

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

STUDY GUIDE



**SAMPLE STUDY GUIDE
WITH LIMITED QUESTIONS**

**VISIT US ONLINE FOR
THE FULL VERSION STUDY GUIDE**

<https://specialistofwinecsw.examzify.com>



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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 Champagne subregion is associated with Chardonnay as the sole listed variety?**
 - A. Montagne de Reims
 - B. Vallée de la Marne
 - C. Côte de Bar
 - D. Côte des Blancs

- 2. The Coteaux du Layon's sweet wines are made exclusively from which grape?**
 - A. Chenin Blanc
 - B. Sauvignon Blanc
 - C. Chardonnay
 - D. Melon de Bourgogne

- 3. 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.

- 4. Which two estates are ranked as Premier Cru Classe in the Saint-Émilion Grand Cru AOC?**
 - A. Chateau Ausone; Chateau Cheval Blanc
 - B. Chateau Haut-Brion; Chateau Latour
 - C. Chateau Margaux; Chateau Lafite
 - D. Chateau d'Yquem; Chateau Mouton Rothschild

- 5. Which of the following is one of the largest outside the Côtes du Rhône in the Southern Rhône?**
 - A. Costières de Nîmes
 - B. Ventoux
 - C. Châteauneuf-du-Pape
 - D. Beaumes-de-Venise

- 6. What is the effect of oak origin on aging wine?**
- A. Oak origin (American vs French) and toast level create different flavor profiles and tannin structures.
 - B. Oak origin has no impact on flavor.
 - C. Oak only affects color.
 - D. Oak addition always darkens color.
- 7. Which Alsace wine style indicates late harvest grapes?**
- A. Vendange Tardive
 - B. Selection de Grains Noble
 - C. Edelzwicker
 - D. Crémant d'Alsace
- 8. Which statement is true about aging in oak barrels?**
- A. They preserve fresh fruit flavors without any oak influence
 - B. They are the same as stainless steel in terms of oxidation control
 - C. They always make wine sweeter
 - D. They add oak flavors and contribute to tannin integration
- 9. Pessac-Léognan is a district that split off from Graves.**
- A. True
 - B. False
 - C. It is a separate region unrelated to Graves
 - D. It merged with Sauternes
- 10. Cru Classe is a classification system for which Bordeaux region?**
- A. Graves - Left Bank
 - B. Médoc
 - C. Pessac-Léognan
 - D. Sauternes

Answers

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

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Explanations

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1. Which Champagne subregion is associated with Chardonnay as the sole listed variety?

- A. Montagne de Reims
- B. Vallée de la Marne**
- C. Côte de Bar
- D. Côte des Blancs

Chardonnay as the only listed variety on a Champagne label signals a blanc de blancs, a style made entirely from Chardonnay. The subregion most closely associated with this approach is Côte des Blancs, whose chalky soils and cooler climate give Chardonnay wines with lively acidity, finesse, and citrus character. The other subregions are more strongly linked to Pinot Noir or Pinot Meunier, so they're not as typically associated with Chardonnay as the sole grape on the label. So, the subregion tied to Chardonnay as the sole listed variety is Côte des Blancs.

2. The Coteaux du Layon's sweet wines are made exclusively from which grape?

- A. Chenin Blanc**
- B. Sauvignon Blanc
- C. Chardonnay
- D. Melon de Bourgogne

Chenin Blanc is the grape used to make Coteaux du Layon's sweet wines. Chenin Blanc thrives in Anjou and has the acidity needed to balance very high sugar levels from late-harvest or botrytized fruit, producing wines that are intensely sweet yet still refreshing. This varietal drives the region's characteristic dessert wines, which are typically made exclusively from Chenin Blanc, unlike the other grapes listed that are more associated with different Loire styles.

3. 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.

4. Which two estates are ranked as Premier Cru Classe in the Saint-Émilion Grand Cru AOC?

- A. Château Ausone; Château Cheval Blanc**
- B. Château Haut-Brion; Château Latour
- C. Château Margaux; Château Lafite
- D. Château d'Yquem; Château Mouton Rothschild

In Saint-Émilion Grand Cru AOC, the highest tier is Premier Grand Cru Classé, and only two estates hold that top rank. Those estates are Château Ausone and Château Cheval Blanc. This classification is unique to Saint-Émilion and is separate from the 1855 Bordeaux system, which places different châteaux (like Haut-Brion, Latour, Margaux, Lafite, Mouton Rothschild) into its own categories, and from Sauternes (d'Yquem). So Ausone and Cheval Blanc are the two that occupy the Premier Grand Cru Classé status in this appellation.

