

# USCG Rules of the Road 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

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- 1. If a rowboat underway does NOT show the lights specified for a sailing vessel underway, it shall show which of the following?**
  - A. A stern light only**
  - B. A green sidelights**
  - C. A white light exhibited in sufficient time to prevent collision**
  - D. No lights at all**
  
- 2. In inland waters, what sound signal indicates uncertainty about another vessel's intentions?**
  - A. One prolonged blast**
  - B. Five short blasts**
  - C. Three short blasts**
  - D. One short blast**
  
- 3. What is required of a vessel to indicate a fishing operation?**
  - A. Display a large fishing net**
  - B. Show a specific shape and lights**
  - C. Sound continuous loud signals**
  - D. Keep the vessel at half mast**
  
- 4. What does a high intensity all-round flashing red light indicate when sighted on a vessel?**
  - A. A WIG craft when taking off and landing**
  - B. A vessel engaged in underwater operations**
  - C. A vessel restricted in her ability to maneuver**
  - D. A navigation hazard**
  
- 5. Which of the following is considered a "vessel restricted in her ability to maneuver"?**
  - A. A vessel engaged in fishing.**
  - B. A vessel mineclearing.**
  - C. A vessel towing another vessel.**
  - D. A vessel carrying dangerous cargo.**

- 6. What is the minimum sound signaling equipment required aboard a vessel 10 meters in length?**
- A. Any means of making an efficient sound signal**
  - B. A whistle and a bell**
  - C. A foghorn**
  - D. A radio for distress signals**
- 7. What action should a vessel take if it is "stand-on" in a situation?**
- A. It remains stationary and does not alter course**
  - B. It must take action to avoid collision**
  - C. It may change course if necessary**
  - D. It can only proceed at a slow speed**
- 8. According to the Rules, what operation requires a vessel to display two cones with their apexes together?**
- A. Fishing**
  - B. Anchoring**
  - C. Trawling**
  - D. Moored operations**
- 9. What must every vessel be equipped with in terms of navigation safety?**
- A. Automated navigation systems only**
  - B. A compass and a means of communication**
  - C. Emergency flares and safety equipment**
  - D. All of the above**
- 10. Which action should be taken if both vessels involved in a close-quarters situation cannot determine risk of collision?**
- A. assume there is no risk**
  - B. increase speed to avoid**
  - C. take evasive action**
  - D. maintain current course**

## Answers

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

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## **Explanations**

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**1. If a rowboat underway does NOT show the lights specified for a sailing vessel underway, it shall show which of the following?**

**A. A stern light only**

**B. A green sidelights**

**C. A white light exhibited in sufficient time to prevent collision**

**D. No lights at all**

The correct answer emphasizes the requirement for a rowboat that is underway to exhibit a white light to enhance visibility and avoid collisions. According to the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGs), vessels that don't fit into the defined categories must still ensure they are visible to others, particularly in low-light conditions. A white light helps in signaling the rowboat's presence to other vessels, allowing them ample time to avoid potential collisions. This provision is particularly important because rowboats typically do not meet the standards for displaying sidelights as required for sailing vessels. The other options present scenarios that do not align with the regulations governing visibility and safety for vessels on the water. Displaying only a stern light or sidelights would not adequately inform other vessels of the rowboat's position and movement, especially during times of decreased visibility. Not showing any lights at all would significantly increase the risk of collision, thus the regulations necessitate at least the presence of a white light to maintain safety on the water.

**2. In inland waters, what sound signal indicates uncertainty about another vessel's intentions?**

**A. One prolonged blast**

**B. Five short blasts**

**C. Three short blasts**

**D. One short blast**

The sound signal indicating uncertainty about another vessel's intentions is five short blasts. This signal is universally recognized and is specifically designated for situations where a vessel is unsure of the actions the other vessel is about to take. It serves as a communication tool to alert other vessels that there may be confusion or a lack of clarity in their navigation intentions, prompting caution and increased awareness. In contrast, one prolonged blast generally signifies a vessel's presence or intention to maneuver, while three short blasts indicate a vessel is operating astern propulsion. One short blast is typically used to signal intention to alter course to starboard. These other signals have distinct meanings and do not convey uncertainty, underscoring the specific function of five short blasts as a clear warning to other vessels.

