

Tip for Taking the CSQE Exam

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Tips for preparing for the CSQE exam:

1. **Use the CSQE body of knowledge as a checklist** to focus your study. If you feel comfortable with a knowledge area, you can afford to study it less. If there are areas or terms in the CSQE body of knowledge that you are not familiar with look them up and study them.
2. **Practice taking CSQE exam questions** – for many of us it has been a very long time since we took exams in school. Practicing questions may help us feel more comfortable when taking the exam because we know what to expect. You can find example question on our website at http://www.westfallteam.com/CSQE_Q&A/CSQE_Quizzes.htm or on the ASQ website at http://www.asq.org/certification/docs/csqe_sample_exam.pdf. There are also three complete practice exams included in my book *The Certified Software Quality Engineer Handbook by Linda Westfall* which is available for purchase at [ASQ Quality Press: The Certified Software Quality Engineer Handbook](#) or from [Amazon.com](#) and other sources. You can also preview parts of this book on [Google Books](#).
3. You can also use the results of this practice to better focus your preparation by doing a little analysis of what questions you are getting wrong and their associated CSQE body of knowledge area. For example, if you are getting the most questions wrong in section V, you could focus more study on Metrics and Analysis.
4. **Don't memorize things just for the test – look them up.** If it won't be useful to you on your job, don't bother to memorize it. If there is a question on the exam about something you don't know you can always look it up – this is especially true for formulas – if you don't use them regularly you may remember them incorrectly anyway – so look them up.
5. **Take a preparation course:** For some of us, taking a preparation course is a fast way to come up to speed for the exam. The Westfall Team offers an excellent 5-day preparation course that covers all of the areas of the CSQE body of knowledge in detail (see http://www.westfallteam.com/Courses/csqe_course.htm for more information). Many local ASQ sections also offer CSQE refresher courses (call ASQ customer service at 1-800-248-1946 for information on contacting a local ASQ section near you)

Tips when taking the CSQE exam:

1. **Read each questions carefully** -- There may be one or two key words that make all the difference
2. **Read all 4 answers carefully** before you select an answer
 - One answer may be right some of the time but another answer may be right all of the time
 - Always look for the BEST answer (which means you have to read them all)
3. There are 160 questions on the test so you only have 1 ½ minutes per question and every question counts the same amount so **SKIP and come back to any questions** that:
 - **You have to look up**
 - **Require** anything more than the most simple **math**

These types of question take more time. Answer all the easy questions and the ones you KNOW first and then come back to the harder ones, the one needing math or the ones you have to look up. Every question counts the same number of points no matter how hard or easy it may seem.

4. As you answer each question – **check the question number against the number on the answer sheet** to make sure you stay in sync
5. **Guess** – this exam isn't like the SATs where they take ¼ of a point off for missed questions – if you are running out of time, simply pick a letter and fill it in – you have a one in four chance of getting an extra point even if it's a random guess (which may just give you that extra point you need).
6. **Take breaks** – I always take a break every 40 questions – even if it is to just walk around and refocus my eyes. If you don't take breaks you may find yourself reading the same question 3 times and still not knowing what it is asking you.
7. **Don't change your answer** – Go with your first instincts on the answer unless you have a good reason to change your mind (for example, you realize you miss read the question or you looked the question up and found out you were wrong). Many more people tell me they talk themselves out of the correct answer when they do the practice exams then change an answer to the correct one.
8. **Use a calculator** -- Don't try to do even the simplest math in your head. When you are rushing for time it is very easy to add 12+12 and get 34 by mistake. Check all your math using a calculator.

Things to bring to the test:

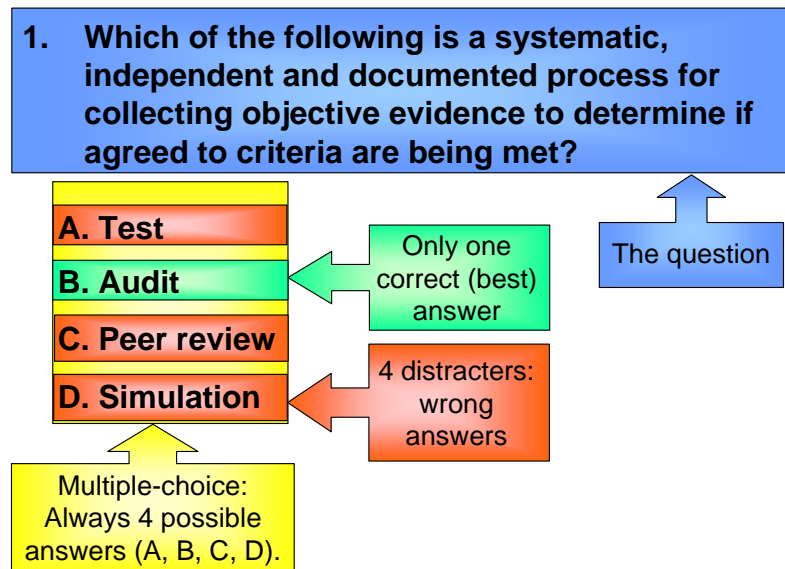
1. **Number 2 Pencils** (at least two so if one breaks you have a spare)
2. **A good eraser** (can be part of the pencils) – be sure that if you change your answer you erase your previous answer completely
3. **A calculator** (you will have to prove that the memory is cleared). You are not allowed to bring one with an alpha keyboard
4. Limited reference materials – it is an **open book exam** but you won't have time to look things up in multiple texts so don't bring more than a maximum of 3-5 books. Many of my students have passed the exam using only the student notebooks from this class.
 - Each examinee must make his/her reference materials available to the proctor for review.
 - The proctor is the final authority on the admissibility of all reference materials.
5. Bottle of water (or **something else to drink**) – 4 hours is a long time