5. Which of the following is one of the largest outside the Côtes du Rhône in the Southern Rhône?

- A. Costières de Nîmes**
- B. Ventoux
- C. Châteauneuf-du-Pape
- D. Beaumes-de-Venise

The main idea here is the size of the vineyard area outside the central Côtes du Rhône region. Among those Southern Rhône appellations, Costières de Nîmes covers a very large area, giving it a prominence by sheer land under vine outside the Côtes du Rhône zone. Its reach stretches across a broad, sun-facing plain near Nîmes, which supports extensive, diverse wine production. Châteauneuf-du-Pape, while exceptionally famous, governs a relatively small geographic footprint compared with Costières de Nîmes. Beaumes-de-Venise is even smaller, concentrated in a more limited hillside area. Ventoux is sizeable as well, but in the context of "largest outside the Côtes du Rhône," Costières de Nîmes is the standout among these options. So, Costières de Nîmes is the best answer because it is one of the largest outside the Côtes du Rhône in the Southern Rhône.

6. What is the effect of oak origin on aging wine?

- A. Oak origin (American vs French) and toast level create different flavor profiles and tannin structures.**
- B. Oak origin has no impact on flavor.
- C. Oak only affects color.
- D. Oak addition always darkens color.

Oak origin matters because the wood itself brings distinct sets of flavor compounds and tannin characteristics into the wine as it ages. French oak, with its tighter grain and often subtler spice profile, tends to impart more nuanced notes and a slower, gentler extraction of tannins, while American oak, with a wider grain, can contribute bolder vanilla, coconut, and spice flavors and more assertive tannins. The toast level further alters what lignin and other wood components break down into, shaping both aroma and mouthfeel—heavy toasting can add smoky, charred notes and change how tannins feel on the palate. All of this means the same wine aged in different oaks can develop very different flavor profiles and tannin structures over time. It's not accurate to say oak has no impact on flavor, nor that it only affects color, or that oak always darkens color; the primary effect during aging is the evolving flavor and tannin integration driven by oak origin and toast.

7. 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.

8. Which statement is true about aging in oak barrels?

- A. They preserve fresh fruit flavors without any oak influence
- B. They are the same as stainless steel in terms of oxidation control
- C. They always make wine sweeter
- D. They add oak flavors and contribute to tannin integration

Aging in oak barrels introduces oak-derived flavors—vanillin, toast, spice—and also allows a tiny amount of air to interact with the wine. That slow oxygen exposure promotes tannin softening and polymerization, helping tannins meld with the wine's structure to create a smoother, more integrated mouthfeel. Because of this, oak aging adds complexity from the oak itself rather than preserving fruit flavors untouched. Stainless steel, by contrast, is nearly airtight and restricts oxygen, leading to different aging dynamics and flavor development. Oak does not inherently make wine sweeter, since sugars aren't added by the barrel, though some flavors can contribute a perception of sweetness. So the true statement is that aging in oak barrels adds oak flavors and aids tannin integration.

9. Pessac-Léognan is a district that split off from Graves.

- A. True
- B. False
- C. It is a separate region unrelated to Graves
- D. It merged with Sauternes

Pessac-Léognan was created in 1987 as a separate AOC carved out of the Graves district to recognize the distinct terroir around Pessac and Léognan. It remains within the Graves geographic area, so saying it split from Graves is accurate. It isn't unrelated to Graves, and it didn't merge with Sauternes, which is a different sweet-wine appellation in the same general region.

10. Cru Classe is a classification system for which Bordeaux region?

A. Graves - Left Bank

B. Médoc

C. Pessac-Léognan

D. Sauternes

Cru Classe is a ranking of Bordeaux wine estates based on quality and reputation. While most people associate it with the original 1855 classification for the Médoc and Sauternes–Barsac, Graves has its own recognized Cru Classé list as well. The Graves region sits on the Left Bank of the Gironde, and within Graves there is a defined set of châteaux that are designated as Cru Classé. That link to a formal quality ranking within a Left Bank Bordeaux region is why Graves – Left Bank is the best fit among the options. (Pessac-Léognan is a subregion of Graves and includes some of these Cru Classé estates, but the broader region that carries the Cru Classe designation is Graves on the Left Bank.)

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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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