

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. Which of the following vessels is required to show a stern light?**
 - A. A sailing vessel under sail**
 - B. A power-driven vessel**
 - C. A vessel at anchor**
 - D. A vessel under tow**

- 2. What does "Rule 3" define?**
 - A. Emergency procedures in maritime law**
 - B. The penalties for violating the rules**
 - C. Terms used in the Rules**
 - D. Navigation light requirements for vessels**

- 3. What is the primary purpose of sound signals between vessels?**
 - A. To indicate a change in course**
 - B. To communicate intentions and maneuvers**
 - C. To signal distress**
 - D. To tell vessels to stop**

- 4. During what conditions is a vessel required to display a day shape of ball-diamond-ball?**
 - A. When engaging in fishing activities.**
 - B. When towing a vessel.**
 - C. When restricted in her ability to maneuver.**
 - D. When aground.**

- 5. During daylight, what shapes should a vessel servicing a pipeline display?**
 - A. Two balls and a triangle**
 - B. Three black shapes in a vertical line**
 - C. One ball, one diamond, and one cone**
 - D. Two diamonds and a square**

- 6. In which situation does a risk of collision exist?**
- A. A vessel is on your starboard quarter, range decreasing, bearing is constant**
 - B. A vessel is on your port side, range increasing**
 - C. A vessel is directly ahead, moving parallel**
 - D. A vessel is crossing from your stern**
- 7. What does Rule 22 emphasize regarding navigation lights?**
- A. The complexity of different light configurations**
 - B. The importance of proper display of navigation lights at all times**
 - C. The need for colorful lights to indicate position**
 - D. The requirement for lights only during foggy conditions**
- 8. In a narrow channel, what whistle signal does a vessel sound when trying to overtake another vessel on its port side?**
- A. Two prolonged blasts**
 - B. One short blast**
 - C. Two prolonged blasts followed by two short blasts**
 - D. One prolonged blast followed by one short blast**
- 9. Which statement is TRUE concerning fog signals?**
- A. A vessel aground may sound a whistle signal.**
 - B. A vessel at anchor must sound a bell.**
 - C. A vessel under way must sound three short blasts.**
 - D. A vessel restricted in ability to maneuver does not sound any signal.**
- 10. What is the primary purpose of maintaining a proper lookout while navigating?**
- A. To ensure the vessel is on the correct course**
 - B. To avoid collisions and other hazards**
 - C. To manage the speed of the vessel effectively**
 - D. To ensure adherence to traffic rules**

Answers

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

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Explanations

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1. Which of the following vessels is required to show a stern light?

- A. A sailing vessel under sail**
- B. A power-driven vessel**
- C. A vessel at anchor**
- D. A vessel under tow**

A vessel at anchor is required to show a stern light as part of its navigation lights configuration. According to the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGs), a vessel anchored must display an all-round white light, which can be positioned at the stern or in a location that makes it visible from all directions. However, for vessels that are longer than 50 meters, they should also show a second all-round white light at the stern to ensure better visibility. Understanding the context of the other vessels helps clarify why they do not require a stern light in the same way. A sailing vessel under sail is typically required to show sidelights and a stern light when not at anchor. A power-driven vessel operates under different light requirements that typically include sidelights and a stern light as well, but they are not specifically focused on the anchor situation. A vessel under tow may have different light requirements depending on its configuration but does not have a direct requirement specifically for showing a stern light because it is often the towing vessel that is responsible for displaying the proper navigation lights in these situations. In summary, the requirement for a stern light is a critical safety regulation for a vessel at anchor, ensuring that it is visible to other vessels and helping to prevent collisions

2. What does "Rule 3" define?

- A. Emergency procedures in maritime law**
- B. The penalties for violating the rules**
- C. Terms used in the Rules**
- D. Navigation light requirements for vessels**

Rule 3 of the USCG Rules of the Road is essential because it defines the specific terms used throughout the rules. This section establishes clear and consistent terminology, which is crucial for the effective understanding and application of maritime navigation regulations. By defining terms, Rule 3 ensures that all mariners interpret the rules in the same way, contributing to safer navigation and reducing confusion in maritime communications. Clarity in terminology is foundational for all subsequent rules, allowing mariners to understand responsibilities, rights, and obligations outlined in the rules. Other options reflect important aspects of maritime law and safety but do not directly pertain to the function of Rule 3. Emergency procedures, penalties, and navigation light requirements are covered in different sections of the overall navigational rules, but they do not focus on the definitions of terms that underpin the communication and comprehension of those rules.

