



Red Seal Exam Preparation Guide

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Am I Ready to Write the Red Seal Exam?

What Is the Red Seal Exam?

The Red Seal Exam is an exam that tests your knowledge of the trade activities of your trade. It is used by all provinces and territories to issue a Red Seal endorsement. Most provinces and territories use the Red Seal Exam to issue trade certification. In many ways, it is the “final exam” for tradespeople.

Am I Eligible to Write the Red Seal Exam?

The apprenticeship and certification authority in each province and territory determines who can write the Red Seal Exam. Ensure that you meet the Red Seal examination requirements of your province or territory. These differ by trade and by type of tradesperson (e.g. apprentice or trade qualifier).

You have to be experienced in the full scope of your trade. The apprenticeship authority in your province or territory specifies if you have the training and/or work experience required to write the Red Seal Exam.

Red Seal Exams are administered by provincial and territorial apprenticeship and certification authorities. Contact [your provincial or territorial apprenticeship certification office](#) for more information.

If you are not sure if your experience in the trade covers all activities that are going to be tested, do the Red Seal Exam Self-Assessment.

Red Seal Exam Self-Assessment Tool

The Red Seal website has a [self-assessment tool](#) for each trade. The self-assessment is designed to give you an idea of your strengths and weaknesses. It is **not** intended to accurately predict how well you will do on the Red Seal Exam . No one sees the results of the assessment except for you.

The self-assessment tool is based on the trades' occupational standard. Occupational standards are organized into key *Tasks* that are broken down into smaller *Sub-Tasks*. All Tasks and Sub-tasks of the trade are listed on the self-assessment webpage. You are asked to think about your experience with and understanding of each one. There is a choice in each section for you to indicate for yourself how well you know each Task:

- I have no or very little understanding or experience in this Task and its Sub-tasks.
- I understand this Task and its Sub-tasks and have some experience doing them in limited situations.
- I have a very good understanding of this Task and its Sub-tasks and am fully competent in doing them in many situations.

If you are not sure about what is meant by each Task, you can click on the Task and be taken to that section of the occupational standard.

As you are completing the Self-Assessment, ask yourself if there are there any Tasks and Sub-tasks that you seem to lack experience in or knowledge of. Are there many questions about them on the Red Seal Exam? What can you do to improve in these areas? Manuals and resource books may be helpful with information about activities that you do not yet have experience with.

There is also a printable copy of the self-assessment if you would prefer not to complete it on the computer or in one sitting.

What You Need to Know About the Red Seal Exam

What Is the Red Seal Exam Format?

The format of the questions is multiple-choice. Each question is worth one mark. There are **no** trick questions. Of the four choices provided, there is only one correct answer.

The Red Seal Exam has a pass mark of 70%. The writing time is four hours.

What Is on the Red Seal Exam?

The Red Seal Exam covers the trade activities performed across Canada. The *Red Seal Occupational Standard (RSOS)* for your trade outlines and describes all these activities. Some trades use a document called the *National Occupational Analysis (NOA)* to detail the activities of the trades.

Occupational standards are each organized in a way that breaks down the trade's tasks into smaller and smaller pieces. This helps organize the tasks into more manageable items.

- There are a number of **Major Work Activities/Blocks**, which include the broad trade activities.
- **Major Work Activities / Blocks** are broken down into several **Tasks**. **Tasks** describe the activities within a **Major Work Activity/Block**.
- **Tasks** are then broken down into several **Sub-tasks**. **Sub-tasks** are specific activities within a **Task**.
- Exam questions are based on the **Sub-tasks**.

Who Decides What Is on the Red Seal Exam?

Tradespeople from across Canada determine the content of a trade's occupational standard. They also write and review every question that appears on the Red Seal Exam. This way, exams use the same concepts, terms and language that are relevant in the workplace.

Tradespeople also determine how many questions there should be for each section of the occupational standard. This is important to know when studying for the Red Seal exam.

If you took part in an apprenticeship program and technical training, you might have had exams to assess your learning. **The Red Seal Exam is not the same.** The exam is **not** just based on what you do in your job or what is done in your province or territory, but rather covers the scope of the trade **across Canada**. It is a national trade certification exam based on the work and knowledge expected at the journeyman level in your trade.

