

USAF Instrument Practice Exam (Sample)

Study Guide



Everything you need from our exam experts!

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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

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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. If there is a malfunction of the compass system or compass card, what should you consider about the VOR or TACAN pointer?**
 - A. It is reliable and can be used immediately**
 - B. It is unreliable until verified by RADAR or other navigational equipment**
 - C. It can be trusted as long as certain parameters are met**
 - D. It should be ignored completely during the flight**

- 2. What is required at the MDA during an ASR approach until reaching the MAP?**
 - A. Continue your radar contact with ATC**
 - B. Maintain visual contact with the ground environment**
 - C. Be prepared for a go-around**
 - D. Increase descent rate to reach the runway sooner**

- 3. Is it true that unless conducting rescue operations, a pilot should not operate within 50NM of known or reported hazardous volcanic ash?**
 - A. True**
 - B. False**
 - C. Only during day operations**
 - D. Only when instructed by ATC**

- 4. For which conditions are minimum climb altitude or gradient specified for departures?**
 - A. Only when approaching a busy airport**
 - B. In specific sectors of the departure**
 - C. During bad weather only**
 - D. On all departures from controlled airfields**

- 5. What is the required flight visibility for a pilot flying VFR in Class E airspace at night?**
 - A. 1 mile**
 - B. 3 miles**
 - C. 5 miles**
 - D. 10 miles**

- 6. What is the purpose of maintaining visibility and cloud clearances before switching from IFR to VFR?**
- A. To ensure safety in uncontrolled airspace**
 - B. To comply with FAA regulations**
 - C. To meet flight plan requirements**
 - D. To prevent a go-around situation**
- 7. What is correct regarding visual holding?**
- A. It requires holding at specific airways**
 - B. It involves holding at geographic fixes easily recognized from the air**
 - C. It is performed above 18,000 feet MSL**
 - D. It allows uncontrolled aircraft in the holding pattern**
- 8. When encountering Clear Air Turbulence (CAT), which actions are recommended?**
- A. Descend aggressively through the turbulent zone**
 - B. Maintain current speed regardless of conditions**
 - C. Fly recommended turbulence-penetration airspeed and make gradual changes**
 - D. Alternate between climbs and descents to find a smoother altitude**
- 9. When listed as OBO (OFFICIAL BUSINESS ONLY), what does it imply about using an airfield?**
- A. You may land only with prior permission**
 - B. No official business can be conducted there**
 - C. It is open to all military and civilian traffic**
 - D. Emergency landings are prohibited**
- 10. What must be executed prior to reaching the MAP if the missed approach is initiated?**
- A. Fly as specified on the approach plate**
 - B. Descend immediately to the missed approach altitude**
 - C. Perform a 360-degree turn**
 - D. Switch to visual flight rules**

Answers

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

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Explanations

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1. If there is a malfunction of the compass system or compass card, what should you consider about the VOR or TACAN pointer?

A. It is reliable and can be used immediately

B. It is unreliable until verified by RADAR or other navigational equipment

C. It can be trusted as long as certain parameters are met

D. It should be ignored completely during the flight

When considering the implications of a malfunction in the compass system or compass card, it is essential to recognize that the VOR (VHF Omnidirectional Range) or TACAN (Tactical Air Navigation) pointers may not provide accurate information without proper verification. The compass system is crucial for initial navigation and orientation, so if it fails, it directly affects pilot situational awareness. Consequently, any navigation aid reliant on the compass could also be compromised. In this situation, the VOR/TACAN pointers should not be assumed to be reliable until their accuracy is confirmed through additional means, such as radar or other navigational tools. These backup systems can provide essential cross-checking capabilities, ensuring that the pilot has accurate positioning information before making navigational decisions. Thus, exercising caution and seeking to verify the information before relying on the VOR or TACAN is critical to maintaining safe flight operations in the event of a compass failure.

