

Joanne's Guidance for the CMP (Certified Meeting Professional) Exam

Preparing and Learning

Nobody ever has what they feel is “enough” time to study for the exam. I believe that it is important to strategically study and prepare for the exam. That way you are starting with the methods that you are going to get the largest results from, and if you have more time, working through more material, in more detailed ways. If you start out spending all of your time on the minutia you will never get the big picture. Yes, there is strategy to studying, just as there is to meeting and event planning.

The “it sounds so obvious”:

- 1. You cannot pass without reading the Events Industry Council Book. Cover to Cover. Period. Twice is better. So is reading the other two resources.**
- 2. You must, and I mean must, schedule time to prepare. Book it in your calendar.** If you schedule out time where you are consistently preparing, you are less likely to have to do that. Find your time—morning, evening, an hour before everyone comes into work, or an hour after everyone leaves. Maybe it's some time 3 evenings a week. Maybe it's Sunday morning for a few hours. Get yourself into a routine that works. Trying to cram at the end does not work for many reasons, including raising your stress.
- 3. The people around you need to understand how important this is to you and how hard the exam is. This may mean sometimes having to say “no” to things you want to do with family and friends. Work also needs to understand you cannot be working a string of 12+ hour days leading up to the exam.**
- 4. Schedule your exam. Seems obvious right? This tip comes from people who took it once and passed, and people who did not pass who had to retake.** If you do not have a date it is too easy to put off preparing, then and exam period passes... then another...then another...and you still are not done. It is much more exhausting and stressful to stretch the process out. You are constantly going back to the material and having to start over. Think out things like big commitments at work and your personal life, and get it scheduled. We are good at deadlines in this industry! Make one for yourself.

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5. Everyone wants to think they are the exception to everything I am saying.

Advice from the past:

- 6. Do not listen to specifics from anyone who took the exam more than a couple of years ago.** It has changed so much they really do not know specifics of the current exam unless they are really involved in the process through the Conclaves. What they do know is that it is stressful!
- 7. Do not use “practice tests” except the one provided on line by EIC (formerly CIC)*.**

Yes, I know this is controversial and lots and lots of people disagree with me (it's OK -I am used to it). And you probably already have that 4” stack that has been collected around the country (or world since we are now global) and overnighted to you. Why would I say this?

One reason is the same one as #1---the tests have changed so much, both content and how the questions are written, that these are probably not a good measure for what the exam is going to be like.

A second reason that anyone who has been officially involved with writing questions for the exam in the past 10 years, will tell you it takes a while (usually minimally 10 minutes) and a couple of people (at least two have to write and/or review) for a "real" question to be written(and that is only phase one). There is actually a real science to it (People are taught before they are allowed to write them!). Because of that it is very difficult for one person to correctly write numerous correct, and current, questions to create a mock exam or quiz.

A third reason---I have seen a lot of wrong and/or outdated material on these. Definitely not useful to be using that as a benchmark.

These three points also apply to many of the apps that are available. Please note that even if an app says “CMP app” does not mean it was put together by anyone knowledgeable about the industry or the exam. **EIC does *not* have an app.**

And one last point---I have seen people “study” the questions. This is just not the best use of your study time. Those questions are not on the exam.

In my mind it is worse for someone to take a mock exam with incorrect questions, than it is to not take any. It can give you a false sense of success or failure.

The only "real mock exams" (how's that for an oxymoron?) is the **Official CMP Practice Exams. There are two. Here is more information:*

<http://www.eventscouncil.org/CMP/CMPApplicants/PracticeExam.aspx> *The good thing is that it shows a "real" question that will never be used in the future (it is removed from the question bank). Be aware that some have been removed from the question bank because they are “outdated”---they are no longer in the books or exam content. It does not show you really how you will do on the exam however, because the subject areas (domains) are not necessarily represented in the same proportion as the exam.*

It is suggested on the EIC website that you take the Practice Exam before you start studying. I totally disagree. It will in no way give you an indication of what you need to focus on more, especially since that material is no longer on the exam.

One more thing about the questions on the exam. They are all multiple choice, with four distinct choices for the answers. No “all of the above”, “none of the above” etc. Therefore if you are using any other style of questions (open ended, True/False) for your studying, remember that is not how they will be written on the exam.

