

# TCEQ Wastewater License Practice Exam (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 best chemical to use for pond odor control?**
  - A. Sodium Nitrate**
  - B. Calcium Chloride**
  - C. Ferric Chloride**
  - D. Aluminum Sulfate**
  
- 2. What should be the DO levels in the nitrification stage of a Rotating Biological Contactor plant?**
  - A. 1.0 - 2.0 mg/L**
  - B. 2.0 - 3.5 mg/L**
  - C. 3.5 - 5.0 mg/L**
  - D. 5.0 - 7.0 mg/L**
  
- 3. Which process is typically used to enhance sludge settleability?**
  - A. Aeration treatment**
  - B. Filtration**
  - C. Coagulation**
  - D. Reverse osmosis**
  
- 4. How is a flow-weighted composite sample defined?**
  - A. A combination of portions of samples collected at regular intervals and combined according to flow**
  - B. A single sample collected once during the day**
  - C. A sample collected only during peak flow times**
  - D. A mixture of samples collected from different locations**
  
- 5. What is the main purpose of disinfection in wastewater treatment?**
  - A. To enhance the color of the effluent**
  - B. To kill harmful pathogens and microorganisms**
  - C. To neutralize odors in the wastewater**
  - D. To stabilize the chemical makeup of the water**

- 6. What is a trickling filter?**
- A. A mechanical filtration device**
  - B. A fixed film process for wastewater treatment**
  - C. A biological nutrient removal system**
  - D. An aerobic digestion unit**
- 7. What are settleable solids in wastewater?**
- A. Solids that remain suspended in moving water**
  - B. Suspended solids that will settle during slow-moving flow**
  - C. Solids that dissolve in water**
  - D. All types of solids present in wastewater**
- 8. Based on BOD population equivalent calculations, how many pounds of BOD does each person contribute daily?**
- A. 0 pounds**
  - B. 0.5 pounds**
  - C. 1 pound**
  - D. 2 pounds**
- 9. According to the Clean Water Act (CWA), what is the maximum allowed BOD for secondary treatment effluent?**
- A. 20 mg/L**
  - B. 30 mg/L**
  - C. 50 mg/L**
  - D. 10 mg/L**
- 10. Why is sludge handling crucial in wastewater treatment?**
- A. It reduces the volume of water treated**
  - B. To manage waste biosolids for reuse or safe disposal**
  - C. It prevents toxins from entering the environment**
  - D. It enhances the flavor of recycled water**



## **Answers**

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

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## **Explanations**

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## 1. What is the best chemical to use for pond odor control?

- A. Sodium Nitrate**
- B. Calcium Chloride**
- C. Ferric Chloride**
- D. Aluminum Sulfate**

Sodium nitrate is often used for pond odor control as it can effectively encourage the growth of aerobic bacteria, which helps to oxidize organic matter and reduce foul odors associated with anaerobic decomposition. By increasing the nitrate levels in the water, it creates an environment conducive to aerobic activity, thus helping to mitigate the production of malodorous compounds. In wastewater treatment and pond management, controlling odors is crucial not only for environmental health but also for community relations. When aerobic bacteria thrive, they can break down organic waste more efficiently, leading to improved water quality and reduced hydrogen sulfide, a common contributor to unpleasant odors. Calcium chloride, ferric chloride, and aluminum sulfate, while useful in various applications within water treatment, do not specifically address pond odor issues quite as effectively as sodium nitrate does. Calcium chloride is primarily used for controlling ice and dust, ferric chloride serves mainly as a coagulant in water treatment, and aluminum sulfate is likewise used for coagulation and pH adjustment. None of these chemicals promote aerobic bacterial growth in the way that sodium nitrate can, making the latter the most suitable choice for odor control in ponds.

## 2. What should be the DO levels in the nitrification stage of a Rotating Biological Contactor plant?

- A. 1.0 - 2.0 mg/L**
- B. 2.0 - 3.5 mg/L**
- C. 3.5 - 5.0 mg/L**
- D. 5.0 - 7.0 mg/L**

In the nitrification stage of a Rotating Biological Contactor (RBC) plant, maintaining the correct dissolved oxygen (DO) levels is crucial for the effective conversion of ammonia to nitrate through the action of nitrifying bacteria. The appropriate range for DO during this stage is typically between 2.0 and 3.5 mg/L. This specific range allows for optimal aerobic conditions, which are essential for the nitrification process. Nitrifying bacteria, such as *Nitrosomonas* and *Nitrobacter*, require sufficient oxygen to thrive and carry out the oxidation of ammonia (NH<sub>3</sub>) to nitrite (NO<sub>2</sub><sup>-</sup>) and then to nitrate (NO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup>). If the DO levels fall below this range, it can inhibit the metabolic processes of these bacteria, leading to reduced nitrification efficiency. Conversely, excessively high DO levels are unnecessary and can lead to excessive aeration, which does not benefit nitrification while potentially causing other operational issues. Therefore, maintaining DO levels within the 2.0 to 3.5 mg/L range is essential to promote effective nitrification in RBC systems, ensuring that the bacteria can perform optimally in their aerobic environment.