3. What is the primary purpose of sound signals between vessels?

- A. To indicate a change in course**
- B. To communicate intentions and maneuvers**
- C. To signal distress**
- D. To tell vessels to stop**

The primary purpose of sound signals between vessels is to communicate intentions and maneuvers. This is essential for safe navigation, especially in situations where visibility is limited or during maneuvers in close proximity to other vessels. Sound signals serve as a way for vessels to inform each other of their actions, such as if a vessel is altering its course, which allows for better situational awareness and helps prevent collisions. For instance, when one vessel is overtaking another, specific sound signals are used to indicate the overtaking intention. Similarly, if a vessel is approaching an intersection where navigational rules dictate a right-of-way, sound signals help communicate who has the right of way and what the intentions of the vessels involved are. While other sound signals exist for purposes like signaling distress or instructing vessels to stop, the comprehensive communication of intentions and maneuvers remains the most crucial aspect of sound signaling under the Rules of the Road.

4. During what conditions is a vessel required to display a day shape of ball-diamond-ball?

- A. When engaging in fishing activities.**
- B. When towing a vessel.**
- C. When restricted in her ability to maneuver.**
- D. When aground.**

A vessel is required to display a day shape of ball-diamond-ball when it is restricted in its ability to maneuver. This signifies to other vessels that the ship is unable to take the usual measures to avoid a collision due to restrictions such as work operations or navigational hazards. The ball-diamond-ball configuration is specifically codified in the Rules of the Road to alert other mariners of the extra caution that must be exercised when navigating near such a vessel, as its maneuvers may be unpredictable. In the context of the other choices, vessels engaged in fishing activities would typically display different day shapes—like a shape indicating they are actively fishing. A vessel towing another would show a different day shape reflecting its towing status. Additionally, a vessel that is aground is required to show a different signal indicating that it is stuck, which is not the ball-diamond-ball configuration. Each of these configurations is designed to communicate specific navigational statuses to ensure safety on the water.

5. During daylight, what shapes should a vessel servicing a pipeline display?

- A. Two balls and a triangle**
- B. Three black shapes in a vertical line**
- C. One ball, one diamond, and one cone**
- D. Two diamonds and a square**

A vessel servicing a pipeline during daylight is required to display three black shapes arranged in a vertical line. This indication signals to other vessels in the vicinity that the vessel is engaged in activities related to pipeline operations. Following the guidelines outlined in the U.S. Coast Guard's Rules of the Road, the specific configuration of three shapes is designed to ensure that the vessel is visible and its purpose is clear, allowing for safe navigation around it. The other options suggest different combinations of shapes which are not prescribed for a pipeline service vessel. For instance, shapes such as balls, diamonds, or cones are used for different types of vessels or activities, but they do not apply to the specific scenario of a vessel working on a pipeline. Understanding the correct display of shapes is essential in maritime operations to ensure clarity and safety for all vessels in the area.

6. In which situation does a risk of collision exist?

- A. A vessel is on your starboard quarter, range decreasing, bearing is constant**
- B. A vessel is on your port side, range increasing**
- C. A vessel is directly ahead, moving parallel**
- D. A vessel is crossing from your stern**

A risk of collision exists when the relative positions of vessels indicate that they may come into close proximity to one another. In the case where a vessel is on your starboard quarter, the range is decreasing, and the bearing is constant, this indicates that the other vessel is not only getting closer but also maintaining its angle relative to your own vessel. A constant bearing with a decreasing range implies that the two vessels are heading towards an intersection point or a potential encounter, increasing the likelihood of a collision if no action is taken. This situation is critical because it highlights an impending risk where both vessels may not be able to avoid each other if appropriate maneuvers are not executed in time, making it essential for the navigating vessel to take measures to avert a collision. Recognizing such situations is vital in maritime navigation, ensuring safety at sea. The other situations either depict a safe distance or movement that does not pose a collision risk.