I know. You want to see what the questions will look like. Neither of these actions do that. And I cannot tell you how many people have walked out of the exam to say “The Questions did not look like any on the quizzes/app”. Many are completely thrown by the difference.

8. Confirmation Bias. This is when we believe something (or want to) and find information that confirms our belief, because of course, we want to be right. (This pertains to far more than this exam.) People who have passed will swear that certain things they did were why they passed, and therefore what you must do. Pretty much the only thing I would say is true for everyone is---they read the books. Also one size does not fit all. Everyone learns differently.

And now stepping down from my soapbox...

9. The exam is in Global/International English. Because of that the EIC/CIC book is also. Expect to see “theatre” as opposed to “theater”, and “colour” and “favourite” as opposed to “color” and “favorite”. Those are just a few examples.

10. Get over the fact that what is “right” according to the book, may not be the way you do it. The whole purpose of studying, taking the exam is to show you are a professional. That means that you are trying to create the “optimum learning experience” where all the stakeholders get the most out of it. In reality you may never have learned the “best way” to do it since we pretty much have all learned on the job (as my dear friend would say “Boots on the Ground”). Do not take the attitude that the books are wrong. The books have been put together based on a lot of research including input from hundreds, probably thousands, of meeting professionals. Would it really hurt to learn a better way of doing something even if what you have done before has worked? A Professional (the “P” in CMP) is someone who always keeps current with what is new in the profession and strives to create the best.

11. The exam has changed significantly just within the past 5 years (am I making that point enough?) In the past 10 years, it has gone from a very definition/fact type exam, to a situational type exam. Also a lot of the “facts” have changed. Therefore a lot of memorizing of facts tends to be the least effective approach to learning the material. Although obviously some “Facts” have to be learned, what I have found for most people is that learning the concepts--in other words how to apply it, suits the current exam better. Focus on concepts over memorizing every word in the books. Learn working definitions where you know words in context. Because the exam is not based on memory recall (memorization), flash cards are not the most strategic way to study.

12. Corporate planners stop rolling on the floor. Yes, the exam was originally based more on how Associations plan meetings, hence the five-year time line and references to working with volunteers. The books and the test have changed to incorporate other types of meetings, but associations still do plan in a very similar fashion. A suggestion is to look at everything you read in multiple ways: how would it affect you if you were a Corporate Planner? Association? Independent? Supplier?

13. Read the books as if you love the industry and it is one of those industry magazines that you have been wanting to read. So I am going to assume if you are going for the CMP, you love the industry. When we get to read the industry magazines, it is interesting and fun and exciting to learn and experience what others are doing. Read the books as if you really want to, not because “you have to study”. It will help you read on a more conceptual level and you will begin to apply it to your experience. If you “study”, as in whip out the highlighter and mark the entire page up, you are most likely burying yourself in the minutia, or as Carol Norfleet, DMCP, CMP would say, “the factoids”. This is when you start worrying about the quantity of cups of coffee men and women supposedly drink. That is *not* what is on the exam.

Another thing—you must read the books. Even if you have 35 years in the industry, you cannot pass this exam without reading the books. If you hear stories of people who did years ago—maybe so. But not now. Don’t throw your money (and time) away by not doing the most basic thing.

I know frequently it might be suggested for you to read chunks of pages in one book, then jump over and read some in the other book. In other words contracts in one book, then go over and read it in the other. I am not a fan of this because people frequently miss pages and miss the continuity in the books, where content is being built on previous content. Read one book, then read the other. It makes most sense to start with the EIC/CIC 9th edition since EIC “owns” the certification, and it is designed around the domains.

14. Concentrate on the Domains and skills that have the most number of questions – in other words you probably will still pass even if you know nothing about shipping. All domains are not created equal in terms of how many questions are on the exam. That does not mean that you do not need to read the entire books.

15. Glossary---where do you even begin? What you need most is a working definition. Could you recognize the word in context in a question or answer? Remember you do not have to define it, so you don’t need to memorize it. Try this technique.

