

COLREGs Scenarios 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 is the day shape indicating Not Under Command?**
 - A. Two black balls in a vertical line.**
 - B. Ball-Diamond-Ball.**
 - C. A ball.**
 - D. Diamond.**

- 2. How do COLREGs treat fishing vessels in crossing situations?**
 - A. They have priority over all others.**
 - B. They must always yield to power-driven vessels.**
 - C. They are treated with the same collision-avoidance principles; all vessels must avoid risk and keep clear when necessary.**
 - D. They must stop immediately.**

- 3. In COLREGs, what does 'keep well clear' imply?**
 - A. Maintain a safe distance and a substantial margin to avoid collision.**
 - B. Always yield to the other vessel.**
 - C. Keep your current course regardless.**
 - D. Increase speed to pass first.**

- 4. In a crossing where you are the stand-on vessel, what should you do?**
 - A. Maintain course and speed and not impede the other vessel**
 - B. Alter course to starboard**
 - C. Stop and reverse**
 - D. Sound a long blast**

- 5. In a sailing crossing on your starboard bow with another sailing vessel, what is the initial signal if you doubt they will take action?**
 - A. One prolonged blast followed by three short blasts**
 - B. Five or more short and rapid blasts**
 - C. Immediate course change to starboard**
 - D. Signal with flag letters**

- 6. In an overtaking situation, when are you finally past and clear?**
- A. As soon as you pass the stern**
 - B. When nothing you do would resume risk of collision**
 - C. When you are abeam**
 - D. When you are 200m away**
- 7. Which rule prescribes the action to avoid collision by altering course and/or speed?**
- A. Rule 5 Look-out.**
 - B. Rule 8.**
 - C. Rule 3.**
 - D. Rule 19.**
- 8. If you are severely restricted in your ability to deviate from your course while avoiding collision, which action may be appropriate?**
- A. Maintain course and speed**
 - B. Bold alteration to starboard and pass ahead at a safe distance**
 - C. Turn to port**
 - D. Stop and anchor**
- 9. If the stand-on vessel observes the other vessel failing to take action, what may it do?**
- A. Continue on current course and hope the other vessel acts.**
 - B. Wait for a different signal from the other vessel.**
 - C. Take action to avoid.**
 - D. Ask the other vessel to clarify intent.**
- 10. Which COLREGs rule governs the use of lights and shapes at night and in restricted visibility?**
- A. Rule 20**
 - B. Rule 12**
 - C. Rule 13**
 - D. Rule 15**

Answers

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

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Explanations

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1. What is the day shape indicating Not Under Command?

- A. Two black balls in a vertical line.**
- B. Ball-Diamond-Ball.
- C. A ball.
- D. Diamond.

Day shapes are signals used during daylight to tell other vessels what your ship is doing or what condition you're in. Not Under Command is a situation where you cannot maneuver to keep clear of others, even if you want to, so you're signaling your inability to take action. The specific signal for Not Under Command is two black balls displayed one above the other. That vertical pair is unique and instantly recognizable, letting other vessels know to take what steps are necessary to avoid a collision. Other options correspond to different statuses: a single ball means the vessel is at anchor; the ball-diamond-ball arrangement is used when a vessel is Restricted in its ability to maneuver; a lone diamond is used to indicate a vessel constrained by draft. Knowing these distinctions helps you interpret traffic and decide how you should respond.

2. How do COLREGs treat fishing vessels in crossing situations?

- A. They have priority over all others.
- B. They must always yield to power-driven vessels.
- C. They are treated with the same collision-avoidance principles; all vessels must avoid risk and keep clear when necessary.**
- D. They must stop immediately.

In crossing situations, no vessel has automatic priority just because it's a fishing vessel. COLREGs apply the same collision-avoidance rules to every vessel, focusing on keeping risks minimal, not on vessel type. If there's a risk of collision, the give-way vessel (the one that must take action to avoid) and the stand-on vessel (the one that should maintain course if safe) apply their duties accordingly, and both must act promptly to avoid danger. A fishing vessel may have gear that restricts maneuverability, and Rule 9 does say it should not impede other vessels, but this does not grant it priority. The key point is that fishing vessels are treated with the same collision-avoidance principles as everyone else: assess risk and, if needed, alter course or speed to keep clear.

3. In COLREGs, what does 'keep well clear' imply?

- A. Maintain a safe distance and a substantial margin to avoid collision.**
- B. Always yield to the other vessel.
- C. Keep your current course regardless.
- D. Increase speed to pass first.

In COLREGs, keep well clear means you must maintain a safe separation from other vessels, with a substantial margin that allows you to take effective action to avoid a collision. It's a proactive standard: you adjust your speed or course to ensure you have room to maneuver and respond if the other vessel changes course or speed. It isn't about who yields, keeping your current course, or racing to pass first. You keep enough distance so that, under all foreseeable circumstances (speed, maneuverability, weather, visibility, and traffic), there's no risk of collision and you can stop or turn if needed.

