

COLREGs Rules of the Road 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 Rule 1 of the COLREGs about?**
 - A. Responsibilities of mariners**
 - B. Application of the rules to all vessels upon the high seas and in all waters connected**
 - C. Defining key maritime terms**
 - D. Penalties for non-compliance**

- 2. What is Rule 2 focused on?**
 - A. The rights of way among vessels**
 - B. Responsibilities for all mariners to avoid collisions**
 - C. Insurance requirements for vessels**
 - D. Equipment standards for sailing ships**

- 3. What does the term "Rule 39" refer to?**
 - A. Guidelines for light signals during the day**
 - B. Signals that aircraft must use to indicate vessel characteristics**
 - C. A requirement for all vessels to carry distress signals**
 - D. Procedures for vessels in restricted visibility**

- 4. Why is it essential for vessels to maintain a safe speed near areas of restricted visibility?**
 - A. To ensure they can stop quickly**
 - B. Because collisions are more likely when both cannot see**
 - C. To avoid wasting fuel**
 - D. To comply with local regulations**

- 5. What distinguishes being "underway" from being "aground"?**
 - A. Being attached to a buoy**
 - B. Being in the process of moving**
 - C. Not being anchored, grounded, or attached to shore**
 - D. Being docked at a marina**

- 6. What are vessels required to display according to Rule 20?**
- A. Proper flags based on nationality**
 - B. Proper lights and shapes according to their type and activity**
 - C. Only emergency lights**
 - D. A unique identification number**
- 7. When should shapes be displayed by vessels?**
- A. At night**
 - B. During restricted visibility**
 - C. From sunrise to sunset, regardless of visibility**
 - D. Only when anchored**
- 8. What does Rule 9 govern?**
- A. Navigational lights and signals**
 - B. Vessels crossing at right angles**
 - C. Narrow channels and conduct of vessels passing in them**
 - D. Weather conditions affecting navigability**
- 9. What is the key responsibility of a stand-on vessel according to the COLREGs?**
- A. Alter its course and speed**
 - B. Maintain its course unless otherwise necessary**
 - C. Signal to other vessels**
 - D. Proceed to safe harbor**
- 10. What does Rule 29 signify for vessels in an emergency situation?**
- A. They may signal using specific sound tones to indicate their status**
 - B. They must anchor immediately to avoid danger**
 - C. They have the right-of-way over all other vessels**
 - D. They should keep their lights on at all times**

Answers

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

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Explanations

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1. What is Rule 1 of the COLREGs about?

- A. Responsibilities of mariners
- B. Application of the rules to all vessels upon the high seas and in all waters connected**
- C. Defining key maritime terms
- D. Penalties for non-compliance

Rule 1 of the COLREGs outlines the application of the rules to all vessels engaged in international navigation. Specifically, it states that the COLREGs apply to all vessels upon the high seas and in all waters connected to the high seas, where the rules shall apply to every type of vessel, including fishing vessels, sailing vessels, and powered vessels, no matter their size. This universality is crucial because it ensures a common standard for all vessels, promoting safety and preventing collisions in diverse maritime environments. By clarifying the scope of the COLREGs, Rule 1 sets the foundation for how other rules are to be understood and applied, emphasizing the importance of comprehensive adherence to these navigation standards for mariners navigating in different waters.

2. What is Rule 2 focused on?

- A. The rights of way among vessels
- B. Responsibilities for all mariners to avoid collisions**
- C. Insurance requirements for vessels
- D. Equipment standards for sailing ships

Rule 2 of the COLREGs is specifically focused on the responsibilities of all mariners to avoid collisions. This rule emphasizes the importance of maintaining a safe navigational environment by highlighting that all vessels must take action to avoid situations that could lead to an accident. It underscores the principle that regardless of any specific rules, mariners are always obligated to exercise good seamanship and take necessary measures to prevent collisions whenever possible. This rule serves as a foundational guideline for safe navigation and provides a broad responsibility that applies to all vessels, regardless of their specific circumstances or the application of other rules. It is a reminder that safety is paramount and that adherence to good practices is essential in maritime operations.