Read a term and think about what you think it means, and how it would be used. (A good way to test yourself is to cover the definition. Then in your mind think of what you think the answer might be---even if it is vague. Then uncover the answer.) For every word that you have some good working knowledge of,

highlight it. This is the reverse of how we normally do it, so for this to work you need to start this way.

You are going to find some of the words are so much a part of your everyday language that it will eliminate many of them immediately. As you read the chapters you should be able to highlight more and more words. Every word is not in a chapter however, so in the end you need to go back and somewhat learn the ones that are not highlighted. As the pages fill up with highlighter, it also gives you a sense of accomplishment.

This is a great book to carry with you everywhere you go. When you have two or three minutes (in line, on public transportation, waiting for an appointment) you can read a term or two and not worry about having to go back and re-read a whole paragraph because you were interrupted.

Stop carrying all your books everywhere you go because you feel guilty that you should be studying. Just take this one, and follow this process. The books that weigh a total of 10 lbs/5 kg, and should stay wherever you can do your most uninterrupted and focused studying.

Since the exam is no longer definitional based, personally I do not feel flashcards are an effective way to study for the exam. If you want to do flashcards, by all means do it---I am well aware that is what most people are telling you to do. I feel for most people, they are not the most effective use of precious study time. And they take a lot of time to make too.

16. Concepts are best remembered by how they apply to real life. Learn the stories behind what you are studying, including the formulas.

17 Apply what you are learning at work. One of the adult learning principles is that people learn what they can apply---it's also one of the reasons they want to learn. The books and what you are learning should not be separate from your "real life". Will you be able to do all of it? No. But when you can, the more you apply the correct terminology and concepts, the easier it is to learn it. It also becomes "sticky" in your brain allowing you to recall it on the test, because now they are "your" stories.

18. Learn "2 x 8" rule as "2h x 8h" – that way you never have to think twice as to whether the number you use is the Height or the Width—the "H" helps you remember it is the height. In case you were wondering how I came up with that nifty formula... it was because I could never remember. Now I never forget. The only caveat to this? Occasionally, instead of Height and Width, they use the terms Horizontal and Vertical. The problem? Height =Vertical and

Width=Horizontal. If you chose the Horizontal, it would be the wrong “H”. Usually it is Height/Width, but just think it out if it is Vertical/Horizontal.

19. **Confused with terms and definitions?** Look for what is different not what is the same. It is the “sameness” that is making you confused.

The “there are not”:

20. **There are not items from the “general body of knowledge that the “old timers” like me will tell you stories about.** Every answer must be in one of the three recommended books, and when the question is written it is documented to a specific page. An example is that AV projection image ratios are not on it! They are no longer in the books and have not been in over 15 years. In other words, the three books are the only study materials you need. Other tools may help interpret, and put in context, but if the material is not in the book it cannot be on the exam.

21. **There are not measurements that need to be “translated”.** All measurements are written in both imperial and metric so you don't need to know how many ounces in a liter, or liters in a gallon.

22. **You do not need to know international currency and conversions.** If the question has a currency symbol—ignore it. Just think of it as money. It may not even have a currency symbol, but tells you that you are working with currency and moves on with the question.

23. **There is not an ADA section.** First of all this is now a global exam so the “American Disabilities Act” would not apply directly since material is country neutral. Questions about accessibility are incorporated into other areas such as site selection and room set-up. You do not need to know how high the elevator buttons are.

To me the most important two things about accessibility and questions regarding it are:

Did you know ahead of time?

How do you treat the person with the most dignity?

Approach the exam questions concerning disabilities in this order, because the correct answer could be different depending on whether you knew ahead.

24. There is not an International Section. Again, the international points are integrated into other questions. And every question that begins with “You are having a meeting in Paris...” is not necessarily an international question. Remember the questions are frequently built into situational examples. It may be just a piece of information describing the meeting.

25. Need more Break Even Formulas to practice on? You have them at work. Look at past, current and future projects---that’s applying what you are learning to real life. Another note on the formulas? Watch my videos, then listen to them. When you do not watch them, you hear the story, not just see the number.

And lastly...

26. Find your place to prepare. It will be different for different people—a place at work, a place at home, your favorite café, the library...find the one that works for you and use it consistently. I say this for a few reasons. First of all, I don’t want you to carry your books everywhere—see the Tip on the Glossary for more on that. Also, there is some evidence that if you study consistently in the same place, you can place yourself mentally in that place, when you are trying to recall information.

