# COLREGs Lights & Shapes 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

**1. What shape does a vessel proceeding under sail and propelled by machinery display?**

**A. A cone apex up**

**B. A cone apex down**

**C. A cylinder**

**D. A ball**

**2. What optional lights may a sailing vessel display?**

**A. Two all-round lights in a vertical line**

**B. One all-round white light**

**C. Red and green sidelights only**

**D. Only one white light**

**3. What type of light is used primarily for vessel signaling during the day?**

**A. Masthead light**

**B. Side light**

**C. Towing light**

**D. Special flashing light**

**4. What defines a 'special flashing light' in maritime rules?**

**A. A blue light with an arc of 180 degrees**

**B. A red light that flashes 30 times per minute**

**C. A yellow light that flashes 50-70 times per minute**

**D. A green light with an arc of 225 degrees**

**5. What is the minimum length for a power-driven vessel to be required to exhibit two masthead lights?**

**A. 25 metres**

**B. 50 metres**

**C. 75 metres**

**D. 100 metres**

**6. During a nighttime navigation, what additional light may a tug under 50 meters show while pushing?**

**A. Another masthead light**

**B. Flares for visibility**

**C. Red light to indicate towing**

**D. No additional lights are required**

**7. What kind of light must be exhibited by a WIG craft in flight near the surface?**

**A. A white steady light**

**B. A red flashing light**

**C. A high intensity all-round flashing red light**

**D. An all-round white light**

**8. When is a special flashing light exhibited?**

**A. During the night on all vessels**

**B. Only when the vessel is at anchor**

**C. At the forward end of a vessel being pushed ahead on the Great Lakes**

**D. When visibility is poor**

**9. When lights for restricted ability to maneuver are installed, what is the minimum distance they must be placed off the center line?**

**A. 1 meter**

**B. 3 meters**

**C. 2 meters**

**D. 4 meters**

**10. What do the rules regarding lights apply to?**

**A. Only to commercial vessels**

**B. All vessels**

**C. Only to vessels over 100 metres**

**D. Only to leisure crafts**

# Answers

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

# Explanations

## 1. What shape does a vessel proceeding under sail and propelled by machinery display?

**A. A cone apex up**

**B. A cone apex down**

**C. A cylinder**

**D. A ball**

**A vessel that is proceeding under sail while also being propelled by machinery displays a cone with the apex pointing downwards. This shape, which is typically a cone apex down, is a specific signal that indicates the state of the vessel to other nearby vessels. The reason for this distinctive signaling is rooted in navigation safety and is defined by the COLREGs (International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea) to ensure that all mariners can clearly identify the status and capabilities of other vessels. The reason this signal is vital is that it informs other vessels that the sailboat can maneuver effectively under both the power of its sails and by the machinery, which may influence how it interacts with other vessels in terms of right of way and navigational decisions. This is particularly important in busy waterways where multiple vessels are present. Other shapes mentioned in the options do not correspond to a vessel under sail and also using machinery. For instance, a cone apex up might indicate different operational conditions or vessel types, while a cylinder and a ball represent other situations entirely and would not provide the necessary information about the combined sail and power propulsion. This clear signaling helps to prevent collisions and enhances overall maritime safety.**

## 2. What optional lights may a sailing vessel display?

**A. Two all-round lights in a vertical line**

**B. One all-round white light**

**C. Red and green sidelights only**

**D. Only one white light**

**A sailing vessel may display two all-round lights in a vertical line as an optional light configuration. This arrangement is typically used to indicate when the vessel is engaged in fishing or when it is making way under sail only. When these lights are shown, they provide clear visibility to other vessels regarding the sailing vessel's status and intention, enhancing navigational safety. For other light configurations, while they can indicate different statuses, they do not provide the specific indication that the vertical all-round lights do. For instance, one all-round white light alone does not offer enough information regarding the vessel's activity or intentions. Red and green sidelights are mandatory for indicating the vessels' sideline visibility, but they do not serve to communicate the operational state of a sailing vessel specifically. A single white light, while visible, does not convey the necessary information related to a sailing vessel's activities as effectively as the two all-round lights in a vertical line.**

## 3. What type of light is used primarily for vessel signaling during the day?

**A. Masthead light**

**B. Side light**

**C. Towing light**

**D. Special flashing light**

**The side light is primarily used for vessel signaling during the day as it allows other vessels to identify both the type and direction of a vessel's movement. Side lights, which are red and green, indicate port (left) and starboard (right) sides of a vessel respectively. These lights are crucial for visibility and safety when vessels are navigating in close proximity, especially in conditions where other ambient lighting might be limited. During daylight, while some vessels may still use their masthead lights for various purposes, side lights are a clear indication to surrounding vessels of your position and heading, which is essential for maintaining safe navigation. The other types of lights mentioned serve different purposes or are meant for visibility at night rather than in daylight conditions.**

## 4. What defines a 'special flashing light' in maritime rules?

**A. A blue light with an arc of 180 degrees**

**B. A red light that flashes 30 times per minute**

**C. A yellow light that flashes 50-70 times per minute**

**D. A green light with an arc of 225 degrees**

**A 'special flashing light' in maritime rules refers specifically to a yellow light that flashes at a rate of 50 to 70 times per minute. This type of light is utilized to signal the presence of certain vessels, particularly those that are engaged in activities like towing or dredging, as well as to alert other vessels of potential hazards. The characteristics of the special flashing light help distinguish these vessels from others that might display different colored lights or have different flash rates, ensuring that mariners can quickly identify and interpret the signals they are encountering on the water. By adhering to the defined standards for a 'special flashing light,' maritime safety and communication are enhanced, facilitating safer navigation for all vessels involved.**

