

Study Tips - Preparing for the CSI Certificate/Certification Program Exams

Register Early

Registering for the examination establishes a sense of commitment. Early registration gives you extra time to review the source materials and reduces the feeling of not having enough time to study.

Obtain Source Materials

It is important to obtain the exam's source materials so that you have a clear understanding of what material you will be tested on. CSI provides all registered candidates with a study guide which serves as a road map to exam preparation. In addition, candidates should obtain the Project Resource Manual - CSI Manual of Practice (PRM), AIA, and EJCDC source materials appropriate to their exam. These materials may be obtained through purchase or by loan from previous candidates, colleagues, libraries, industry firms, or local CSI chapters. (Note: candidates may study either the AIA or corresponding EJCDC documents. The exam only tests on elements common to both documents.)

Develop a Study Plan

Once you have taken a look at the source materials, outline a study plan. The source materials may seem overwhelming at first, but they can be mastered if broken into smaller, manageable pieces. Set aside a specific time in your day/week to study - 1 ½ to 2 hours per session. Studying is more effective if done in small, frequent chunks rather than long drawn out sessions. Try to study at the time when you typically have peak performance, not just when you have a few extra minutes. If you're a morning person, studying done after the late news may not be to your advantage. Reserve the last two weeks of study time for review.

Establish a Study Environment

Try to study in the same type of environment as where the exam will be given. Select a spot with comfortable seating, good lighting, and plenty of desk space to spread out. The most convenient location for you may be your office, a conference room, or someplace at home. While not as convenient, you may want to consider utilizing study carrels at your local library to avoid distractions from family, friends, and coworkers.

At each study session, make sure you have all your source materials, pens, a notepad, and even snacks close at hand. Turn off phones and pagers to reduce distractions. You may also wish to share your goal with your family, friends, and colleagues so that they will create a supportive environment and respect your need for quiet, undisturbed study time.

Join a Study Group

Many local CSI Chapters and some private firms offer independent study courses. These courses can be helpful if as a supplement, not replacement, to individual study. Use class time to reinforce what you have learned and identify gaps in your knowledge. As you study, jot down questions and ask the instructor to clarify any material you do not understand.

Practice Active Learning

Skimming the source materials is not enough. The exams are comprehensive and you should assume that everything will be covered. While some exam questions may simply require definition a term, some questions require demonstration of knowledge, understanding, and correlation of concepts learned.

Take notes, sketch diagrams and draw flowcharts to highlight important concepts when studying. Use flashcards to help learn key terms and definitions. Try to anticipate exam questions as you study. Write sample questions during one study session and quiz yourself at the beginning of the next session to see what you have retained and what you need to review. Once you have learned material, reinforce your knowledge. Study the material by thinking of its meaning, picturing it, and then thinking of things that are associated with it. Overlearn the material. Continue to study even after you feel you have mastered the material. This will give you an margin of 'forgetfulness' on exam day.

General Hints

Plan a special treat or reward for after the exam. Focus on the big picture: studying for this exam has given you an incredible amount of knowledge and advanced your potential for career development. Study with a positive attitude. Learning the source materials and passing the exam is something you can do!