with copper to bind sulfides.

7. What role do sulfur compounds play in wine, both positive and negative?

- A. Sulfites are irrelevant to wine quality.
- B. Sulfites inhibit spoilage and oxidation, preserving freshness; excessive or certain interactions can produce harsh aromas or reduced fruit character.**
- C. Sulfites add sweetness.
- D. Sulfites promote rapid fermentation.

The key idea is that sulfur compounds in wine serve as both protectors and potential sources of off-flavors. Sulfur dioxide, the main sulfur compound used in winemaking, acts as an antioxidant and antimicrobial agent. By inhibiting unwanted spoilage organisms and slowing oxidation, it helps preserve the wine's freshness, aroma, and color, keeping fruity and floral characters more vibrant over time. At the same time, if sulfur compounds are present in too high amounts or interact with other aroma compounds during aging, they can create sulfurous notes—think burnt matches, rotten eggs, or other harsh sulfur aromas—and can dampen or mask the fruit character of the wine. In short, sulfur compounds help preserve quality, but excessive levels or certain reactions can lead to negative sensory effects.

8. How do Old World and New World wine styles generally differ in terms of flavor profile and winemaking emphasis?

- A. Old World emphasizes ripe fruit and accessibility; New World emphasizes terroir and tradition
- B. Old World emphasizes terroir, restraint, tradition; New World emphasizes ripe fruit, accessibility, and showier styles**
- C. They are identical in style
- D. They differ only in bottle shapes

The main idea here is how climate, tradition, and winemaking goals shape flavor and style. Old World wines tend to express terroir—how the land, soils, and climate imprint the wine—along with a sense of restraint and longstanding tradition. That often means more subtle fruit, higher acidity and tannin for balance, and less emphasis on heavy oak or flashy extraction. The result is a wines that feel more nuanced and food-friendly, with flavors that reflect where they came from and the vintage. New World wines, by contrast, usually aim for ripeness and immediacy. Warmer climates and modern techniques promote fully developed fruit flavors, more accessible alcohol levels, and often more pronounced oak, leading to bolder, showier wines that are easy to enjoy when young. Winemakers emphasize style and market appeal, sometimes with a more aggressive extraction to boost fruit impact. So the correct description is that Old World emphasizes terroir, restraint, and tradition, while New World emphasizes ripe fruit, accessibility, and showier styles. There can be exceptions, but this general contrast captures the common difference.

9. In sparkling wine production, what does dosage refer to?

- A. Sugar added after disgorgement to adjust sweetness.**
- B. Fermentation temperature control.
- C. Carbon dioxide content.
- D. Aging duration.

Dosage is the sugar-containing liquid added after disgorgement to adjust the final sweetness and balance of a sparkling wine. This dosage (liqueur d'expédition) is a small amount of wine with sugar, sometimes plus a bit of reserve wine, used to determine the wine's style, such as brut or demi-sec. It sets how sweet the wine will taste and helps balance acidity after the lees are removed and the bottle is topped up. It is not about fermentation temperature control, nor does it directly set the carbon dioxide content—which comes from the in-bottle fermentation—nor is it about aging duration.

10. The upper end Left Bank reds (Médoc) are known for which type of blends?

- A. Merlot-dominated blends
- B. Petit Verdot-dominated blends
- C. Malbec-dominated blends
- D. Cabernet-dominated blends**

The main idea is that the top Red Bordeaux from the Left Bank, particularly the Médoc, are built around Cabernet Sauvignon. The gravel soils on the Left Bank favor Cabernet Sauvignon's structure, tannins, and aging potential, so the best wines in this area typically have Cabernet Sauvignon as the dominant component. Merlot, Cabernet Franc, and sometimes Petit Verdot play supporting roles to add softness, aroma, color, or additional backbone, but they don't usually surpass Cabernet Sauvignon in quantity for the finest examples. This Cabernet-dominated blend profile is what gives upper-end Médoc wines their characteristic firm tannins, dark fruit, and impressive aging potential. Merlot-dominated blends are more typical of the Right Bank, and Malbec isn't a primary component in Bordeaux blends. Petit Verdot may appear in some blends, but it rarely dominates.

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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://specialistofwinecsw.examzify.com>

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

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