

COLREGs International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (IRPCS) Practice Test (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. What is the primary consideration when determining safe speed?**
 - A. Size of the vessel**
 - B. Avoiding fuel consumption**
 - C. Position of other vessels and environmental conditions**
 - D. The speed of opposing vessels**

- 2. Under what circumstances do COLREGs apply?**
 - A. Only to commercial vessels**
 - B. To all vessels on the high seas and in navigable waters**
 - C. Only in coastal waters**
 - D. Only to military vessels**

- 3. What should a vessel do if it hears a fog signal from another vessel ahead of her beam according to Rule 19e?**
 - A. Increase its speed to pass quickly**
 - B. Reduce speed to the minimum necessary to stay on course**
 - C. Change course immediately**
 - D. Wait for clearer visibility before doing anything**

- 4. What is a "vessel in sight"?**
 - A. A vessel that is in distress**
 - B. A vessel that is visually seen and identified by another vessel**
 - C. A vessel that has navigational aids**
 - D. A vessel that is anchored**

- 5. What must be assessed to determine an appropriate safe speed?**
 - A. Only the number of nearby vessels**
 - B. The visibility and traffic density**
 - C. The engine size of the vessel**
 - D. Weather forecast for the day**

- 6. When is a vessel permitted to enter a separation zone?**
- A. Only during daylight hours**
 - B. To avoid immediate danger or to engage in fishing**
 - C. When it is the only option available**
 - D. To overtake another vessel**
- 7. What action should a vessel take if it needs to enter a separation zone?**
- A. Wait for permission from the coast guard**
 - B. Enter only in emergency situations or for designated activities**
 - C. Signal other vessels to give way**
 - D. Assess the zone for anchoring options**
- 8. What does Rule 26 govern about the actions taken by a vessel when at anchor?**
- A. It requires displaying proper lights to indicate the vessel status**
 - B. It states no actions are needed when at anchor**
 - C. It allows the vessel to operate on engine power only**
 - D. It recommends notifying other vessels of the anchoring**
- 9. When does a sailing vessel have the right of way over a power-driven vessel?**
- A. When both are on a collision course, and the sailing vessel is on the windward side**
 - B. When the sailing vessel is larger**
 - C. When the power-driven vessel is in a narrow channel**
 - D. When the sailing vessel is under engine power**
- 10. What is the focus of Part B Section 3?**
- A. Conduct of Vessels in any Condition of Visibility**
 - B. Conduct of Vessels in Restricted Visibility**
 - C. Conduct in Vessels in Sight of One Another**
 - D. Exemptions**

Answers

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

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Explanations

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1. What is the primary consideration when determining safe speed?

- A. Size of the vessel**
- B. Avoiding fuel consumption**
- C. Position of other vessels and environmental conditions**
- D. The speed of opposing vessels**

The primary consideration when determining safe speed is the position of other vessels and environmental conditions. This is paramount because establishing a safe speed allows the mariner to take necessary actions to avoid collisions. The navigational environment plays a crucial role in assessing potential risks; factors such as visibility, weather conditions, sea state, and traffic density must all be considered when setting a vessel's speed. For example, in reduced visibility due to fog or heavy rain, a vessel may need to reduce speed significantly to ensure that the crew can react in time to any obstacles or other vessels. Similarly, in congested waters, being aware of the position of other vessels is essential to maneuver safely and avoid potential collisions. This approach aligns with COLREGs Rule 6, which emphasizes the need for vessels to proceed at a safe speed at all times to be able to take proper and effective action to avoid collisions. While the size of the vessel, fuel consumption, and the speed of opposing vessels can also influence operational decisions, they are secondary to the immediate need for situational awareness and collision avoidance.

2. Under what circumstances do COLREGs apply?

- A. Only to commercial vessels**
- B. To all vessels on the high seas and in navigable waters**
- C. Only in coastal waters**
- D. Only to military vessels**

The correct answer is that COLREGs apply to all vessels on the high seas and in navigable waters. This encompasses all types of vessels, including commercial, recreational, and government-owned ships, ensuring that all maritime traffic adheres to standardized rules to prevent collisions at sea. The regulations are designed to promote safe navigation and are not limited to specific types of vessels or geographic locations. The application of COLREGs across all vessels underscores the importance of universal compliance in maintaining maritime safety. By applying to both high seas and navigable waters, the regulations help establish uniformity in navigation practices, thereby enhancing safety for all users of waterways. The intent is to mitigate the risks of collisions and to facilitate the orderly movement of vessels in varying maritime environments. In contrast, options suggesting limited applicability to only commercial, military vessels, or coastal waters misrepresent the broader scope of COLREGs, which aim to regulate navigation for every vessel type under a wide range of conditions.