### 3. What is required of a vessel to indicate a fishing operation?

- A. Display a large fishing net
- B. Show a specific shape and lights**
- C. Sound continuous loud signals
- D. Keep the vessel at half mast

When a vessel is indicating that it is engaged in fishing operations, it is required to exhibit specific shapes and lights as prescribed by the maritime regulations. These signals are important for ensuring that other vessels recognize the fishing status of the vessel, promoting safe navigation in shared waters. For a vessel actively fishing, it typically must display two conical shapes in a vertical arrangement when at anchor. If the vessel is engaged in trawling, it may also exhibit appropriate lights at night. This visibility aids in alerting other vessels to the fishing activity, which can prevent accidents, collisions, or disruptions to the fishing process. The other options do not align with the established requirements. Simply displaying a fishing net would not provide an adequate warning or signal to other vessels regarding the fishing operation. Sound signals, while important in some contexts for communication, are not specifically required solely for indicating a fishing operation. Maintaining a vessel at half mast does not pertain to fishing activities at all and relates instead to displaying mourning. Hence, showing specific shapes and lights is the correct and required method for a fishing vessel to indicate its operation.

### 4. What does a high intensity all-round flashing red light indicate when sighted on a vessel?

- A. A WIG craft when taking off and landing**
- B. A vessel engaged in underwater operations
- C. A vessel restricted in her ability to maneuver
- D. A navigation hazard

In the context of maritime navigation, a high intensity all-round flashing red light indicates a very specific operation of a vessel. This kind of light is primarily used to signal that a Wing in Ground Effect (WIG) craft is either taking off or landing. WIG craft are specialized vessels designed to operate close to the surface of the water, using the ground effect to achieve lift. While they exhibit characteristics that can be similar to both aircraft and marine vessels, the use of a high-intensity all-round flashing red light is crucial to warn other vessels of their unique operational status during these critical phases. The other answers represent different scenarios that do not apply to the specific nature of the high-intensity all-round flashing red light. For example, underwater operations would typically be indicated by different signals, while a vessel restricted in its ability to maneuver would use signals that convey its condition but do not include this specific light configuration. A navigation hazard might use varying signaling techniques depending on the particulars of the situation, but again, they would not use a high intensity all-round flashing red light in the same manner as a WIG craft during takeoff or landing. Thus, the correct answer reflects the particular signaling requirements designed to maintain safety and communication on the water for this type

**5. Which of the following is considered a "vessel restricted in her ability to maneuver"?**

- A. A vessel engaged in fishing.**
- B. A vessel mineclearing.**
- C. A vessel towing another vessel.**
- D. A vessel carrying dangerous cargo.**

A vessel restricted in her ability to maneuver is defined in navigational regulations as one that is unable to keep out of the way of another vessel due to the nature of her work. In this context, a vessel engaged in mineclearing fits this definition perfectly. Mineclearing operations require significant focus and maneuverability restrictions, as the vessel must navigate carefully to ensure the safety of the crew and the environment while clearing potential hazards from specified areas. In contrast, a vessel engaged in fishing may have limitations but does not necessarily restrict her ability to maneuver in the same way. Similarly, a vessel towing another vessel has specific responsibilities, but it can often take measures to avoid collisions. A vessel carrying dangerous cargo might have strict protocols to follow, but unless it is engaged in specific operations that limit its maneuverability, it would not qualify as a vessel restricted in her ability to maneuver. Thus, mineclearing vessels are distinctly recognized as restricted due to the risks they manage while performing their vital task.

**6. What is the minimum sound signaling equipment required aboard a vessel 10 meters in length?**

- A. Any means of making an efficient sound signal**
- B. A whistle and a bell**
- C. A foghorn**
- D. A radio for distress signals**

The minimum sound signaling equipment required aboard a vessel 10 meters in length is any means of making an efficient sound signal. This requirement is in line with the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGs), which specify that vessels must be able to produce sound signals to communicate their presence or maneuvers, particularly in low visibility conditions. The allowance for "any means" covers a range of devices, recognizing that smaller vessels may not have the space or resources for specialized equipment. Efficient sound signals include devices such as whistles, air horns, or even the human voice if necessary, as long as they can be heard over the ambient noise and are effective for communication. In contrast, the other options specify particular types of signaling equipment that may not be necessary for every vessel of this size. For example, a whistle and a bell may be more suitable for larger vessels or specific maritime situations, but they exceed the minimum requirement for a vessel of 10 meters. A foghorn is typically used on larger vessels or for particular navigational purposes, while a radio for distress signals, though crucial for safety, does not fulfill the requirement for sound signaling. Therefore, any efficient means of making sound signals meets the regulation and is considered the minimum necessary equipment

