

Illinois Cosmetology Practice Exam (Sample)

Study Guide



Everything you need from our exam experts!

Copyright © 2026 by Examzify - A Kaluba Technologies Inc. product.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

No part of this book may be reproduced or transferred in any form or by any means, graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, web distribution, taping, or by any information storage retrieval system, without the written permission of the author.

Notice: Examzify makes every reasonable effort to obtain accurate, complete, and timely information about this product from reliable sources.

SAMPLE

Table of Contents

Copyright	1
Table of Contents	2
Introduction	3
How to Use This Guide	4
Questions	5
Answers	8
Explanations	10
Next Steps	16

SAMPLE

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

SAMPLE

1. What is a contraindication for receiving a chemical peel?

- A. Dry skin**
- B. Active acne or infections**
- C. Oily skin**
- D. Sun-damaged skin**

2. What are the two main types of hair texture?

- A. Fine and thick**
- B. Curly and straight**
- C. Fine and coarse**
- D. Wavy and straight**

3. What type of color is best for grey coverage?

- A. Semi-permanent hair color**
- B. Demipermanent hair color**
- C. Permanent hair color**
- D. Temporary hair color**

4. What is the ideal posture while performing hair services?

- A. Leaning forward with tension**
- B. Sitting cross-legged**
- C. Straight back with relaxed shoulders**
- D. Slouched shoulders to relieve stress**

5. What is the role of disinfectants in a cosmetology salon?

- A. To enhance product effectiveness**
- B. To improve customer service**
- C. To kill germs and prevent infection**
- D. To clean surfaces for aesthetics**

6. Which chemical is primarily used in hair straightening treatments?

- A. Glycolic acid**
- B. Sodium hydroxide**
- C. Ammonium thioglycolate**
- D. Hydrogen peroxide**

7. How often must a cosmetology license be renewed in Illinois?

- A. Every year**
- B. Every two years**
- C. Every three years**
- D. Every five years**

8. Which condition should a stylist avoid when working with alkaline treatments?

- A. Weak hair**
- B. Curly hair**
- C. Thick hair**
- D. Color-treated hair**

9. What is a key benefit of routine manicures?

- A. It prevents nail polish from chipping**
- B. It improves nail health and appearance**
- C. It allows for creative nail art**
- D. It reduces skin sensitivity**

10. What is a main benefit of a clarifying shampoo?

- A. It enhances color**
- B. It removes product buildup**
- C. It adds volume**
- D. It moisturizes hair**

Answers

SAMPLE

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

SAMPLE

Explanations

SAMPLE

1. What is a contraindication for receiving a chemical peel?

- A. Dry skin
- B. Active acne or infections**
- C. Oily skin
- D. Sun-damaged skin

Active acne or infections present a significant contraindication for receiving a chemical peel because these conditions can lead to increased irritation and complications during the procedure. Chemical peels work by exfoliating the skin, and if the skin is already compromised due to active acne or an infection, the treatment may exacerbate these issues. Additionally, the chemicals used in peels can irritate open lesions and cause additional inflammation, leading to a longer healing process or potential scarring. In contrast, while dry skin, oily skin, and sun-damaged skin can influence the choice of peel used or its intensity, they do not inherently prevent someone from undergoing the procedure. For instance, dry skin may require a gentler approach, and oiliness might be treated effectively, while sun-damaged skin can often benefit from resurfacing treatments. However, active infections or acne create a higher risk scenario that warrants avoiding the treatment altogether.

2. What are the two main types of hair texture?

- A. Fine and thick
- B. Curly and straight
- C. Fine and coarse**
- D. Wavy and straight

The concept of hair texture primarily refers to the thickness or diameter of the individual hair strands, which can significantly impact styling and treatment. Fine hair indicates strands that are thinner and more delicate, while coarse hair refers to strands that are thicker and often stronger. These factors influence how hair responds to various chemical processes, heat styling, and products, making it essential for cosmetologists to understand and identify these textures in their work. While other options mention variations of texture and patterns like curly, straight, or wavy, these terms describe hair's overall appearance rather than its fundamental physical characteristics. Thus, focusing on the specific attributes of fine and coarse hair better encapsulates the main categories defining hair texture. Recognizing these two primary types allows professionals to tailor their services to best suit each client's hair care needs.