3. What should a vessel do if it hears a fog signal from another vessel ahead of her beam according to Rule 19e?

- A. Increase its speed to pass quickly**
- B. Reduce speed to the minimum necessary to stay on course**
- C. Change course immediately**
- D. Wait for clearer visibility before doing anything**

Under Rule 19e of the COLREGs, a vessel that hears a fog signal from another vessel ahead of her beam is required to reduce speed to the minimum necessary to stay on course. This rule is put in place to enhance safety in conditions of reduced visibility, such as fog, where the risk of collision is significantly increased. By reducing speed, the vessel allows for better maneuverability and more time to assess the situation, including the relative positions of both vessels. This cautious approach is essential because the exact nature of the threat may not be clear, and maintaining a slower speed can help prevent accidents while navigating through potentially dangerous waters. The emphasis on staying on course while minimizing speed reflects the need to maintain control over the vessel while still being able to react to any developments. Quick maneuvers or changes in speed, such as increasing speed or changing course immediately, could lead to confusion and risk of collision, especially in reduced visibility where the actions of nearby vessels are unpredictable. Waiting for clearer visibility before taking action might not be a viable option if another vessel is already in proximity, as delays could lead to accidents. Thus, maintaining control through a cautious approach is paramount.

4. What is a "vessel in sight"?

- A. A vessel that is in distress**
- B. A vessel that is visually seen and identified by another vessel**
- C. A vessel that has navigational aids**
- D. A vessel that is anchored**

A "vessel in sight" refers to a situation where one vessel is visually seen and identified by another vessel. This definition is crucial because it establishes the ability of vessels to perceive each other's presence in navigational scenarios, which is essential for maintaining safe maritime operations and ensuring compliance with the COLREGs. When vessels are in sight of each other, they can take the necessary actions to avoid collisions, such as altering course or speed as indicated by the rules. The other choices do not accurately define "vessel in sight." A vessel in distress pertains to a specific situation involving an emergency, navigational aids refer to equipment used for navigation purposes rather than a specific type of vessel, and a vessel that is anchored does not necessarily imply that it is being visually observed by another vessel. Therefore, the correct understanding is focused on visual identification between vessels, which is key to navigating safely at sea.

5. What must be assessed to determine an appropriate safe speed?

- A. Only the number of nearby vessels**
- B. The visibility and traffic density**
- C. The engine size of the vessel**
- D. Weather forecast for the day**

To determine an appropriate safe speed, it is essential to assess several factors that can impact navigation. The visibility and traffic density are critical elements in this evaluation. Visibility affects a vessel's ability to see other vessels, navigational hazards, and aids to navigation, while traffic density indicates how many other vessels are present in the area. When visibility is low, for instance due to fog or heavy rain, it is prudent to reduce speed, allowing for better reaction time and safer navigation. Similarly, if the area is congested with other vessels, a lower speed may be warranted to avoid collisions and ensure that the vessel can maneuver safely if needed. While other factors such as engine size, the number of nearby vessels, or weather forecasts can influence safe navigation, they do not provide as comprehensive an assessment of safe speed as visibility and traffic density do. These two aspects are aligned with the COLREGs' guidance on maintaining a safe speed at sea.

6. When is a vessel permitted to enter a separation zone?

- A. Only during daylight hours**
- B. To avoid immediate danger or to engage in fishing**
- C. When it is the only option available**
- D. To overtake another vessel**

A vessel is permitted to enter a separation zone primarily to avoid immediate danger or to engage in fishing. This regulation is in place to ensure that vessels navigate primarily in designated navigational channels, thereby maintaining safety and reducing the risk of collisions. The separation zone is meant to be a buffer area between opposing streams of traffic, and entry into it is restricted to specific circumstances to protect the orderly flow of maritime traffic. When a vessel encounters a situation where its safety is at risk, such as mechanical failure or adverse weather conditions, or if it needs to engage in fishing activities in accordance with local regulations, it can enter the separation zone. This exception acknowledges the need for vessels to respond appropriately to emergencies and operational needs while still promoting overall maritime safety. Other options suggest conditions for entry that are not permissible under the regulations. For example, entering a separation zone simply because of limited options or for overtaking purposes does not align with the prescribed norms. Likewise, limiting entry to daylight hours neglects the complexity of navigation, where factors beyond just light conditions may influence a vessel's need to enter a separation zone.