4. In a crossing where you are the stand-on vessel, what should you do?

- A. Maintain course and speed and not impede the other vessel**
- B. Alter course to starboard**
- C. Stop and reverse**
- D. Sound a long blast**

In a crossing, the stand-on vessel keeps its course and speed and does not impede the other vessel. This arrangement gives the other vessel (the one that has the stand-on on its port side) the responsibility to avoid collision, by taking early and substantial action if needed. You should stay alert and be prepared to maneuver only if it becomes clear the other vessel will not avoid, but your default is to maintain your current heading and speed. Changing course to starboard would undermine the stand-on position and could create confusion or a closer approach. Stopping or reversing is unnecessary and potentially dangerous in a crossing. A long blast is not the required response to the collision-risk scenario here; signaling may be used for general awareness, but it does not replace the need to maintain course and speed unless you must avoid.

5. In a sailing crossing on your starboard bow with another sailing vessel, what is the initial signal if you doubt they will take action?

- A. One prolonged blast followed by three short blasts**
- B. Five or more short and rapid blasts**
- C. Immediate course change to starboard**
- D. Signal with flag letters**

In this situation the most effective way to prevent a collision is to clearly communicate your intended maneuver. Day signals using flag letters provide a visible, unambiguous way to tell the other vessel what you plan to do, even if you doubt they'll take action. Flag signals are designed for exactly this purpose in daylight and are more reliable than relying on sound signals alone or making an immediate course change without clear communication. The other options involve whistle signals or an abrupt maneuver, which can be misinterpreted or too late, whereas hoisting the appropriate flag communicates your intent directly.

6. In an overtaking situation, when are you finally past and clear?

A. As soon as you pass the stern

B. When nothing you do would resume risk of collision

C. When you are abeam

D. When you are 200m away

The key idea is that overtaking is not finished until you are completely safe from collision, no matter what either vessel does next. You are past and clear when there is no possibility that your subsequent maneuvers could bring you back into the other vessel's risk area. In other words, you can proceed with normal operation only when nothing you do would resume the risk of collision. That's why the best choice is the one that frames safety in terms of potential future actions: once you have no path or action that could recreate a collision, you've cleared the other vessel. Being past the stern or being abeam are not guaranteed indicators of safety, and a fixed distance like 200 meters does not account for speed, angles, or maneuvers that could still bring you into danger. After you're past and clear, continue to monitor the situation and proceed with due caution.

7. Which rule prescribes the action to avoid collision by altering course and/or speed?

A. Rule 5 Look-out.

B. Rule 8.

C. Rule 3.

D. Rule 19.

The main idea is that preventing a close-quarters situation requires taking proactive changes in how you move. The rule that covers this tells every vessel to take early and substantial action to avoid collision, and that action is usually changing course and/or changing speed so the vessels won't come too close. In practice, the vessel responsible for avoiding—often the one with the other vessel on its collision course—must initiate a maneuver well before danger develops, using a course change, speed change, or a combination of both to pass safely. The other vessel should maintain its course and speed unless it becomes clear that the first vessel isn't taking adequate action, in which case it also must adjust to prevent a collision. This rule is the direct instruction on how to execute avoidance, whereas the other rules cover who has the right of way, what to do in special cases, and general lookout requirements.

8. If you are severely restricted in your ability to deviate from your course while avoiding collision, which action may be appropriate?

A. Maintain course and speed

B. Bold alteration to starboard and pass ahead at a safe distance

C. Turn to port

D. Stop and anchor

When you're severely restricted in your ability to deviate from your course, you must take decisive, early action to keep well clear of the other vessel. A bold alteration to starboard to pass ahead at a safe distance is the best option because it creates a clear, predictable maneuver that reduces the chance of a collision despite limited maneuverability. This approach moves you away from the line of potential collision and establishes a safe separation path by crossing in front of the other vessel if needed, without relying on a large or slow maneuver. Maintaining course and speed wouldn't reduce risk because it relies on the other vessel to alter course or slow down, which you may not be able to count on. Turning to port could put you into the other vessel's path given your restricted ability to maneuver. Stopping and anchoring isn't practical or safe in normal traffic and doesn't guarantee collision avoidance.

9. If the stand-on vessel observes the other vessel failing to take action, what may it do?

A. Continue on current course and hope the other vessel acts.

B. Wait for a different signal from the other vessel.

C. Take action to avoid.

D. Ask the other vessel to clarify intent.

When the stand-on vessel sees that the other vessel is not taking action to avoid, it may and must take action to avoid collision. The purpose of this rule is to prevent a collision even if the other vessel is not complying. So, if ROM (risk of collision) exists, you should maneuver to pass clear—altering course, adjusting speed, or both as needed. Relying on the other vessel to act would risk a collision, and waiting for a different signal or asking for clarification does not address the immediate danger. Early, decisive action to avoid is the correct approach.

10. Which COLREGs rule governs the use of lights and shapes at night and in restricted visibility?

A. Rule 20

B. Rule 12

C. Rule 13

D. Rule 15

The use of lights and shapes at night and in restricted visibility is governed by the lamps and shapes rule. This rule specifies what navigation lights you must display to indicate your vessel's type and status (for example, power-driven versus sailing) and when day shapes must be shown to convey not under command, restricted visibility, or other conditions. It applies specifically to night operations and to situations where visibility is reduced, ensuring other vessels can accurately interpret your position and intentions through standardized signals. In restricted visibility, these lighting requirements remain the primary means of signaling, with sound signals used as needed to accompany them. Other rules focus on how vessels should behave in crossing, head-on, or overtaking scenarios, or on different kinds of signals, but they don't establish the lighting and day-shape requirements themselves.

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://colregsscenarios.examzify.com>

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