3. What type of color is best for grey coverage?

- A. Semi-permanent hair color
- B. Demipermanent hair color
- C. Permanent hair color**
- D. Temporary hair color

Permanent hair color is the best choice for grey coverage because it contains a higher level of ammonia or other alkaline agents that allow the color to penetrate the hair shaft more effectively than other types. This penetration is crucial for achieving complete and long-lasting coverage of grey hairs, ensuring that the color stays vibrant and does not wash out easily. When applied, permanent hair color can lift the natural pigmentation in the hair while simultaneously depositing new color, which is particularly important for grey or white hair that often resists color. Moreover, the results are typically durable, lasting until the hair grows out and needs to be re-colored. This makes it ideal for anyone looking for a reliable solution to cover a significant amount of grey. In contrast, semi-permanent and demi-permanent hair colors are less effective for complete grey coverage, as they do not contain ammonia and generally do not lift the natural pigment. Temporary hair color typically offers the least commitment, as it only coats the outer layer of the hair and washes out after a few washes, making it unsuitable for effective grey coverage.

4. What is the ideal posture while performing hair services?

- A. Leaning forward with tension
- B. Sitting cross-legged
- C. Straight back with relaxed shoulders**
- D. Slouched shoulders to relieve stress

The ideal posture while performing hair services is characterized by a straight back with relaxed shoulders. This posture is essential not only for maintaining long-term physical health but also for ensuring efficiency and precision during hair services. A straight back helps in the proper alignment of the spine, reducing the risk of back strain and fatigue, which is particularly important for cosmetologists who may spend long hours on their feet. Relaxed shoulders allow for greater arm mobility and less tension in the upper body, enabling the stylist to move freely and perform tasks with ease, such as cutting, styling, or coloring hair. This alignment also promotes better circulation and focus, which are crucial for delivering high-quality services to clients. In contrast, leaning forward with tension, sitting cross-legged, or slouched shoulders can lead to physical discomfort, reduced effectiveness, and increased likelihood of injury over time. These postures can hinder the stylist's ability to perform tasks with the necessary dexterity and confidence, ultimately affecting the quality of the service provided.

5. What is the role of disinfectants in a cosmetology salon?

- A. To enhance product effectiveness
- B. To improve customer service
- C. To kill germs and prevent infection**
- D. To clean surfaces for aesthetics

Disinfectants play a crucial role in a cosmetology salon by killing germs and preventing infection. This is vital for maintaining a safe and hygienic environment where services such as haircuts, coloring, and skin treatments are performed. By using effective disinfectants, salon professionals can eliminate harmful bacteria, viruses, and fungi that may be present on tools, equipment, and surfaces, thereby reducing the risk of infection for both clients and staff. The importance of this aspect is heightened in a salon setting, where multiple clients may use the same tools or space, making regular disinfection practices essential for public health. Ensuring that instruments like scissors, combs, and brushes are disinfected helps create a trustworthy and safe atmosphere, fostering client confidence in the services provided. In contrast, while enhancing product effectiveness, improving customer service, and cleaning for aesthetics are valuable in their own right, they do not specifically address the core function of disinfectants in combating pathogens and safeguarding health in a cosmetic service environment.

6. Which chemical is primarily used in hair straightening treatments?

- A. Glycolic acid
- B. Sodium hydroxide**
- C. Ammonium thioglycolate
- D. Hydrogen peroxide

Sodium hydroxide is primarily used in hair straightening treatments because it acts as a strong alkali that alters the structure of the hair. This chemical is part of a group known as relaxers, which break down the disulfide bonds in the hair's keratin structure. By breaking these bonds, sodium hydroxide allows the hair to be reshaped into a straighter form when combined with heat during the treatment process. This is particularly effective for coarse or tightly curled hair types, as it can provide a more manageable and straightened appearance. The strength of sodium hydroxide necessitates its careful application, as it can cause damage if not used properly, which is a critical aspect for cosmetology students to understand. Other chemicals listed, such as glycolic acid, ammonium thioglycolate, and hydrogen peroxide, are used in different hair treatments and processes, but sodium hydroxide's function in permanently straightening hair sets it apart as the primary choice for chemical hair straightening. Glycolic acid is primarily an exfoliant, ammonium thioglycolate is often used for permanent waving, and hydrogen peroxide is typically associated with bleaching and hair lightening.