3. What does the term "Rule 39" refer to?

- A. Guidelines for light signals during the day
- B. Signals that aircraft must use to indicate vessel characteristics**
- C. A requirement for all vessels to carry distress signals
- D. Procedures for vessels in restricted visibility

The correct choice regarding "Rule 39" pertains to "Procedures for vessels in restricted visibility." This rule is an essential part of the COLREGs, providing specific protocols that vessels must follow when operating in conditions where visibility is significantly limited, such as fog or heavy rain. The primary goal of this rule is to enhance safety by ensuring that vessels take appropriate measures to avoid collisions when visual cues are impaired. In situations of restricted visibility, vessels are advised to take sound signals to communicate their presence and intentions. They must also navigate cautiously, ensuring to reduce speed if necessary, and be ready to take evasive measures to avoid collisions. This proactive approach to safety is crucial in maintaining maritime navigation standards in poor visibility. The other options do not accurately describe Rule 39. The first option relates to guidelines for using visual signals, which is not the focus of Rule 39. The second option incorrectly states that it involves aircraft, which do not fall under maritime rules. Lastly, while distress signals are vital, their regulation is covered in different rules, not specifically in the context of restricted visibility. Thus, understanding Rule 39 is fundamental to ensuring safe maritime operations during inclement weather conditions.

4. Why is it essential for vessels to maintain a safe speed near areas of restricted visibility?

- A. To ensure they can stop quickly
- B. Because collisions are more likely when both cannot see**
- C. To avoid wasting fuel
- D. To comply with local regulations

Maintaining a safe speed in areas of restricted visibility is crucial because it directly relates to the increased risk of collisions. In such conditions, both vessels and other potential hazards may be difficult to see, making it challenging for mariners to assess the situation accurately. By operating at a reduced speed, a vessel increases its ability to react to unexpected obstacles or changes in the environment. This provides more time to recognize potential dangers and take appropriate action, thus helping to avoid collisions. In addition, operating at a safe speed contributes to better control of the vessel, allowing for safer maneuvers when visibility is compromised. This is particularly important in busy waterways or when other vessels may also be navigating the same area under similar poor visibility conditions. Prioritizing a safe speed is a fundamental practice that enhances navigational safety and minimizes the likelihood of accidents.

5. What distinguishes being “underway” from being “aground”?

- A. Being attached to a buoy**
- B. Being in the process of moving**
- C. Not being anchored, grounded, or attached to shore**
- D. Being docked at a marina**

The distinction between being "underway" and being "aground" primarily revolves around the vessel's relationship to the water and its position relative to land. When a vessel is classified as "underway," it means that it is not anchored, aground, or attached to the shore, allowing it the capability to navigate freely through the water. This definition captures the essence of being in motion or capable of movement. In contrast, a vessel that is "aground" is stuck or grounded on the bottom, preventing any movement through the water. Thus, option C effectively encapsulates the concept of what it means to be underway, emphasizing that the vessel's status is defined by its lack of attachment to any fixed point, such as the shore, which is crucial for its operation and navigation. This definition aligns with the COLREGs as it helps to establish navigation rules and responsibilities while a vessel is in motion.

6. What are vessels required to display according to Rule 20?

- A. Proper flags based on nationality**
- B. Proper lights and shapes according to their type and activity**
- C. Only emergency lights**
- D. A unique identification number**

Vessels are required to display proper lights and shapes according to their type and activity as stipulated in Rule 20 of the COLREGs. This rule is essential for ensuring safety on the water, particularly during times of reduced visibility such as at night or in fog. The display of appropriate navigation lights and shapes allows for other vessels to recognize their type, activity, and status, thereby preventing collisions and facilitating safe navigation. For instance, different kinds of vessels (like fishing boats, sailing ships, and powerboats) have specific light arrangements and shapes they must display. These signals indicate to others if they are under sail, undergoing fishing activities, or anchored, among other scenarios. The other options do not align with the requirements set forth in Rule 20. The display of flags based on nationality, emergency lights, or a unique identification number relates to different regulations and does not pertain directly to the requirements for lights and shapes that enhance navigational safety outlined in this rule.

