COLREGS LIGHTS & SHAPES PRACTICE TEST (SAMPLE)

STUDY GUIDE



SAMPLE STUDY GUIDE WITH LIMITED QUESTIONS

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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.

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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!

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Questions

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1. For a vessel less than 20 meters in length, where should the masthead light be exhibited?

A. As far forward as is practicable

B. At the stern

C. In the middle of the vessel

D. At the bow only

2. What is indicated by a red light over a white light and another white light at a lower side level?

A. A vessel making way

B. A vessel not trawling with gear extending over 150 meters

C. A fishing vessel not under command

D. A vessel at anchor

3. What is the term for a vessel being pushed and the pushing vessel when they are rigidly connected?

A. Composite unit

B. Towed unit

C. Barge unit

D. Connected vessels

4. Which vessels are required to display masthead lights?

A. All sailing vessels

B. Power-driven vessels underway

C. Fishing vessels at anchor

D. Non-power driven vessels

5. How is the intensity of a flashing light defined?

A. Flashes at less than 60 times per minute

B. Remains steady at all times

C. Flashes at a range of 60-120 times per minute

D. Flashes at 120 times or more per minute

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6. What lights are shown by a pilot vessel when not on pilotage duty?

A. The lights prescribed for vessels of her length

B. Flashing red and green lights

C. Only white lights

D. No lights required

7. What does a diamond shape indicate for a dredging vessel?

A. It has a restriction on the starboard side

B. It indicates a clear side for navigation

C. It demonstrates positioning of equipment

D. It is a signal for all approaching vessels

8. Which lights must a barge being towed exhibit according to international rules?

A. Only a sternlight

B. Side lights and a sternlight

C. Navigation lights only

D. All-round white lights

9. Where should the forward masthead light be placed on a power-driven vessel?

A. Not more than one-third of the length from the stern

B. Equal to the vessel's length

C. At the stern of the vessel

D. Not more than one-quarter of the length from the stem

10. What is the key requirement for the placement of sidelights on a vessel of 20 meters or more in length?

A. Directly in front of the forward masthead light

B. Near the bow

C. Not higher than the aft masthead light

D. Higher than the deck

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Answers

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

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Explanations

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1. For a vessel less than 20 meters in length, where should the masthead light be exhibited?

A. As far forward as is practicable

B. At the stern

C. In the middle of the vessel

D. At the bow only

For a vessel less than 20 meters in length, the masthead light should be exhibited as far forward as is practicable. This positioning is essential for ensuring that the light provides maximum visibility to other vessels, indicating the vessel's presence and heading effectively. The International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGs) stipulate this to enhance safety at sea, as the forward placement helps other vessels to detect the smaller craft from a distance and to better understand its direction of travel. Placing the masthead light at the bow, while logical, does not account for the optimal visibility necessary for navigational safety, hence the phrase "as far forward as is practicable" is chosen to accommodate various vessel designs and configurations while emphasizing safety. A requirement to mount it at the stern, in the middle of the vessel, or exclusively at the bow would not meet the objectives of visibility and clarity provided by the COLREGs standards, which prioritize a vessel's signal visibility to enhance collision avoidance.

2. What is indicated by a red light over a white light and another white light at a lower side level?

A. A vessel making way

B. A vessel not trawling with gear extending over 150 meters

C. A fishing vessel not under command

D. A vessel at anchor

The configuration of a red light over a white light with another white light positioned lower indicates that the vessel is engaged in fishing and is not trawling with gear extending over 150 meters. In accordance with COLREGs, fishing vessels must display specific lights to convey their operational status to other vessels. In this particular light arrangement, the red light signifies that the vessel is not under command, but since a white light is included below it, this indicates the type of fishing the vessel is engaged in, distinguishing it from trawlers that may have gear extending further than the specified distance. This arrangement assists other vessels in understanding the operational context of the fishing vessel, thus ensuring safe navigation in their vicinity. It's important to recognize how this setup distinguishes it from other types of vessels, as trawlers with gear extending over 150 meters would typically display different lights, specifically indicating their gear to avoid misunderstandings on the water.

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3. What is the term for a vessel being pushed and the pushing vessel when they are rigidly connected?

