

# US Railroad General Code of Operating Rules (GCOR) Practice Test (Sample)

## Study Guide



**Everything you need from our exam experts!**

**This is a sample study guide. To access the full version with hundreds of questions,**

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# Table of Contents

<b>Copyright</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>How to Use This Guide</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Questions</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Answers</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>Explanations</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Next Steps</b> .....	<b>17</b>

# 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. Don't worry about getting everything right, 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, and take breaks to retain information better.**

## **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.**

## **7. Use Other Tools**

**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!**

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## Questions

- 1. What type of communication should be prioritized in emergencies while on duty?**
  - A. Non-urgent messages**
  - B. Routine checks**
  - C. Clear and immediate communication**
  - D. Delayed responses**
- 2. What is an absolute block in railroad terminology?**
  - A. A section where trains can run freely without restrictions**
  - B. A length of track no train is permitted to enter while occupied by another train**
  - C. A designated area for maintenance activities only**
  - D. A signal indicating all trains must stop**
- 3. According to railroad terminology, how is a train defined?**
  - A. A collection of cars without an engine**
  - B. One or more engines coupled, with or without cars, authorized to operate**
  - C. Any vehicle authorized for use on a railway**
  - D. A maintenance vehicle required to stay off main tracks**
- 4. What must an employee operating a radio ensure before transmitting?**
  - A. That they are close to a control tower**
  - B. That the channel is not being used**
  - C. That their battery is fully charged**
  - D. That they speak clearly into the microphone**
- 5. What action should employees take when a restricted area is less than two miles away from a terminal or junction?**
  - A. Display a yellow-red flag**
  - B. Notify the train dispatcher**
  - C. Slow down to 10 mph**
  - D. Change the train's route**

- 6. What does form 68D relate to in the context of railway incidents?**
- A. Equipment inspection**
  - B. Employee performance review**
  - C. Reporting personal injuries or accidents**
  - D. Regular maintenance checks**
- 7. A distant signal does NOT indicate what?**
- A. Track conditions between signals**
  - B. Approaching the switch point indicator**
  - C. Train speed limits**
  - D. Upcoming station stops**
- 8. What are mandatory directives in railroad operations?**
- A. Verbal communications between crew members**
  - B. Official orders or speed restrictions from the dispatcher**
  - C. Reports on train delays**
  - D. Schedules for train movements**
- 9. If a train is moving under a signal requiring restricted speed, can it comply with the next signal's indication?**
- A. Yes, if the aspect is visible**
  - B. No, it must maintain restricted speed**
  - C. Only if instructed by the dispatcher**
  - D. Yes, regardless of visibility**
- 10. What color flag is used to display the approach of a restricted area?**
- A. Red**
  - B. Yellow**
  - C. Yellow-red**
  - D. Blue**

## **Answers**

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

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## **Explanations**

**1. What type of communication should be prioritized in emergencies while on duty?**

- A. Non-urgent messages**
- B. Routine checks**
- C. Clear and immediate communication**
- D. Delayed responses**

In emergency situations while on duty, prioritizing clear and immediate communication is crucial for ensuring safety and effective response. This type of communication allows personnel to convey vital information rapidly, which can be the difference between preventing accidents and ensuring that appropriate actions are taken swiftly to mitigate the emergency. Clear communication eliminates ambiguity, reducing the chances of misunderstandings that could exacerbate a situation. It enables all parties involved to quickly assess the circumstances and take necessary action, whether that involves alerting other personnel, contacting emergency services, or implementing emergency protocols. In contrast, non-urgent messages, routine checks, and delayed responses can hinder the immediate actions required in emergencies. These options may lead to confusion or a lack of timely intervention, which is why they cannot be prioritized over the need for direct, concise, and prompt communication.

