

10 Keys to Passing a Human Resources Credentialing Exam

Besides all of the tips like drink water, get plenty of rest, breathe deeply, and know about HR... there are at least 10 other keys to passing your exam.

1. Understand the Process

- You will be asked to choose the best answer to the question or scenario.
- There will usually be 4 options and 2 of them will be wrong.
- 2 of the options will be very close to correct, but only 1 is absolutely correct based on the way the question is asked.

2. Read the Question Word for Word

- Reading too quickly will cause you to make mistakes and miss important language that cue the correct answer.
- Reading too slowly will cause you to run out of time! The key here is balance.
- Watch for words that reverse the meaning you may believe you are reading.
 - Even though, in spite of, unless, while, nevertheless are tricky terms we often miss.
- Read the question two or three times slowly. Then read the answer options.
- Read the question again and consider the language and how the options deny the language.
- Next, look for indicators that confirm the answer to the question.

3. Understand the Clues of the Language

- Words like may, can, usually, likely, always, exactly, sometime, generally, and rarely are often the key to the correct answer.
- Watch for prefixes like pre, post, pro, de, re or un which can all change the context of the sentence.
- Don't look for trick questions. The questions are honest. But they are written in a very specific manner which will throw off people who are ill-prepared or overly anxious.
- Not every true option is the correct answer. The question may be about FLSA and one of the options may be that the sky is blue. The fact that the sky is blue does not make the option the correct choice.
- An option that says something like "... is the best course of action **if...**" would be a better guess than an option that says "...is **always** the best course of action..."

4. Save and Return

- Don't stress over the answer. Mark the question and return at the end of the exam.
- Go with your gut. If you are absolutely unsure, go with your gut response. Statistics show you will have a better chance of choosing the correct answer.
- Accept the fact that you will not know every answer on the exam. It's OK. No one does!

5. Analyze, Assess, and Need

- When a question asks for the best “first” step to take in a situation, look for one of these three words.
- HR does almost nothing without first assessing or analyzing to determine a need – Remember that!
- ADDIE, SWOT, PEST, POLC are all models and frameworks that you must understand.

6. Corporate Leadership and Human Resources are a Team - or should be!

- HR and Big Boss are a team. Everything HR does is to move the company ahead.
- Increasing the profitability (or bottom line) is the bottom line and is referred to on many of the exams.
- Analysis and strategic planning are two of the most important concepts the exams will address.
- A solid working relationship with leadership is necessary for HR’s initiatives to survive.

7. HR’s Main Function is to Protect the Company

- In addition to the concepts in #6, you must understand that protecting the company is the job.
- If a policy is written that benefits the employee, but not the employer, the decision must be made as to whether the policy is necessary or optional.
- HR makes sure employment laws are followed because they protect the company – not the employee.

8. Humans Really are Capitol

- In addition – or in spite of – the statements in #7, HR should realize that employees are the most valuable asset to an organization.
- Watch for the questions where the right answer may be to invest in programs or incentives for workers.

9. Change Management: Training and Communication

- All companies undergo change. Whether good or bad, change is difficult.
- Training and Communication create a feeling of being plugged in and valued.
- HR can spearhead these programs when change is looming to facilitate a positive transition.

10. The Law

- Understanding the law is absolutely necessary for an HR professional.
- We are not attorneys but are often looked upon as the giver of legal advice for many employment related issues.
- We can never overstep our scope of knowledge and training.
- Many of the questions on the exams refer to a law without actually calling it out. Watch for these questions and ask yourself “is this issue governed by a statute?”.

Exercise:

Use the 10 Keys to answer these practice test questions. Break them down and explain why you chose these answers specifically.

1. What is the core reason to evaluate a training program?

- A. Manage the Quality of the Program
- B. Control ROI
- C. Measure the program's effectiveness
- D. Ensure the program is within budget

2. Which of the following is not normally a part of HR's strategic duties:

- A. Organization design
- B. Administering organizational policies
- C. Performance development and appraisal
- D. Succession planning

3. This action allows competition among private suppliers for services that in the past had been provided by the government or by monopolies.

- A. Decentralization
- B. Delegation
- C. Localism
- D. Deregulation

4. The federal minimum wage is \$7.25 per hour. Sterling Cooper, a successful line of jewelry stores located in Georgia, will be hiring 10 new workers at minimum wage with the option for commission. Georgia has a statewide minimum wage of \$5.15 per hour, so the company owners have contacted human resources manager Carolyn regarding the disparity in minimum wage pay at the state and federal level.

Which statement below best describes the policy Carolyn would cite to help Sterling Cooper resolve the concern?

- a. Sterling Cooper is required to pay employees the state minimum wage, which is \$5.15.
- b. When a federal minimum wage is higher than a state minimum wage, companies may use the federal minimum wage as their standard.
- c. When a state minimum wage is lower than the federal minimum wage, the company is required to pay the federal minimum over the state minimum.
- d. The size of Sterling Cooper makes it exempt from minimum wage requirements, so the company has no obligation to follow either federal or state minimum wage and may set their own pay rates.
- e. The option for commission means that Sterling Cooper can lower the minimum wage that it pays workers because the commission payments compensate for the lower minimum.