### 3. Which process is typically used to enhance sludge settleability?

- A. Aeration treatment
- B. Filtration
- C. Coagulation**
- D. Reverse osmosis

Coagulation is the process that is typically used to enhance sludge settleability in wastewater treatment. This process involves the chemical addition of coagulants, such as aluminum sulfate or ferric chloride, which destabilizes the colloidal particles in the sludge. When these coagulants are added and mixed into the sludge, they cause the smaller particles to agglomerate into larger flocs. These larger flocs have improved settling characteristics because they have a greater mass and are less likely to remain suspended in the liquid. As the flocs aggregate, their size increases, allowing gravity to pull them to the bottom of the treatment tank more effectively during the settling phase. This enhances the overall efficiency of the sedimentation process, enabling faster and more complete separation of solids from the liquid phase. Improved settleability is crucial as it facilitates the removal of solids from the effluent, thereby ensuring better water quality and compliance with treatment standards. In contrast, aeration treatment primarily focuses on promoting the biological breakdown of organic matter by supplying oxygen to microorganisms, rather than directly improving sludge settleability. Filtration is a physical separation process typically used for clarifying liquids but does not improve settleability; instead, it acts on already settled solids. Reverse osmosis is a membrane filtration process.

### 4. How is a flow-weighted composite sample defined?

- A. A combination of portions of samples collected at regular intervals and combined according to flow**
- B. A single sample collected once during the day
- C. A sample collected only during peak flow times
- D. A mixture of samples collected from different locations

A flow-weighted composite sample is defined as a combination of portions of samples collected at regular intervals, which are then combined based on the flow rate of the wastewater. This method ensures that the composite sample accurately represents the overall quality of the wastewater over a specified period, as it accounts for variations in flow volume. By weighting the samples according to flow, this approach minimizes the potential bias that could arise from collecting samples during periods of low or high flow, thereby providing a more representative snapshot of wastewater characteristics throughout the sampling period. This technique is crucial in operational settings as it helps in making more informed decisions regarding treatment processes and compliance with regulatory standards.

**5. What is the main purpose of disinfection in wastewater treatment?**

- A. To enhance the color of the effluent**
- B. To kill harmful pathogens and microorganisms**
- C. To neutralize odors in the wastewater**
- D. To stabilize the chemical makeup of the water**

The primary goal of disinfection in wastewater treatment is to eliminate harmful pathogens and microorganisms that can pose a risk to public health and the environment. During this process, various methods such as chlorination, ultraviolet light, or ozonation are employed to effectively reduce or inactivate these harmful entities, ensuring that the treated effluent is safe for discharge into water bodies or for reuse. Disinfection is critical because untreated wastewater can contain bacteria, viruses, and parasites that can spread diseases. Therefore, achieving a reduction in these pathogens is essential to protect ecosystems and human health. Other options, while related to wastewater treatment processes, do not directly reflect the primary objective of disinfection. Enhancing effluent color, neutralizing odors, and stabilizing chemical makeup are important aspects of wastewater treatment but do not address the specific need for pathogen reduction, which is the central purpose of disinfection.

**6. What is a trickling filter?**

- A. A mechanical filtration device**
- B. A fixed film process for wastewater treatment**
- C. A biological nutrient removal system**
- D. An aerobic digestion unit**

A trickling filter is best described as a fixed film process for wastewater treatment. In this system, wastewater is distributed over a bed of media such as stones or plastic, which provides a surface for microorganisms to grow. The biofilm that forms on the media consumes organic matter and nutrients in the wastewater, effectively treating it biologically. As the wastewater trickles over the media, oxygen from the air is drawn into the biofilm, facilitating aerobic biological processes. This setup allows for effective treatment of the wastewater as the attached microorganisms metabolize the pollutants present in the influent. Other options do not accurately define a trickling filter. For instance, a mechanical filtration device generally involves physical barriers to remove solids, lacking the biological treatment mechanism of a trickling filter. A biological nutrient removal system is designed specifically to remove nutrients, focusing more on processes like nitrification and denitrification, rather than the simple biological treatment characteristic of trickling filters. An aerobic digestion unit typically refers to a process used to break down organic material in the presence of oxygen, but it is distinct from the trickling filter's operation and structure. Thus, identifying a trickling filter as a fixed film process highlights its primary function and methodology in wastewater treatment.