Things NOT bring to the test:

1. Multiple choice questions – Leave the CD and the colored pages from the course materials at home
2. Cell phones (or turn them off)
3. Any calculator with an alpha/numeric keyboard
4. iPods or MP3 Players
5. Food – unless needed for medical reasons (Please inform your certification coordinator of any special needs so that they can notify the proctor)

What do the questions look like?

The CSQE examination consists of 160 multiple-choice questions. Each question has the following format:



There will always be 4 possible answers and only one of those is the correct (best) answer. There are also different types of questions on the exam.

The first type of question ends in a complete sentence that asks a question and ends in a question mark. This type of question is looking for the one positive, correct answer. For example:

2. Which of the following levels of testing focuses on the interfaces between the components of a software product?
 - A. Unit testing
 - B. Integration testing
 - C. System testing
 - D. Acceptance testing

The second type of question ends with an incomplete sentence that ends in a colon. This type of question is looking for the one positive, correct answer that completes that sentence. For example:

3. Controlling changes to software products is a responsibility of:
 - A. Software testing.
 - B. Software project management.
 - C. Software configuration management.
 - D. Software auditing.

The third type of question includes words or phrases like “**not**”, “**except**”, “**least likely to**”. This type of question is looking for the one negative, incorrect answer. This is why you need to be careful and read each question carefully. ASQ is not trying to “trick” you, they will help make these easier to recognize these questions by putting these key words in all CAPS or underlining or bolding them. For example:

4. Which of the following of the following is NOT a typical role in a software inspection?
 - A. Author
 - B. Moderator
 - C. Scribe
 - D. Tester

The fourth type of question lists a set of items and asks that they be put into the correct order. The answer to this type of question is the item numbers put in the correct numeric sequence. For example:

5. Put the following phases of a software life cycle in the order in which they typically occur in a waterfall life cycle model.
 1. Design
 2. Requirements
 3. Coding
 4. Testing
 - A. 1, 2, 4, 3
 - B. 2, 1, 3, 4
 - C. 3, 1, 4, 2
 - D. 3, 4, 1, 3

The final type of question is the “dreaded Roman Number” type question. This type of question lists a set of items and asks the examinee to pick the correct ones that answer the questions. For example:

6. Which of the following are defect detection techniques?
Which they typically occur in a waterfall life cycle model.
 - I. Requirements elicitation
 - II. Peer reviews
 - III. Structural testing
 - IV. Architectural design

- A. III only
- B. II and III only
- C. I, III and IV only
- D. I, II, III and IV

Notice that there are not any examples of answer are in the format of “none of the above”, “all of the above” or “both a and c”. You will not find those types of answer on the exam. However, the Roman Numeral type questions are similar in format because they require you to select the right “set” of answer from a list.

The good news on question types is that approximately 2 out of every three questions will be of the first two types.

Recertification:

If you are certified as a CSQE, you are required to maintain the level of knowledge demonstrated when you passed the certification exam. This is accomplished by recertifying every three years, either through professional recertification units or retesting. If you do not recertify, your certification will lapse and you will no longer be certified in membership records, society publications and directories, or personnel inquiries.

You must earn 18 recertification units (RUs) within the three-year certification period. Recertification units are awarded for professional activities that either broaden your knowledge in any of the areas of the defined Body of Knowledge or are job-enhancing. RUs can be earned for:

- Professional development (conference, seminars, workshops, forums)
- Professional employment in the field
- Instructor / student
- Meetings
- Committees
- Proctoring
- Publishing (papers, books, presentations)

I highly recommend that if you choose to collect RUs to recertify, that you collect them into a folder throughout the 3-year period. Trying to go back and find all of the required information at the end of the three years can be difficult if not impossible. ASQ provides a recertification journal (see <http://www.asq.org/certification/recertification/index.html>) with complete details on the types of records needed for each type of recertification unit. Of course you can always recertify by taking the exam again – but most people do not choose that method.