27. When you schedule your exam, if you have a learning disability or English is not your first language, you may apply for an extended testing time.

27. Review my “Test Taking Tips for the CMP Exam”

28. Don’t study the night before or the day of – really. Stop no later than 5 pm. You either know it or you don’t at this point, and sleep is more important. You need to relax (I know—LOL). I’ve known people to go for massages. I want to give Jennifer Jacobson, CMP credit for this idea. She watched a comedy movie the night before---the laughing made her relax, and she was distracted from the exam. I have now shared that with many people who said it helped them. Think about how you can relax.

Test Techniques start on next page!

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Joanne's Recommended Test Techniques for the CMP (Certified Meeting Professional) Exam

For starters...

1. **Go find the exact building, and if you are driving, the parking too**, before the day of the exam. Frequently the testing centers are in large office complexes and all the buildings look alike and parking is confusing. One person I know fortunately did this a few days before her exam, and got there to find that the main entrance was closed due to construction, and she had to go around the (large) building to get in. You do not need the additional stress the day of the exam when you suddenly find yourself going in circles. Someone else told me they were glad they found out where the stairs were, because the elevator was broken.
2. **If you live any distance away, stay near the testing center the night before.** It is worth the extra money to not lose your investment because you got stuck in traffic, or there is bad weather, or your kids turned off your alarm clock. It also helps to stay over if you have “distractions” at home.
3. **Before the test---limit your liquid intake.** You will have to sign in and out of the testing room including the security protocol if you leave the room. Also the clock does not stop on your time for the exam. Now if you think a break would be good for you, some people put water and a small snack in their locker to recharge.
4. **Make sure you have your Prometric Scheduling Confirmation (“ticket”) and government issued photo ID. If you are using something that is “always in your wallet”, double check before you walk out the door. Yep, there is a story behind that. In fact, two.**
5. **You will be required to leave everything in a locker**, and the only thing you will be able to take in is your ID and locker key. Go to www.prometric.com and watch the video called “What to Expect on Test Day”. As of now people sitting for the CMP exam are not required to do the finger scan, but the other security steps apply. You will have to lift your pant legs, and roll their socks down. **You cannot wear any jewelry except religious jewelry and wedding rings.** They will require you to take wedding rings off to show there is nothing hidden (you might want to go to the restroom so you can use soap to get it off before you go in the

room.) You also will be asked to remove your glasses for them to examine. Be aware so it does not rattle you.

Why all that? Because people cheat.

6. **Go dressed comfortably** and know that if you decide to take off a sweater, or need one during your exam time, you will have to sign out and in to go to your locker. And your clock does not stop.
7. **They will supply noise cancelling headphones** if you request. Be aware that you may be the only one in the room taking the CMP exam and people will be coming and going at different times. Some of the other types of exams require typing (lots of it), and some CMP test takers have found the keystroke noise to be very distracting. If you do think you may use the headphones, one person told me she regretted wearing earrings because after a while the headphones began to press into them. Now that you cannot wear jewelry (except religious) that is less of an issue.
8. **There is a security camera** above your exam station.
9. **There is a calculator on the computer.** If you are not familiar with this type, you can find similar ones by searching “online calculator”. It has been pointed out to me that the multiplication sign used on the calculator is not an “X”, but an asterisk ---think the “star” sign on a phone.
10. **There is a step-by-step tutorial that shows you how to use the computerized exam** that you can take when you sit down at your testing station. It will show you how to highlight, access the calculator and other information.
11. **You will be given a small “white board”** (basically a laminated piece of paper) to use as a scratch pad. One test taker also suggested you check the marker they give you. The one she had was a wide tip and the writing took up the white board quickly---and you are not given anything to clean the white board. Make sure the marker has a small tip or ask for another.
12. **There is a clock on the screen.** It is visible at all times.

Then...