A. Composite unit

B. Towed unit

C. Barge unit

D. Connected vessels

The term "Composite unit" is used to describe a situation where a vessel being pushed and the pushing vessel are rigidly connected. This classification stems from the fact that when these two vessels are joined together in a fixed manner, they operate as a single unit, thus creating a composite structure that can navigate together. This term is particularly relevant in the context of navigation and the application of maritime regulations, including the COLREGs, as it affects the vessel's maneuverability, stability, and the signaling requirements they must adhere to while on the water. The connection creates a scenario where the pushing vessel takes on the responsibility and characteristics of the composite unit as a whole. In contrast, other terms described in the choices refer to different configurations or relationships between vessels. A "Towed unit" typically describes a scenario where a vessel is being towed but not rigidly connected, which implies a different set of operational and signal requirements. Similarly, a "Barge unit" usually refers to a barge being towed or pushed but does not encompass the rigid connection aspect. The term "Connected vessels" is more general and does not specifically denote the nature of the connection, making "Composite unit" the most accurate and relevant term in the context provided.

4. Which vessels are required to display masthead lights?

A. All sailing vessels

B. Power-driven vessels underway

C. Fishing vessels at anchor

D. Non-power driven vessels

Masthead lights are an essential component of navigation safety, specifically designated for vessels that are power-driven and underway. These lights are displayed on the foremast or, if there is no foremast, at the highest point of the vessel's structure. The masthead light serves to indicate the presence and heading of the vessel to other mariners, thereby helping to prevent collisions at sea. Power-driven vessels are defined as those that are equipped with machinery to propel them, which is a fundamental consideration in maritime navigation rules. When these vessels are in motion, having a masthead light illuminated is critical for ensuring that their position is known to nearby vessels, particularly at night or during periods of low visibility. Other types of vessels may not be required to display a masthead light in the same manner. For instance, sailing vessels may be equipped with different lighting configurations depending on whether they are under sail or using auxiliary power. Fishing vessels at anchor generally follow a different lighting protocol, primarily displaying anchor lights instead. Lastly, non-power-driven vessels, such as those solely under sail, will not typically display a masthead light during the periods that they are not using auxiliary power. Thus, the requirement for power-driven vessels underway to display masthead lights is a specific

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5. How is the intensity of a flashing light defined?

A. Flashes at less than 60 times per minute

B. Remains steady at all times

C. Flashes at a range of 60-120 times per minute

D. Flashes at 120 times or more per minute

The intensity of a flashing light is defined by its flashing rate, which indicates how often the light turns on and off within a given time frame. A flashing light that operates at a rate of 120 flashes or more per minute is classified as having high intensity. This categorization is crucial for distinguishing between different types of navigational aids and signaling devices. In maritime navigation, lights are used to convey specific information to other vessels. A flashing light serves as a signal that can be easily recognized by mariners, and the frequency of the flashes plays a critical role in identifying the light's purpose and the type of vessel or situation it represents. Lights flashing at 120 times or more per minute are often associated with significant navigational aids, such as those used in more hazardous areas or to mark specific obstructions. While other options refer to lower flashing rates or steady lights, they do not meet the criteria for defining a high-intensity flashing light. Therefore, the understanding that a high-intensity light is characterized by a flash frequency of 120 times or more is essential for navigation safety and for recognizing proper signaling techniques at sea.

6. What lights are shown by a pilot vessel when not on pilotage duty?

A. The lights prescribed for vessels of her length

B. Flashing red and green lights

C. Only white lights

D. No lights required

When a pilot vessel is not engaged in pilotage duty, it is required to display the lights prescribed for vessels of its length. This means that the vessel must follow the standard navigation lights as stipulated by the COLREGs for its specific size. This is important for ensuring that the vessel is properly identified by other mariners, contributing to maritime safety and communication. This requirement helps prevent confusion when such vessels are present in navigable waters, particularly when they are not actively serving their primary function of transporting pilots. By adhering to the prescribed lighting configurations, the pilot vessel maintains visibility and conformance to regulations, ensuring that it can operate safely alongside other commercial and recreational vessels. In contrast, other answer choices reference specific light colors or suggest the absence of lights, which do not align with the operational standards set for vessels in general navigation. Displaying incorrect lights or no lights at all could lead to misunderstandings about the vessel's status and intentions, potentially compromising safety on the water.