7. When should shapes be displayed by vessels?

- A. At night
- B. During restricted visibility
- C. From sunrise to sunset, regardless of visibility**
- D. Only when anchored

The correct answer is that shapes should be displayed by vessels from sunrise to sunset, regardless of visibility. This is grounded in the COLREGs (Convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea). According to the regulations, certain shapes indicate specific conditions or statuses of vessels during the day, such as being at anchor, aground, or constrained by their draft. The intention behind requiring these shapes to be displayed is to ensure that vessels are visible and their activities clearly communicated to others on the water during daylight hours. This promotes safety and navigational understanding among vessels operating in the vicinity. In contrast, shapes are not required solely for night operations, restricted visibility, or only when anchored. Nighttime visibility is primarily supported through the use of navigation lights, not shapes. While shapes are also displayed in restricted visibility or when anchored, the regulation emphasizes their necessity during daylight hours at all times. Therefore, the continuous display from sunrise to sunset encompasses all potential vessel statuses and promotes effective communication at sea.

8. What does Rule 9 govern?

- A. Navigational lights and signals
- B. Vessels crossing at right angles
- C. Narrow channels and conduct of vessels passing in them**
- D. Weather conditions affecting navigability

Rule 9 of the Colregs (International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea) specifically addresses the conduct of vessels in narrow channels and the rules that govern their navigation within such areas. The purpose of this rule is to ensure safe passage in channels where the space is limited and where the risks of collision are heightened due to the close proximity of vessels and potential cross-currents or other navigational hazards. In narrow channels, Rule 9 stipulates that vessels must generally keep to the side of the channel that is in accordance with their direction of travel, and larger vessels must be given the right of way. This rule supports the safe and orderly movement of maritime traffic, reducing the chances of accidents that might result from the limited maneuverability in these confined spaces. Therefore, understanding the specifics of Rule 9 is crucial for any mariner to safely navigate narrow channels.

9. What is the key responsibility of a stand-on vessel according to the COLREGs?

- A. Alter its course and speed**
- B. Maintain its course unless otherwise necessary**
- C. Signal to other vessels**
- D. Proceed to safe harbor**

The key responsibility of a stand-on vessel, according to the COLREGs, is to maintain its course unless otherwise necessary. This role is crucial in determining the actions taken during encounters between vessels. The stand-on vessel is typically the one that has the right of way in a crossing situation and, thus, is expected to maintain its current course and speed to facilitate the passage of both vessels. Maintaining its course helps prevent confusion and allows the give-way vessel to understand its responsibilities and maneuver appropriately. It is important for the stand-on vessel to remain predictable, which aids in ensuring safety at sea and reduces the risk of collision. This principle supports the overall intent of the COLREGs, which focuses on preventing accidents through clear rules of engagement between vessels. Other options, while relevant to maritime navigation, do not accurately define the primary duty of a stand-on vessel in this specific context. The responsibility is centered on maintaining a steady course until a situation arises that necessitates a change, such as if the give-way vessel does not take appropriate action to avoid collision.

10. What does Rule 29 signify for vessels in an emergency situation?

- A. They may signal using specific sound tones to indicate their status**
- B. They must anchor immediately to avoid danger**
- C. They have the right-of-way over all other vessels**
- D. They should keep their lights on at all times**

Rule 29 of the COLREGs specifically addresses the actions that vessels should take in emergency situations. When a vessel finds itself in distress, it is permitted to signal its status using specific sound signals. These signals are designed to communicate its condition to other vessels in the vicinity, ensuring that nearby boats are aware of the emergency and can offer assistance if able. This rule emphasizes the importance of communication in navigational safety, especially during critical situations when quick recognition by other vessels can be vital for the safety of the distressed vessel and crew. Sound signals are an effective means of conveying the nature of the emergency without the need for visual signals, which may be difficult to see in certain conditions or during the night. Therefore, signaling using specific sound tones is the proper action for vessels in an emergency situation as outlined by Rule 29.

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://coloregrrulesoftheroad.examzify.com>

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

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