2. What is required at the MDA during an ASR approach until reaching the MAP?

A. Continue your radar contact with ATC

B. Maintain visual contact with the ground environment

C. Be prepared for a go-around

D. Increase descent rate to reach the runway sooner

During an ASR (Approach Surveillance Radar) approach, the Minimum Descent Altitude (MDA) is a crucial point in the procedure. At the MDA, the pilot must maintain visual contact with the ground environment because this is the point where the pilot determines whether they have adequate visual references for a continued approach to the runway. If visual contact with the ground and the runway is established, the pilot can continue the approach and land. Maintaining visual contact is essential for the safety of the approach, as it allows the pilot to assess the distance to the runway and the approach path. If the visual reference is not established by the time the Minimum Descent Altitude is reached, the pilot must execute a go-around to ensure safety, as continuing the descent without visual references can lead to dangerous situations. While radar contact with ATC is important for the entire approach, at the MDA, the primary requirement is visual reference to the ground. "Being prepared for a go-around" is indeed a necessary mindset any time a pilot is not able to complete an approach safely, but the requirement at the MDA focuses specifically on visual contact. Increasing the descent rate to reach the runway sooner is not a valid requirement and could lead to controlled flight into

3. Is it true that unless conducting rescue operations, a pilot should not operate within 50NM of known or reported hazardous volcanic ash?

A. True

B. False

C. Only during day operations

D. Only when instructed by ATC

The statement is true. Pilots are advised to avoid flying within 50 nautical miles of known or reported hazardous volcanic ash. This precaution is in place because volcanic ash can severely affect aircraft performance, causing engine failures, reduced visibility, and other critical safety issues. Volcanic ash can damage engines, impair flight controls, and lead to hazardous inflight conditions. As a result, when ash is in the vicinity, it is crucial for pilots to maintain a safe distance to mitigate the risks associated with ash clouds. The operational guidelines aim to ensure that non-rescue flights prioritize safety by avoiding regions where volcanic activity poses a threat. Therefore, conducting operations outside this exclusion zone unless specifically required for rescue missions underscores the emphasis on safety, confirming the correct answer.

4. For which conditions are minimum climb altitude or gradient specified for departures?

A. Only when approaching a busy airport

B. In specific sectors of the departure

C. During bad weather only

D. On all departures from controlled airfields

Minimum climb altitude or gradient for departures is specified in specific sectors of the departure. This is primarily due to air traffic control and safety considerations in areas where airspace conflicts might arise or where terrain may pose risks. In certain sectors, especially near obstacles or where airways converge, it is critical to maintain specific altitudes to ensure safe and effective separation from other aircraft and to avoid terrain. While busy airports may have specific requirements, the necessity for minimum climb altitudes or gradients is not exclusively linked to airport traffic levels. Similarly, bad weather conditions may affect overall operations but do not inherently mandate climb altitudes — they are part of standard departure procedures regardless of weather. Finally, while controlled airfields have regulations, the specific requirement for minimum climb altitudes is not universally applied to all departures but rather to designated sectors important for safety and operational efficiency.

5. What is the required flight visibility for a pilot flying VFR in Class E airspace at night?

- A. 1 mile**
- B. 3 miles**
- C. 5 miles**
- D. 10 miles**

For pilots flying VFR (Visual Flight Rules) at night in Class E airspace, the required flight visibility is indeed 3 miles. This is specified in the Federal Aviation Regulations, which set different visibility and cloud clearance requirements based on the type of airspace and the time of day. In Class E airspace, when operating at night, pilots must maintain a minimum visibility of 3 statute miles to ensure a sufficient visual reference to navigate and avoid obstacles and other aircraft. This requirement is particularly important at night due to reduced visibility conditions, emphasizing the need for greater situational awareness and safety margins. Meeting the visibility requirement helps ensure that pilots can maintain adequate visual separation from terrain and other aircraft, which is critical for safe night flying.

6. What is the purpose of maintaining visibility and cloud clearances before switching from IFR to VFR?

- A. To ensure safety in uncontrolled airspace**
- B. To comply with FAA regulations**
- C. To meet flight plan requirements**
- D. To prevent a go-around situation**

Maintaining visibility and cloud clearances before switching from IFR (Instrument Flight Rules) to VFR (Visual Flight Rules) is crucial for ensuring safety in uncontrolled airspace. When transitioning to VFR, pilots must have adequate visibility and be able to see and avoid clouds to safely navigate and avoid obstacles or other aircraft. The primary concern is to ensure that pilots can visually identify their surroundings and maintain situational awareness, which is essential for safe flight operations, especially in areas where air traffic control may not be actively managing traffic. While compliance with FAA regulations, meeting flight plan requirements, and avoiding go-around situations are all important factors in flight operations, the central focus when transitioning from IFR to VFR is the pilot's ability to maintain visual reference to the ground and other aircraft, thereby enhancing safety during flight.