**7. What action should a vessel take if it is "stand-on" in a situation?**

- A. It remains stationary and does not alter course**
- B. It must take action to avoid collision**
- C. It may change course if necessary**
- D. It can only proceed at a slow speed**

In a situation where a vessel is designated as "stand-on," it indicates that the vessel has the right of way and is expected to maintain its course and speed. However, the vessel is permitted to take appropriate action if it becomes clear that a collision is imminent. Therefore, the action that allows the stand-on vessel to change course if necessary is indeed a correct understanding of the rules. While the primary responsibility of the stand-on vessel is to maintain its current path, it has the discretion to maneuver if it determines that the other vessel does not appear to be taking sufficient action to avoid a collision. This flexibility is important in ensuring safety at sea, as unexpected situations can arise where the initial conditions may change. The other options do not correctly capture the nature of the stand-on vessel's responsibilities. For example, while remaining stationary might be appropriate under some circumstances, it does not encompass the need to be proactive if the risk of collision increases. Similarly, indicating that the vessel must take action to avoid a collision implies a mandatory change, which is not the case; the stand-on vessel should only take action when it is evident that a collision is forthcoming. Lastly, the premise of only proceeding at a slow speed neglects the primary obligation to maintain course and speed

**8. According to the Rules, what operation requires a vessel to display two cones with their apexes together?**

- A. Fishing**
- B. Anchoring**
- C. Trawling**
- D. Moored operations**

Displaying two cones with their apexes together is a signal that indicates a vessel is engaged in trawling operations. This configuration serves as a visual indicator to other vessels operating in the vicinity about the nature of the trawler's activities, specifically that it has fishing gear deployed in the water. In the context of maritime navigation, signaling is crucial for safety, especially when fishing vessels are operating. It alerts nearby vessels that they should take care and avoid the area where the trawler is working, as it may have nets or lines that could entangle other vessels if they come too close. Other operations, such as fishing, anchoring, or being moored, have their own specific signals and visual indicators that differ from the configuration of the two cones with apexes together. For example, a fishing vessel not trawling would display different signals, while anchoring requires a different setup altogether. Understanding these distinctions is vital for ensuring safe and efficient navigation on the water.

**9. What must every vessel be equipped with in terms of navigation safety?**

- A. Automated navigation systems only**
- B. A compass and a means of communication**
- C. Emergency flares and safety equipment**
- D. All of the above**

Every vessel must prioritize navigation safety by being equipped with a variety of essential tools and equipment. Having automated navigation systems alone is not sufficient as it limits safety to technology that might fail or be misused. A compass provides fundamental navigational support, enabling mariners to orient themselves and plan their courses accurately, especially in circumstances where technology may fail. A means of communication is critical for distress signaling and coordination with other vessels or authorities, ensuring that help can be requested when needed. Additionally, emergency flares and safety equipment are vital as they provide necessary signals for help in emergencies and enhance the safety of all onboard. These elements collectively ensure a comprehensive safety system aboard the vessel. Therefore, the requirement includes not just one item or another but a combination of navigational aids, communication means, and emergency gear, which is why the correct answer encompasses all these elements.

**10. Which action should be taken if both vessels involved in a close-quarters situation cannot determine risk of collision?**

- A. assume there is no risk**
- B. increase speed to avoid**
- C. take evasive action**
- D. maintain current course**

In a close-quarters situation where neither vessel is able to determine if there is a risk of collision, taking evasive action is essential for ensuring safety. The International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGs) emphasize the importance of proactive measures to prevent accidents when uncertainty exists regarding the interaction between vessels. When vessels are close together and the risk is ambiguous, maintaining the current course or increasing speed may create further uncertainty and can likely lead to a collision. Assuming there is no risk can lead to complacency, which is dangerous in such scenarios. Therefore, taking evasive action is prudent; it allows for the opportunity to alter the vessel's course or speed to avoid potential accidents, thereby prioritizing safety on the water. Ultimately, it aligns with the general principle of navigating safely and responsibly under circumstances where potential hazards cannot be clearly identified.

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

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

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