

Red Seal Exam Preparation Guide



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RED SEAL EXAM PREPARATION GUIDE



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What You Need to Know About the Red Seal Exam

What is the Red Seal Exam?

The Red Seal Exam is an exam that tests your knowledge of trade activities. It is used by all provinces and territories to issue a Red Seal endorsement. Most of them use the Red Seal Exam to issue trade certification. In many ways, it is the “final exam” for tradespeople.

The format of the questions is multiple-choice. Each question is worth the same. There are no trick questions. Of the four choices, there is one correct answer, and three incorrect options.

The Red Seal Exam has a pass mark of 70%. There is a time limit of four hours for writing it.

What is on the Red Seal Exam?

The Red Seal Exam covers the trade activities performed in Canada. Red Seal Standard for the [trade](#) outlines and describes all these activities.

Red Seal Standards are all organized in a way that breaks down the trade into smaller and smaller pieces. There are a number of Major Work Activities. These are divided into several Tasks. Tasks are then divided into several Sub-tasks.

The Red Seal Exam has sections based on each Major Work Activity in the Red Seal Standard. The exam questions in each section are all based on the Sub-tasks that make up the Major Work Activity.

Who decides what is on the Red Seal Exam?

Tradespeople from across Canada decide what goes into the trade's standard. They also write and review every single question that appears on the Red Seal Exam. That way, exams use the same concepts, terms and language that people use on the job.

Tradespeople also determine how many questions there should be for each section of the standard. This is important to know when studying for the Red Seal exam. If a section has 30 questions, you should spend more time preparing for it than for a section that has three questions. Use the Self-Assessment tool on the Red Seal website to prioritize the topics for your own situation.

If you took part in an apprenticeship program and technical training, you might have had exams to test your learning. The Red Seal Exam is not the same – it is a trade certification exam based on the work. So, textbooks might be great resources to help you study, but they are not the basis of the exam.

Who can write the Red Seal Exam?

Each province and territory decides who can write the Red Seal Exam.

You have to be experienced in the full scope of the trade. You might have done a formal apprenticeship program. Or you might have worked in the trade without doing an apprenticeship in Canada.

Preparing Yourself to Write the Red Seal Exam

1. Take care of the administrative tasks that you need to do.

For example:

- Proof of apprenticeship completion or trade experience.
- Payment of fees.
- Know what you need to bring (e.g. photo ID, proof of apprenticeship, etc.)
- Request accommodations you need, such as for a learning disability.
- Confirm the language (English/French) of the exam you will take.

Check your apprenticeship authority's website for more details.

2. Familiarize yourself with what the exam is going to be testing.

Every single exam question is linked to a Sub-task that is in the Red Seal Standard.

To get a better explanation of what each Sub-task is about, look it up in Red Seal Standard for the [trade](#). This document can be found on the Red Seal website. It gives much more detail about the skills and knowledge you need for each Sub-task.

Look at the Red Seal Exam Breakdown for your trade to see how many questions there are for each section of the exam.

Ask yourself how experienced and familiar you are with the activities described in each Sub-task.

Are there any Tasks and Sub-tasks that you think you lack experience in? Are there many questions about them? What can you do to improve in these areas?

3. Prepare your own study plan.

Look for ways to learn more about these Tasks and Sub-tasks, especially the ones that you don't know very well. Check with your trade instructor about resources or reading you could do. Ask instructors for recommendations about resources like manuals and textbooks.

Remember that Red Seal Exams are work-based, not textbook-based, but reviewing these types of resources can't hurt.

Talk to your fellow workers in the trade about good learning resources and learn from one another.

Look at the Sample Questions on the Red Seal website to get a good understanding of the format of Red Seal Exam questions.

Use the Internet to find explanations of concepts that you are unsure about. Not all sites or sources are reliable. Try to use reputable sources like manufacturers' instructional videos, training providers' materials or instructional videos. Check in with qualified tradespeople and employers to see if these online resources and videos are true to the Canadian workplace.

If anyone tries to give you or sell you copies of the actual Red Seal Exam or its questions, **do not trust** this claim. Report fraud to your apprenticeship authority.

Most importantly, try to **gain experience** in these activities. The exam is all about showing that you know how to work in the trade. The best way to learn these tasks is by doing them! After all, that's what apprenticeship is all about. Ask your employer or mentor about getting more practice and experience in the areas where you might need them.

Red Seal Exam Format

Every question has exactly one correct answer and three incorrect options. They are not misleading or trick questions, but the incorrect options are not always obvious. Only someone who is skilled and experienced should be able to pick the correct answer from all the options.

Some questions are used to check your knowledge of **facts** related to doing a Sub-task.

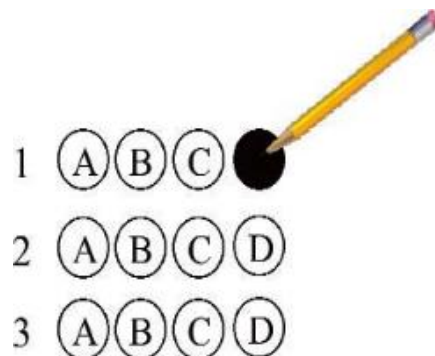
Some questions test your knowledge of **procedures** and might include calculations or interpretations of diagrams.

Some questions are used to check **problem-solving** skills related to your trade.

There are examples of questions for each trade on the Red Seal website in the section called “Sample Questions”.