7. What does a diamond shape indicate for a dredging vessel?

A. It has a restriction on the starboard side

B. It indicates a clear side for navigation

C. It demonstrates positioning of equipment

D. It is a signal for all approaching vessels

The diamond shape displayed by a dredging vessel is an indication of the positioning of its equipment. This shape signals to other vessels that the dredging operation involves the use of gear that extends beyond the vessel's side, indicating a potential hazard. When approaching vessels see the diamond shape, they are made aware that they should navigate with caution due to the equipment's possible location and movement. While the other options touch on different aspects of navigation or vessel signaling, they do not accurately reflect the specific purpose of the diamond shape in the context of dredging operations. It is essential for mariners to understand these indications, as they help ensure safe passage and effective communication between vessels in busy waterways.

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8. Which lights must a barge being towed exhibit according to international rules?

A. Only a sternlight

B. Side lights and a sternlight

C. Navigation lights only

D. All-round white lights

A barge being towed must exhibit side lights and a sternlight in accordance with international maritime regulations, specifically the COLREGs. The side lights are essential as they indicate the duration of the vessel's presence and act as a signal to other vessels regarding its direction. The sternlight, which is also required, provides visibility from the rear and is crucial in delineating the vessel's presence in the waters, especially when viewed from behind. The requirement for side lights ensures that the barge can be identified as a tow while on the water, just as any other vessel would be, thus enhancing safety during navigation. A lack of these lights would make it difficult for other vessels to determine the barge's orientation and direction of travel, significantly increasing the risk of collisions. Other options, while presenting individual light types, do not encompass the full set of lights required under the COLREGs. For example, just a sternlight would not provide adequate visibility from the side, while navigation lights alone do not specify the combination needed for a barge. Similarly, an all-round white light is insufficient to provide the proper identification that side lights and a sternlight would collectively offer. Therefore, the requirement for a barge being towed to exhibit both side

9. Where should the forward masthead light be placed on a power-driven vessel?

A. Not more than one-third of the length from the stern

B. Equal to the vessel's length

C. At the stern of the vessel

D. Not more than one-quarter of the length from the stem

The forward masthead light on a power-driven vessel is required to be located at a position that ensures its visibility is optimized for navigation safety. Placing the light not more than one-quarter of the length from the stem ensures that it is adequately forward, providing an appropriate range of visibility for other vessels and aiding in identifying the type of vessel and its direction of travel. This positioning is critical because it allows for proper identification of the vessel's heading. When the masthead light is set at this specific location, it aids other vessels in recognizing that it is a power-driven craft underway, thus enhancing safety by reducing the risk of collisions. The regulations dictate that this light should be high enough to be seen from a distance, and being set forward ensures it is consistent with the way vessels are typically navigated. Positions like one-third of the length from the stern or at the stern do not adequately fulfill the requirement for visibility from the forward direction, while suggesting equal to the vessel's length would place the light in a position that might obscure its recognition since it would be too far along the boat's length.

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10. What is the key requirement for the placement of sidelights on a vessel of 20 meters or more in length?

A. Directly in front of the forward masthead light

B. Near the bow

C. Not higher than the aft masthead light

D. Higher than the deck

For a vessel that is 20 meters or more in length, the correct requirement regarding the placement of sidelights is that they should be installed not higher than the aft masthead light. This positioning ensures that the sidelights are visible from a distance and conform to the regulations regarding visibility angles for navigational lights. The placement ensures that the sidelights, which indicate the port (red) and starboard (green) sides of the vessel, are effective in communicating the vessel's orientation and direction of travel to other vessels, especially at night or in low visibility conditions. If the sidelights were positioned higher than the aft masthead light, it could create confusion about the vessel's heading and increase the risk of collisions. Other options may refer to different scenarios or placements that do not align with the specific requirements set forth in the COLREGs for vessels of this size. By adhering to the specification of placement relative to the aft masthead light, vessels maintain compliance with safety standards and enhance their visibility to others on the water.

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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:

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

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