7. What action should a vessel take if it needs to enter a separation zone?

- A. Wait for permission from the coast guard**
- B. Enter only in emergency situations or for designated activities**
- C. Signal other vessels to give way**
- D. Assess the zone for anchoring options**

A vessel needing to enter a separation zone should only do so in emergency situations or for designated activities. Separation zones are specifically established under the International Maritime Organization's maritime regulations to facilitate the safe passage of vessels and reduce the risk of collisions. These zones serve to keep vessels on specific paths and prevent conflict, thereby enhancing navigational safety. Entering a separation zone without appropriate justification could disrupt the orderly flow of maritime traffic and may lead to dangerous situations. Therefore, the regulations state that such entries should be limited to emergencies, such as when a vessel is in distress or requires urgent assistance, or for specific purposes that are authorized. The other options involve actions that do not align with the intended purpose of the separation zone. Waiting for permission from the coast guard may not always be practical, as these zones are often controlled by the flow of marine traffic rather than strict authorization. Signaling other vessels to give way is unnecessary in these scenarios since the vessel should not be entering the zone unless it meets the stipulated circumstances. Lastly, assessing the zone for anchoring options is not appropriate, as anchoring is typically not permitted in separation zones designed for vessel transit, emphasizing the need for high-traffic management and safety.

8. What does Rule 26 govern about the actions taken by a vessel when at anchor?

- A. It requires displaying proper lights to indicate the vessel status**
- B. It states no actions are needed when at anchor**
- C. It allows the vessel to operate on engine power only**
- D. It recommends notifying other vessels of the anchoring**

Rule 26 of the COLREGs indeed governs the actions of vessels when at anchor and specifically focuses on the requirement for these vessels to display proper lights. When a vessel is at anchor, it must show specific anchor lights to ensure its presence is recognized by other vessels, particularly during nighttime or reduced visibility conditions. The visibility of these lights is crucial for maintaining safety at sea, as it communicates to approaching vessels that the anchored vessel is not underway, which helps to prevent collisions. Proper navigation lights are essential as they enhance visibility and awareness among all vessels operating in the vicinity. The requirement to display anchor lights is part of the measures to mitigate risks associated with maritime navigation and promotes adherence to safe practices while at anchor.

9. When does a sailing vessel have the right of way over a power-driven vessel?

- A. When both are on a collision course, and the sailing vessel is on the windward side**
- B. When the sailing vessel is larger**
- C. When the power-driven vessel is in a narrow channel**
- D. When the sailing vessel is under engine power**

A sailing vessel has the right of way over a power-driven vessel when both are on a collision course, and the sailing vessel is on the windward side. This situation is governed by the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGs), specifically Rule 12, which deals with sailing vessels. In sailing, the windward side refers to the direction from which the wind is coming. A sailing vessel that is sailing into the wind (on the windward side) is considered to be constrained by her sails and has priority over a power-driven vessel when trying to avoid a collision. This rule is in place to facilitate safe navigation and to minimize potential conflict between different types of vessels. Other scenarios mentioned may not provide a basis for the sailing vessel's right of way. The size of the vessel or whether it is in a narrow channel does not inherently grant the sailing vessel priority. Also, if a sailing vessel is operating under engine power, it loses its status as a sailing vessel, which could change the right of way dynamics as prescribed by the COLREGs. Therefore, the situation where both vessels are on a collision course, with the sailing vessel on the windward side, clearly supports the rule regarding the right of way.

10. What is the focus of Part B Section 3?

- A. Conduct of Vessels in any Condition of Visibility**
- B. Conduct of Vessels in Restricted Visibility**
- C. Conduct in Vessels in Sight of One Another**
- D. Exemptions**

The focus of Part B Section 3 specifically addresses the conduct of vessels in restricted visibility. This section of the COLREGs outlines the responsibilities and maneuvers that vessels must adhere to when they are navigating in conditions where visibility is reduced, such as during fog, heavy rain, or other situations that limit the range of sight. The regulations emphasize the necessity for vessels to take precautionary measures to avoid collisions, which includes sound signals and other actions aimed at ensuring safe navigation. This part is crucial because restricted visibility can significantly increase the risk of accidents. The regulations establish protocols for vessels to follow, including reducing speed, maintaining a proper lookout, and sounding appropriate signals to alert other nearby vessels of their presence. Understanding these rules is essential for mariners to operate safely in challenging conditions.

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://coloregsirpcs.examzify.com>

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

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