

Developing a Study Plan

The following suggestions are designed to help you develop a study plan in preparation for the Illinois Certification Testing System.

✓ **Study the objectives.**

The first step in preparing for an ICTS test is to identify what information the test will cover by reviewing the test objectives for your field. Test objectives are included in the study guide for each test field and are the only source of this information.

Test objectives are organized into groups known as subareas. The subareas define the major content areas of the test. You will find a list of subareas at the beginning of each test objective list. The number of objectives within each subarea typically reflects the emphasis given to that subarea on the test. In general, subareas with greater numbers of objectives will receive more coverage on the test.

Once you have a broad picture of what the examination includes, read each objective and its descriptive statements carefully to get a more specific idea of the knowledge you will be required to demonstrate on the examination. When you have become familiar with the objectives, make a list of those objectives about which you feel you know the least. Use this review of the objectives to set priorities for your study time. The test objectives are the core of the testing program and a helpful study tool. Read them carefully to determine the areas of strength and weakness in your content knowledge.

✓ **Identify resources.**

After you have identified the objectives on which you will focus your time, consider the resources you may use in studying the content of those objectives. The most appropriate resources may well be textbooks from courses you have taken. You may also wish to consult your class notes. This is especially important for courses you took more than a year ago. Talk with other students who have taken those courses more recently. Meet with your advisor or the professors who teach these courses. They may be able to provide you with some guidelines for reviewing your notes and textbooks. You may also wish to review other materials and publications from local, state, and national professional education organizations.

✓ **Review the sample test questions.**

After you have become familiar with the objectives, you may want to review the sample test directions and the test question formats and suggested approaches contained in the appropriate ICTS study guide. Then try to answer the sample multiple-choice questions for the test you are taking. If your test includes one or more constructed-response assignments, you should try to respond to the sample assignment(s) as well.

Next, review the correct responses and explanations for the sample multiple-choice questions. If your test includes one or more constructed-response assignments, you should review the sample response(s) or description of the task/assignment that is provided.

✓ **If you are retaking a test, use the information on your score report.**

Your subarea performance will help you identify possible areas on which to focus your studies. You may wish to concentrate your study on those subareas or sections of the test that include the greatest number of test items and that count the most toward your total test score.

✓ **Take additional courses.**

Consult with your advisor about whether you have completed sufficient coursework in preparation for the test. Your advisor may be able to identify specific courses that may cover content you have not yet studied.

✓ **Form or join a study group.**

Joining a study group can be effective for reviewing test-related content. You may gain the most from participation in a study group if you have already identified the test objectives with which you are less familiar and which you need to review more. If you have a specific need or area of weakness, a study group that focuses on that need or area may be best for you.

✓ **Avoid cramming in the days before the test.**

A gradual study pattern will be more effective for learning unfamiliar or difficult content. In the last few days before the test, take time to review the content with which you feel more comfortable and avoid trying to learn new material.