**2. What is an absolute block in railroad terminology?**

- A. A section where trains can run freely without restrictions**
- B. A length of track no train is permitted to enter while occupied by another train**
- C. A designated area for maintenance activities only**
- D. A signal indicating all trains must stop**

An absolute block in railroad terminology is defined as a length of track that is exclusively occupied by one train at a time; no other train is permitted to enter this block while it is occupied. This rule is critical for maintaining safety on the railroad because it ensures that trains cannot collide with one another on the same section of track. The system of absolute blocks utilizes signals and communication protocols to manage train movements, ensuring that when one train is in the block, others are held back until it has cleared the area. This safety measure helps prevent accidents and facilitates efficient train operations by clearly delineating area usage. In contrast, the other options describe scenarios that do not align with the definition of an absolute block. For example, a section where trains can run freely without restrictions does not consider occupancy and potential collisions. A designated area for maintenance activities only implies restrictions but does not specifically relate to train occupancy in a block. Lastly, a signal indicating all trains must stop does not define an occupied block, as it does not communicate the concept of exclusive occupancy that is central to an absolute block.

**3. According to railroad terminology, how is a train defined?**

- A. A collection of cars without an engine
- B. One or more engines coupled, with or without cars, authorized to operate**
- C. Any vehicle authorized for use on a railway
- D. A maintenance vehicle required to stay off main tracks

The definition of a train in railroad terminology is specifically characterized as one or more engines that are coupled together, regardless of whether they are pulling cars. This definition highlights the fundamental role of the locomotive or engine in a train's operation. The inclusion of the phrase "with or without cars" emphasizes that even a single engine running alone is still classified as a train. This distinction is essential for understanding operational protocols and safety regulations within the railroad system, ensuring that the definition captures both freight and passenger train setups appropriately. This broad understanding of what constitutes a train is crucial for effective communication and management of train operations on the railway network.

**4. What must an employee operating a radio ensure before transmitting?**

- A. That they are close to a control tower
- B. That the channel is not being used**
- C. That their battery is fully charged
- D. That they speak clearly into the microphone

An employee operating a radio must ensure that the channel is not being used before transmitting to maintain effective communication and avoid interference. This practice is essential in preventing multiple parties from talking over each other, which can lead to misunderstanding or loss of important information. By confirming the channel is clear, the employee helps ensure that their message is conveyed without disruption, facilitating safe and efficient operations on the railroad. While being near a control tower, having a fully charged battery, and speaking clearly are all important factors for effective communication, they do not directly address the priority of ensuring the channel is available for transmission.

**5. What action should employees take when a restricted area is less than two miles away from a terminal or junction?**

- A. Display a yellow-red flag**
- B. Notify the train dispatcher**
- C. Slow down to 10 mph**
- D. Change the train's route**

When a restricted area is located less than two miles from a terminal or junction, displaying a yellow-red flag serves as an essential warning signal for train crews and employees. The yellow-red flag indicates that there is a specific hazard or condition that requires heightened awareness and caution in that vicinity. This precaution is vital for maintaining safety in areas where train operations could be affected by potential risks, ensuring that personnel and equipment are properly alerted to the need for vigilance. The use of flags is a standard practice in railroad operations to communicate important safety information effectively and promptly. In contrast, the other options either do not specifically address the requirement for flagging in this context or may not be the most appropriate response to the presence of a restricted area. Notifying the train dispatcher or changing the train's route may be necessary in certain situations but do not align directly with the immediate action of notifying others through visual signals. Similarly, slowing down to 10 mph is a cautionary measure typically applied to various safety concerns but does not specifically apply to the protocol for alerting staff about a restricted area.

**6. What does form 68D relate to in the context of railway incidents?**

- A. Equipment inspection**
- B. Employee performance review**
- C. Reporting personal injuries or accidents**
- D. Regular maintenance checks**

Form 68D specifically pertains to the recording and reporting of personal injuries or accidents that occur on the railway. This form is crucial in documenting incidents that can impact the safety and wellbeing of employees and others within the railway environment. By utilizing Form 68D, the railway ensures that proper protocols are followed when such incidents occur, facilitating thorough investigations and enabling the implementation of necessary safety measures to prevent future occurrences. Other forms or procedures exist for the other options, but they do not specifically address the reporting of personal injuries or accidents, which is the primary purpose of Form 68D. This highlights the importance of accurate and timely reporting in maintaining safety standards within the railway industry.