7. How often must a cosmetology license be renewed in Illinois?

- A. Every year**
- B. Every two years**
- C. Every three years**
- D. Every five years**

In Illinois, a cosmetology license must be renewed every two years. This period is standard to ensure that cosmetologists stay updated on current practices, techniques, and regulatory changes in the field. Regular renewal helps maintain high professional standards and ensures that practitioners continue to meet the necessary health and safety requirements. Licensing boards often implement renewal requirements that include continuing education to promote ongoing learning in the industry. Therefore, the two-year renewal cycle aligns with these goals and underscores the importance of continual professional development.

8. Which condition should a stylist avoid when working with alkaline treatments?

- A. Weak hair**
- B. Curly hair**
- C. Thick hair**
- D. Color-treated hair**

When working with alkaline treatments, a stylist should avoid using them on weak hair. Alkaline formulations raise the pH level of the hair, which can open the cuticle and allow for deeper penetration of chemicals. While this can be effective for certain treatments, weak hair is already vulnerable due to damage or excessive processing. Applying alkaline treatments can further compromise the integrity of weak hair, leading to more breakage, split ends, and other damage. In contrast, curly hair, thick hair, and color-treated hair can be managed with proper techniques, and with more robust formulations, these types of hair can often handle alkaline treatments without suffering as severe a negative reaction as weak hair would. Thus, understanding the condition of the hair is crucial when selecting appropriate treatments.

9. What is a key benefit of routine manicures?

- A. It prevents nail polish from chipping
- B. It improves nail health and appearance**
- C. It allows for creative nail art
- D. It reduces skin sensitivity

Routine manicures offer a key benefit in improving nail health and appearance. Regular manicures involve various techniques such as filing, buffing, and moisturizing that promote the overall condition of the nails. Consistent care helps to remove any dead skin cells, preventing hangnails and other issues that can detract from the nails' appearance. Additionally, manicures often incorporate the use of quality treatments and products that provide essential nutrients to the nails, contributing to their strength and resilience. Improved appearance is also a significant aspect, as manicures can make nails look well-groomed and polished, which can enhance the overall aesthetic of a person's hands. This is particularly important in the cosmetology field, where the visual appeal is critical. While preventing nail polish from chipping is a benefit of well-applied polish prepped during a manicure, it isn't as foundational to the health aspect as routine care practices. Creative nail art is a fantastic benefit of manicures, but it is more superficial and does not directly relate to the innate health and strength of the nails themselves. Reducing skin sensitivity might be a minor effect of some manicure techniques, but it is not a primary focus or key benefit like the improvement of nail health and appearance.

10. What is a main benefit of a clarifying shampoo?

- A. It enhances color
- B. It removes product buildup**
- C. It adds volume
- D. It moisturizes hair

The primary advantage of a clarifying shampoo is its ability to remove product buildup from the hair and scalp. Over time, various styling products, conditioners, and even hard water minerals can accumulate, leading to a dull appearance and reduced effectiveness of regular shampoos and conditioners. By using a clarifying shampoo, these residues are effectively stripped away, allowing the hair to regain its natural shine and health. This cleansing action prepares the hair for better absorption of subsequent products and can enhance the overall effectiveness of your hair care routine. While enhancing color, adding volume, and moisturizing are beneficial qualities of other types of shampoos or treatments, those attributes are not the main focus of a clarifying shampoo, which is specifically designed to detoxify and purify the hair.

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://illinoiscosmetology.examzify.com>

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

SAMPLE