13. Most importantly and before we go to anything else---**Go with your first instinct.** Studies have shown that a first instinct is usually right more than 90% of the time, not just in this exam, but in real life. What you need to do is tap into that ---and then don't talk yourself out of it. Don't change your answers unless you are positive.
14. **Read the questions and answers carefully.** Read what they really say, not what you think they should say.
15. **Do not read too much into the question.** Yes sometimes they are that "easy".
16. **Read the end of the question first. Based on that, strike through all the useless information. If you need an example ask me the "Bob, the bus driver" story or watch the video on my YouTube channel. (Many people have told me this one technique was key in them getting through the exam.**
17. **Don't read the answers when you first read the question.** Cover them with your hand or white board if you have to. Then in your mind think of what you think the answer might be---even if it is vague. Then uncover the answers. If one is in the ballpark take it. Why? **See #13.**
18. **If you are stuck between two answers that you believe are correct, ask yourself if one has to happen before the other.** The thing that needs to happen before the other should be your answer. Special thanks --This tip is the brainchild of Carol Norfleet, DMCP, CMP.
19. If you are really unsure of an answer, use the other tips to make an educated guess and mark it to go back to. **Go back ONLY to those marked at the end. Do not re-read every question.** Why? **See #13.**
20. **The exam is not grouped by Domains.** This means you may have a question about room set up right next to a finance question.
21. **The "right" answer may not be there, but the "correct" one will be.** If the needed space or ceiling height is "10" and the choices are 9, 13, 20 and 25, choose the one that will work the best. In other words if the math works out that you need a 10 foot ceiling, 9 won't work, but the other three will. Usually you will pick the closest that is over the minimum you need because having too much

22. space may cause your meeting to “get lost” in the room. (Besides most venues are going to want you in the smallest space—RevMax). Don’t get hung up on the fact that your exact answer is not there. Unless you have someone custom building rooms for you, you have to choose the best meeting room out of the selection the venue has available. Same concept.
23. **Keep track of time.** Check the clock between questions #50 and #51, and see where you are relative to an hour into the exam. If you are less than an hour into you’re time, you’re fine, much more than an hour you may need to pick up the pace. Do the same at between #100 and #101 (2 hours in) and again between #150 and #151 (3 hours, with 30 minutes left). You have more than a minute for each question. It may not sound like a lot, but some questions will take you 10 seconds and some will take multiple minutes. Don’t panic about the time, just pay attention.
24. **Remember—the answer is there.** You do not have to pull it out of thin air, you only have to recognize it. Follow all the other tips for reading the question and approaching the answers. If you get really stuck look at the answers and figure out which ones you know it “isn’t” and cross them out. Usually you can eliminate at least two that way leaving you a 50/50 chance of getting it right.
25. **Answer every question.** Use all the other tips to narrow it down. You can tag it to go back to at the end, but better to have an answer, than run out of time at the end and the exam end. If you do have time, you can go back. If you accidentally left it blank it will not let you submit the exam without putting in an answer. If you still have time at the end it will let you know which questions you tagged, and any that are blank. If you run out of time the exam will end no matter where you are.
26. **Don’t beat yourself up if you absolutely don’t know.** There are 150 questions (that count). So you don’t know a few. That’s why it is a pass/fail exam. Passing shows you have met the competency.
27. **Plan to use the entire 3 1/2 hours.** You don’t get extra credit for finishing sooner. This will give yourself “permission” to take the test slowly, take a breath, and then review your work -- again only changing answers if you KNOW they're wrong. **See #13.**

28. **The exam is in Global English.** Expect to see “theatre” as opposed to “theater”, and “colour” and “favourite” as opposed to “color” and “favorite”. Those are just a few examples.
29. **Don’t panic if people start leaving the room.** They may, in fact most likely, are taking a different exam. Even if they are taking the CMP they may have started before you. Stay focused on you. Everyone tests differently.
30. **Relax** (stop laughing...)
31. **Get a good night’s sleep.** Do not study. No --- really!

[For short videos on these and other techniques check out my channel here on YouTube!](#)

One last thing. At the end of your exam you will be asked to fill out a questionnaire. Most people are so anxious to find out their score they do not read it , they just push answers. If you want to “contest” a question, in other words you feel that there was a problem with it, this is the space where you can voice that. Examples would be something you did not think were in any of the three books, not enough information, a style of question, etc.

And no, it cannot be every question .