## 5. What is the minimum length for a power-driven vessel to be required to exhibit two masthead lights?

**A. 25 metres**

**B. 50 metres**

**C. 75 metres**

**D. 100 metres**

**A power-driven vessel must exhibit two masthead lights when its length is 50 metres or more. The requirement is outlined in the COLREGs (International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea), specifically focusing on the proper display of lights to ensure visibility and safety at sea. The rationale behind this requirement is based on the increased size and operational capabilities of vessels that are 50 metres and longer. Such vessels may be involved in various maritime activities and require enhanced visibility to other vessels, especially during periods of reduced visibility or bad weather. The two masthead lights indicate the presence and direction of a large power-driven vessel, allowing other mariners to assess its size and navigation path more effectively. For vessels under 50 metres, one masthead light is typically sufficient to provide appropriate visibility and communication about the vessel's intentions. This graduated lighting requirement ensures a balance between safety at sea and the practicality of maintaining proper navigation lighting.**

## 6. During a nighttime navigation, what additional light may a tug under 50 meters show while pushing?

**A. Another masthead light**

**B. Flares for visibility**

**C. Red light to indicate towing**

**D. No additional lights are required**

**A tug under 50 meters in length that is pushing a vessel is permitted to display another masthead light to indicate its status while engaged in towing operations. This additional masthead light serves to enhance visibility and improve the identification of the tug's specific activities during nighttime navigation. It is essential for the safe navigation of vessels in proximity, as it helps other mariners understand the tug's intentions and maneuverability. Displaying an additional masthead light is important because it signals that the tug is not just traveling under its own power but is also engaged in propelling another vessel. This is critical for the other vessels on the water, ensuring they can take appropriate action based on the tug's configuration and movement. Other options would not provide the same level of clarity or adherence to the COLREGs. Flares are emergency signaling devices and not permanent navigation tools. A red light would not correctly represent the operation of a tug. Finally, not displaying any additional lights would not comply with navigation safety practices, potentially increasing the risk of collisions.**

## 7. What kind of light must be exhibited by a WIG craft in flight near the surface?

**A. A white steady light**

**B. A red flashing light**

**C. A high intensity all-round flashing red light**

**D. An all-round white light**

**A WIG (Wing-in-Ground) craft, when in flight near the surface, is required to exhibit a high-intensity all-round flashing red light. This specific lighting protocol is essential for ensuring the visibility of the craft to other vessels and aircraft in the vicinity. The high-intensity aspect of the light is particularly important because it enhances the recognition of the WIG craft, which might otherwise be confused with other types of vehicles. Furthermore, the choice of a red light is significant in maritime navigation, as red is universally recognized as a cautionary color, alerting others to the presence of the craft. The combination of being all-round and flashing adds to the visibility and awareness among other operators, reducing the chances of a collision or mishap. In contrast to other lighting options mentioned, such as a steady white light, which is more common for different types of vessels, or other colors that don't convey the same warning, the requirement for a high-intensity all-round flashing red light provides clear communication of the craft's presence and operational status, adhering to safety regulations and helping to avoid accidents.**

## 8. When is a special flashing light exhibited?

**A. During the night on all vessels**

**B. Only when the vessel is at anchor**

**C. At the forward end of a vessel being pushed ahead on the Great Lakes**

**D. When visibility is poor**

**A special flashing light is typically exhibited at the forward end of a vessel being pushed ahead, such as on the Great Lakes. This specific light serves to indicate the presence of a towing arrangement, ensuring that other vessels recognize the operational status of the pushing vessel and the one being towed. It is crucial for maintaining safe navigation by clearly signaling the configuration and movements of the vessels involved. The other scenarios do not align with the regulations governing the use of special flashing lights. While vessels may exhibit various lights and shapes during the night or in poor visibility, these do not pertain specifically to special flashing lights. The function of such lights is very particular to the context of towing operations, making it essential for safety on the water.**

## 9. When lights for restricted ability to maneuver are installed, what is the minimum distance they must be placed off the center line?

**A. 1 meter**

**B. 3 meters**

**C. 2 meters**

**D. 4 meters**

**The requirement for lights indicating restricted ability to maneuver specifies that these lights must be positioned at least 2 meters off the centerline of the vessel. This distance is crucial for ensuring that the lights can be seen clearly from various angles, reducing the likelihood of misinterpretation by other vessels. The placement of 2 meters off the centerline helps to ensure compliance with the COLREGs, which seek to promote safe navigation and reduce the risk of collisions at sea. Adequate separation from the centerline aids both in visibility and recognition of the vessel's operational status, ensuring other mariners can understand the specific limitations in maneuverability being communicated.**

## 10. What do the rules regarding lights apply to?

**A. Only to commercial vessels**

**B. All vessels**

**C. Only to vessels over 100 metres**

**D. Only to leisure crafts**

**The rules regarding lights apply to all vessels, which is why the correct answer is that they pertain to every type of watercraft, regardless of size or purpose. This includes commercial vessels, recreational yachts, and small fishing boats. The intention behind having these regulations is to ensure navigational safety on the water, allowing vessels to be easily identified and understood by other mariners, which is crucial for preventing collisions and ensuring that everyone is aware of each other's movements. Commercial and leisure crafts, as well as smaller vessels, all must display the appropriate lights according to their size and operational status, which helps to standardize operations on the water. The comprehensive nature of these regulations is vital for maintaining safe maritime navigation, highlighting the importance of understanding and adhering to these rules for all types of vessels.**

# 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://coloregslightsshapes.examzify.com**

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