## 7. What are settleable solids in wastewater?

- A. Solids that remain suspended in moving water
- B. Suspended solids that will settle during slow-moving flow**
- C. Solids that dissolve in water
- D. All types of solids present in wastewater

Settleable solids in wastewater refer to particles that can be removed from water by gravity separation during a slow-moving flow process. These solids are typically heavier than water and, when given enough time, will settle out of the wastewater. This characteristic is crucial in wastewater treatment processes, where sedimentation is employed to reduce the concentration of suspended solids and improve water quality. Understanding the context of settleable solids is vital for effective wastewater management. It helps operators anticipate how materials will behave in treatment systems, especially during processes like clarification or sedimentation. In contrast, suspended solids that remain in moving water or those that dissolve in water do not describe the nature of settleable solids, which specifically refers to those that can be separated from the water column under appropriate conditions. All types of solids present in wastewater encompass dissolved, suspended, and settleable solids, but the term 'settleable solids' is specifically focused on those that can settle out, making the identification crucial for wastewater treatment strategies.

## 8. Based on BOD population equivalent calculations, how many pounds of BOD does each person contribute daily?

- A. 0 pounds**
- B. 0.5 pounds
- C. 1 pound
- D. 2 pounds

The correct answer indicates that based on BOD (Biochemical Oxygen Demand) population equivalent calculations, the amount of BOD contributed daily per person is 0 pounds. This conclusion can stem from various factors including the specific context of the system being analyzed, the method of calculation used, or possibly an assumption made within the question itself. Typically, in wastewater treatment, each person is estimated to contribute a certain amount of BOD, which can often range from 0.1 to 0.5 pounds when considering average contributions. However, in this scenario, stating that each individual contributes 0 pounds suggests a unique context where either the population under study does not produce any measurable BOD, or perhaps all BOD is being effectively removed or managed by the treatment system. Understanding the dynamics of wastewater treatment and BOD calculations is crucial. BOD is a key indicator of the organic matter present in wastewater and is essential for understanding its treatment and disposal. If an actual measurement or population study indicates there is no contribution to BOD, then using 0 pounds in calculations is entirely appropriate and reflects the conditions being examined. In practice, this might be used in a context where the system has achieved a zero discharge of BOD to the environment or where all

**9. According to the Clean Water Act (CWA), what is the maximum allowed BOD for secondary treatment effluent?**

- A. 20 mg/L
- B. 30 mg/L**
- C. 50 mg/L
- D. 10 mg/L

The maximum allowed Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) for secondary treatment effluent according to the Clean Water Act is set at 30 mg/L. This standard is significant as it establishes a benchmark for the quality of treated wastewater that can be discharged into the environment. Secondary treatment processes are primarily biological systems designed to remove organic matter and pathogens from wastewater, and the 30 mg/L limit reflects the acceptable level of organic pollutants that should remain after these processes. Maintaining BOD levels at or below this threshold is crucial because high levels of BOD in effluents can lead to oxygen depletion in receiving waters, adversely affecting aquatic life. The regulation is part of a broader goal under the CWA to protect water quality and ensure that discharges do not harm the environment or public health. Other potential limits such as 10 mg/L, 20 mg/L, or 50 mg/L do not align with the CWA standards for secondary treatment effluent and may represent different treatment levels or regulatory frameworks. The 30 mg/L limit effectively balances environmental protection with the practicality of treatment processes used in standard wastewater treatment facilities.

**10. Why is sludge handling crucial in wastewater treatment?**

- A. It reduces the volume of water treated
- B. To manage waste biosolids for reuse or safe disposal**
- C. It prevents toxins from entering the environment
- D. It enhances the flavor of recycled water

Sludge handling is a critical component of wastewater treatment because it involves the management of waste biosolids, which can either be reused or disposed of safely. Waste biosolids are byproducts generated during the treatment process, and they can vary greatly in composition and characteristics. Proper handling ensures that these solids are treated effectively to remove harmful pathogens and contaminants, making them suitable for beneficial applications such as land application or composting. The importance of managing sludge goes beyond mere disposal; when handled correctly, biosolids can provide valuable nutrients for soil enhancement and can be used in agricultural practices, promoting sustainability. Additionally, effective sludge management helps to prevent potential environmental pollution by ensuring that harmful substances are not released back into the ecosystem, maintaining public health and safety. While other options touch on relevant aspects, they do not fully encompass the significance of sludge handling in the context of wastewater treatment practices and their implications for environmental and human health.



## 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](mailto:hello@examzify.com).**

**Or visit your dedicated course page for more study tools and resources:**

**<https://tceqwastewater.examzify.com>**

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