## 7. A distant signal does NOT indicate what?

- A. Track conditions between signals**
- B. Approaching the switch point indicator**
- C. Train speed limits**
- D. Upcoming station stops**

The aspect of a distant signal providing information about track conditions between signals is not its intended purpose. Distant signals specifically serve to inform train crews of the status of the upcoming signal, typically indicating whether the train should prepare to stop or can proceed at a certain speed. The distant signal displays information primarily related to upcoming signals and does not directly convey details about the actual conditions of the track itself, such as whether the conditions are safe, clear, or obstructed beyond that signal. This aspect is usually communicated through other means, such as track circuit signals or other forms of communication, rather than through the distant signal itself. In contrast, a distant signal can help train crews anticipate the status of the upcoming switch point, inform them about speed limits that they should observe before reaching the next signal, and alert them if they will be making any scheduled stops at upcoming stations. These uses of the distant signal directly relate to train operation and preparation, which further clarifies why the other choices are associated with its function.

## 8. What are mandatory directives in railroad operations?

- A. Verbal communications between crew members**
- B. Official orders or speed restrictions from the dispatcher**
- C. Reports on train delays**
- D. Schedules for train movements**

Mandatory directives in railroad operations are crucial instructions that ensure the safe and efficient movement of trains. The correct answer identifies these directives as official orders or speed restrictions issued by the dispatcher. These orders are mandatory; therefore, they must be followed by all crew members involved in the operation of the train. These directives can include specific instructions about speed limits, track usage, or other critical operational parameters that must be adhered to in the interest of safety and compliance with the overall operational rules of the railroad. Such directives are essential for preventing accidents and ensuring that all personnel are aware of any changes to the operating conditions or emergency measures that need to be taken. In contrast, the other options do not fall under the definition of mandatory directives. Verbal communications between crew members can be important for coordination but do not carry the formal authority of written directives. Reports on train delays are useful for operational awareness but do not dictate any immediate actions or requirements. Schedules for train movements, while outlining planned operations, are not directives in the sense of imposing immediate commands or restrictions.

**9. If a train is moving under a signal requiring restricted speed, can it comply with the next signal's indication?**

**A. Yes, if the aspect is visible**

**B. No, it must maintain restricted speed**

**C. Only if instructed by the dispatcher**

**D. Yes, regardless of visibility**

When a train is operating under a signal requiring restricted speed, the train must adhere to that speed limit until it reaches a clear indication that the train can change its speed or proceed. Restricted speed is often employed in situations where the train must be prepared to stop within half the distance of any visible obstruction and be ready to encounter potential hazards. In this context, maintaining restricted speed serves several purposes: it allows for increased safety, particularly in areas where track work, other trains, or animals may be present, and it provides the crew time to react appropriately to any signal aspects or situations they may encounter. If the next signal is not visible or clear, the train must continue to operate at restricted speed until such a signal can be observed and interpreted regarding its indication. Therefore, according to the rules, the train is required to maintain restricted speed and cannot simply change its speed based on the next signal's indication without ensuring that the circumstances allow for it.

**10. What color flag is used to display the approach of a restricted area?**

**A. Red**

**B. Yellow**

**C. Yellow-red**

**D. Blue**

The color flag used to display the approach of a restricted area is yellow-red. This specific color combination indicates to train crews and other personnel that they are approaching a location where restricted operations may be imposed, requiring them to proceed with caution. The yellow aspect serves as a warning, while the red conveys the importance of the restriction, signaling an immediate need for awareness and potential reduction of speed or preparation to stop. Using yellow-red provides a clear visual cue that is easily recognizable and provides sufficient contrast to be seen in various lighting conditions, which is crucial for safety in areas where operations may be hazardous or constrained. This flagging system is part of standardized practices in railway operations to maintain safety and ensure compliance with the established protocols for navigating restricted areas.

## 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://usrailroadgcor.examzify.com>**

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