7. What is correct regarding visual holding?

- A. It requires holding at specific airways
- B. It involves holding at geographic fixes easily recognized from the air**
- C. It is performed above 18,000 feet MSL
- D. It allows uncontrolled aircraft in the holding pattern

Visual holding involves maintaining a designated flight path that is visually referenceable, typically at geographic fixes that can be easily recognized from the air. This practice is used in situations where pilots can visually navigate to landmarks such as prominent terrain features, intersections, or other identifiable locations. The essence of visual holding is to enable pilots to conduct holding patterns using visual references rather than relying solely on navigational aids or airways. This can enhance situational awareness because pilots can see and confirm their position relative to the terrain or significant landmarks. Various factors determine when and how visual holding is applicable, but they usually emphasize the importance of identifiable geographic features rather than the constraints of airways or limitations based on altitude or air traffic control regulations.

8. When encountering Clear Air Turbulence (CAT), which actions are recommended?

- A. Descend aggressively through the turbulent zone
- B. Maintain current speed regardless of conditions
- C. Fly recommended turbulence-penetration airspeed and make gradual changes**
- D. Alternate between climbs and descents to find a smoother altitude

When encountering Clear Air Turbulence (CAT), flying at the recommended turbulence-penetration airspeed and making gradual changes is the most effective action. This airspeed is specifically determined to minimize the strain on the aircraft and its occupants, reducing the risk of structural damage while also providing better control of the aircraft. By maintaining this airspeed, pilots can handle turbulence more effectively and ensure that the aircraft remains stable despite the changing conditions. Making gradual changes to altitude or heading allows the pilot to react to the turbulence without introducing additional stress to the aircraft, making it safer for both the crew and passengers. The other actions would not provide the same level of safety or effectiveness. Descending aggressively through turbulent zones could lead to a loss of control or increased discomfort for passengers. Maintaining a constant speed, irrespective of conditions, could also expose the aircraft to greater risks, especially if it does not align with the turbulence-penetration speed. Alternating climbs and descents might lead to increased operational complexity and could potentially expose the aircraft to more turbulence rather than finding smoother air.

9. When listed as OBO (OFFICIAL BUSINESS ONLY), what does it imply about using an airfield?

- A. You may land only with prior permission**
- B. No official business can be conducted there**
- C. It is open to all military and civilian traffic**
- D. Emergency landings are prohibited**

When an airfield is designated as OBO (OFFICIAL BUSINESS ONLY), it implies that landing at that airfield requires prior permission. This designation is used to manage traffic and ensure that the airfield is used appropriately for its intended purposes, specifically for official governmental or military operations. Landings without advance permission would not typically align with the intended operational policies governing such facilities. This ensures that air traffic control can maintain safety and efficiency at the airfield, monitoring and granting access to aircraft engaged in official duties. The restrictions implied by the OBO designation are crucial for maintaining order and ensuring that the airfield can serve its primary function related to official business, while also potentially limiting use by personal or non-official flights.

10. What must be executed prior to reaching the MAP if the missed approach is initiated?

- A. Fly as specified on the approach plate**
- B. Descend immediately to the missed approach altitude**
- C. Perform a 360-degree turn**
- D. Switch to visual flight rules**

The correct procedure before reaching the missed approach point (MAP) involves flying as specified on the approach plate. This guidance is crucial because the approach plate provides specific instructions for the missed approach, detailing the commands to follow, including the route to take and the altitude to maintain. Adhering to these instructions ensures the aircraft maintains safe terrain clearance and remains within controlled airspace during the transition to the missed approach segment. By following the designated path outlined on the approach plate, pilots can effectively manage their aircraft's position and ensure safe navigation away from the approach area. The other options do not accurately reflect the correct procedure. For instance, descending immediately to the missed approach altitude without following the approach plate instructions can lead to unsafe operational scenarios. Performing a 360-degree turn is generally not a required action during a missed approach; instead, the aim is to follow the planned route efficiently. Since visual flight rules require the pilot to see and avoid obstacles using visual references, switching to VFR may not be practical or safe in low visibility conditions typically associated with approaching an airport.

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://usafinstrument.examzify.com>

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

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