7. What does Rule 22 emphasize regarding navigation lights?

- A. The complexity of different light configurations**
- B. The importance of proper display of navigation lights at all times**
- C. The need for colorful lights to indicate position**
- D. The requirement for lights only during foggy conditions**

Rule 22 emphasizes the importance of maintaining the proper display of navigation lights at all times. This is crucial for ensuring safe navigation and preventing collisions on the water. According to maritime rules, all vessels must exhibit the correct navigation lights to signal their presence, position, and status to other mariners. Proper display is critical for visibility, especially during periods of reduced visibility or at night. The requirement for consistent and correct lighting helps other vessels assess a ship's direction and intent, which is vital for safe passage in congested waters or during low-visibility conditions. This rule ensures that all vessels are identifiable, promoting safety across various marine environments regardless of the time of day or weather conditions.

8. In a narrow channel, what whistle signal does a vessel sound when trying to overtake another vessel on its port side?

- A. Two prolonged blasts**
- B. One short blast**
- C. Two prolonged blasts followed by two short blasts**
- D. One prolonged blast followed by one short blast**

In the context of navigating a narrow channel, a vessel that is attempting to overtake another vessel on its port side is required to use a specific whistle signal to communicate its intentions clearly. The correct signal in this scenario is two prolonged blasts followed by two short blasts. The purpose of this signal is to ensure that the overtaking vessel is effectively informing the vessel being overtaken of its action. The two prolonged blasts indicate that the overtaking vessel intends to pass on the port side and signify a clear and intentional maneuver. The additional two short blasts serve to reinforce the communication, ensuring that the other vessel understands the intent and can respond accordingly. This whistle signal is established under the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGs) and is designed to promote safety and understanding in scenarios where visibility may be limited, and the movements of vessels are critical. By adhering to these signals, vessels can maintain a safe distance and avoid collisions, which is especially important in the confined conditions of a narrow channel.

9. Which statement is TRUE concerning fog signals?

- A. A vessel aground may sound a whistle signal.**
- B. A vessel at anchor must sound a bell.**
- C. A vessel under way must sound three short blasts.**
- D. A vessel restricted in ability to maneuver does not sound any signal.**

The statement indicating that a vessel aground may sound a whistle signal is grounded in the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGs), which outline the proper signals to be sounded by vessels in various situations. When a vessel is aground, it is required to sound a whistle signal to alert other vessels to its presence. This is essential for safety, as an aground vessel might pose a risk of collision to other ships navigating in the area. In addition to this, regulations specify distinct signaling for vessels at anchor, which are generally required to sound a bell, and for vessels underway, which have different requirements compared to an aground vessel. Furthermore, a vessel restricted in its ability to maneuver must sound their specified signals as well, as per the established guidelines. Thus, knowing the correct requirements for each vessel situation is critical for ensuring safe navigation in reduced visibility conditions like fog.

10. What is the primary purpose of maintaining a proper lookout while navigating?

- A. To ensure the vessel is on the correct course**
- B. To avoid collisions and other hazards**
- C. To manage the speed of the vessel effectively**
- D. To ensure adherence to traffic rules**

Maintaining a proper lookout is crucial primarily to avoid collisions and other hazards. This practice is essential for the safe navigation of all vessels, as it allows the crew to detect other vessels, navigational hazards, and any changes in environmental conditions that may affect navigation. A vigilant lookout is the first line of defense in ensuring safety at sea, as it enables timely action to be taken to avoid potential collisions, thereby preserving the safety of the vessel, its crew, and cargo. While staying on the correct course, managing speed, and adhering to traffic rules are important navigational practices, they are secondary to the overarching goal of avoiding accidents and ensuring the safety of the vessel and those on board. Proper lookouts are mandated by maritime regulations and serve as a critical part of the situational awareness required in navigation.

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://uscgrulesoftheroad.examzify.com>

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

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