Some questions require reference information such as formulas, acronyms, diagrams, charts or parts of related codes. When this is required, this information will be provided to you with the exam.

The exam questions come in an exam booklet and a bubble sheet to record your responses like this:



You should check the number on the bubble sheet against the number in the exam booklet often to make sure they match.

Trade Terminology

The Red Seal Exam is based on the Red Seal Occupational Standard.

Read through the Red Seal Occupational Standard. Pay attention to the skills and knowledge statements under each Sub-task.

Do you understand all the terms that are used in the Red Seal Occupational Standard? Many of these same terms will show up on the Red Seal Exam.

There are also some sections at the end of each standard that can help:

Tools and Equipment: A list of the tools and equipment used in the trade. Make sure you know the correct names. Note that brand names and slang expressions are not used on the exam.

Glossary: Definitions for technical terms used in the standard.

Acronyms: Acronyms used in the trade and what they mean.

Finding Resources Online

The Internet can be very useful for learning more about your trade. However, some sources of information are better than others.

Here are some pointers for filtering good from bad. Put each resource through a CRAAP test – **C**urrency, **R**elevance, **A**uthority, **A**ccuracy, **P**urpose.

Currency Was the information developed fairly recently?

Avoid outdated work techniques or trade information.

Relevance Does the information address the topics covered in the Red Seal Occupational Standard?

Authority Do you recognize the source of the information to be trustworthy?

Apprenticeship authorities and approved training providers are trustworthy sources. Unions may also provide good study materials.

Accuracy Does the information seem accurate and truthful?

All Red Seal Exam questions and answers are confidential. Any site that says they have the real questions and answers is either dishonest or breaking the law.

The Red Seal Program does not endorse any test preparation companies or websites.

Purpose Is the purpose of the material to educate you in your trade?

Be wary of websites trying to sell you products. Check with co-workers, other students or teachers if they have ever used these products.

Dealing with Stress and Exam Anxiety

The Red Seal Exam is an important step to getting your Red Seal endorsement. It is normal to have some anxiety and stress before or during your exam. Here are some tips to help you manage:

- Plan your time! Allow yourself enough time to learn and study before your exam.
- Schedule your study time! Use a paper or an electronic calendar to devote specific time to studying each week leading up to your exam.
- Breathe! Calm and deep breathing may help you to refocus and to find the answers more easily.
- Talk positively to yourself! Remind yourself of why you are taking the exam. Remember the time and effort you have put into your training and exam preparation.
- Fill your mind with positive images: Your last vacation, your favourite activity, someone who helps you to feel grounded. Once you feel more calm, return to your studies.
- Look for tools that reduce stress through mindfulness and meditation. Many apps, podcasts and videos are freely available on mobile devices and online.
- Physical activity helps to deal with stressful situations like exams. Enough rest and proper nutrition are also key to dealing with anxiety.
- Make sure you know exactly where and when the exam will take place. Plan ahead and allow yourself plenty of time to get there.
- You may also consult a specialist to help you manage anxiety and stress.

Know the Rules for the Exam Room

Here are some general rules that you should know in advance. There might be specific rules that apply in your province or territory.

You must:

- Not cheat. This will result in expulsion from the exam session and other penalties.
- Not copy any exam information or leave with any exam material. Any attempts to share, reproduce or leave with any exam information will result in expulsion from the exam session and other penalties.
- Not bring any materials into the room.
- Place all items required during the exam on the desk. Accessing personal items, including reaching into pockets is not permitted during the exam.
- Remove all outerwear (e.g.: jackets, hats, hoodies) during the exam.
- Not bring backpacks, purses or pouches to the exam.
- Not bring any electronic device in the exam room. These include but are not limited to: picture, video, voice recording and transmitting devices, calculators (if you need one, it will be provided), cell phones, tablets, media players, watches, headsets, cameras, microphones.
- Have all other items approved by the examiner before bringing them into the exam room (water, food, etc.).
- Use only the pencils, erasers, calculators and scrap paper provided.
- Not communicate with or disrupt other candidates.
- Ask the examiner for approval to leave the exam room.
- Return all materials provided to the examiner after completion.
- Not attempt to open any computer applications during the exam (programs, websites, etc.).
- Not look at another candidate's exam materials.

Some Final Tips for Writing Multiple-Choice Exams

- Read each question carefully and completely. Do not assume you know what the question is asking after you've read only part of it.
- Process the question you read. Look for the key words that will trigger the thought process.
- Manage your time. Divide the time allowed by the number of questions on the exam to gauge how much time per question you have. Some questions will not take you nearly that long, and others may take a bit longer. At the halfway point, check if you have completed half of the exam, and adjust your pace accordingly.
- Separate long questions into smaller parts to make them easier to understand.
- Read (process) what the question is asking. Think of the answer based on your experience, preparation and training. Find the answer from the list of options.
- As you read all the options, take note of those you know are wrong to narrow your options.
- If you are answering a question that involves calculation, estimate what the correct answer is first. Once you calculate the answer, you can decide whether it seems right.
- Draw a diagram or jot down a formula if it helps answer a question.
- If you don't know the answer, jot down the question number, move on and come back later. It's better to finish the easier questions first and come back to the more difficult ones later. (Each exam question is worth with the same, no matter if it is easy or difficult.)
- Answer all questions, even if you have to guess. You have at least a 25% chance of guessing correctly. Do not leave any question unanswered.
- If you still have some time after answering all questions, take some time to review everything and make sure your responses are marked on the correct line.