Common Core and Not Common Core

In putting together a trade's occupational standard, tradespeople from each province and territory indicate whether or not each **Sub-task** is performed by skilled workers in the trade in their province or territory.

It is important to note that if at least 70% of provinces and territories state that a Sub-task is performed by the journeymen in a trade, that Sub-task is considered part of the **Common Core**. This means that it could be tested on the Red Seal Exam.

On the other side, if fewer than 70% of provinces and territories state that a Sub-task is performed by the journeymen in a trade, that Sub-task is considered to be **Not Common Core**. This means that there will **not** be any questions on the Red Seal exam on this Sub-task.

The occupational standard of each trade indicates which tasks are Common Core, and therefore testable on the Red Seal exam.

It is important to be familiar with the entire occupational standard when preparing for the Red Seal Exam.

- If you have the full experience of working in the trade, most items on the exam should be familiar to you;
- Everyone has different trade experience and there may be some questions about activities that you are less familiar with;
- Activities that are **Not Common Core** will **not** be tested on the exam.

Keep in mind that textbooks can be helpful study resources, but they are **not** the basis of the exam; the occupational standard is the basis of the exam.

Red Seal Exam Supplies

For the exam, you will be provided with:

- an exam booklet
- a diagram booklet (if required)
- other reference material, *if required*:
 - acronym list
 - math formulas
 - code book information
- a pencil and eraser
- a calculator, if needed
- a bubble sheet to record your answers on

Red Seal Exam Format

Red Seal Exam Questions: Types and Study Tips

The Red Seal Exam questions are all multiple-choice. Every question has ONE correct answer and three incorrect options. They are not misleading or trick questions, but the incorrect options are not always obvious. Someone who is skilled and experienced should be able to pick the correct answer from the options.

There are different types of knowledge tested on the Red Seal Exam:

i. Knowledge and Recall

Some questions are used to check your knowledge of **facts** related to doing a Sub-task.

For example, in some questions, like the one below, you may be able to determine the correct answer before looking at the options to pick one.

Which ingredient makes crisped rice treats stick together?

- A. Crisped rice cereal.
- B. Marshmallows.**
- C. Butter.
- D. Flour.

Other questions require that you read the options before selecting the answer.

Which ingredients are used to make crisped rice treats?

- A. Flour, water and crisped rice cereal.
- B. Icing sugar, baking powder and crisped rice cereal.
- C. Milk, vanilla extract and crisped rice cereal.
- D. Butter, marshmallows and crisped rice cereal.**

Tips for Studying for These Types of Questions

i. Review the *Range of Variables*

The ranges of variables are found in Red Seal Occupational Standards. They are lists of examples of items and terms used in the standard. They provide an in-depth description of terms used in Sub-Tasks.

Possible Study Method: Index Cards

Write the range of variables on the index cards. Write the variable on one side of the card and the definition or explanation on the other. This is a great way to stay organized and a good practice method for study.

You can also write the information out a few times, read it out loud a couple of times and/or record yourself saying it and play it over.

ii. Procedural and Application

Some questions test your knowledge of **procedures** and might include calculations, interpretations of diagrams or code books.

For example:

What is the first step to prepare crisped rice treats?

- A. Melt butter.**
- B. Cook crisped rice cereal.
- C. Bake marshmallows.
- D. Boil milk.

What is the procedure to prepare crisped rice treats?

- A. Melt butter on low heat, stir marshmallows with butter, remove from heat, add and mix crisped rice cereal, transfer the mix in a buttered pan, press lightly, then allow the preparation to cool.**
- B. Melt butter on low heat, stir marshmallows with butter, add and mix crisped rice cereal, remove from heat, transfer the mix in a buttered pan, press firmly, then allow the preparation to cool.
- C. Melt marshmallows on low heat, add and mix butter and cereal, remove from heat, transfer the mix in a pan, press lightly, then place in the refrigerator overnight.
- D. Melt marshmallows on low heat, add and mix butter and crisped rice cereal on medium heat, remove from heat, transfer the mix in a pan, press firmly, then allow the preparation to cool.

The crisped rice treats recipe uses 4.5 c. of crisped rice cereal and the ratio of cereal to marshmallows is 2:1. What quantity of marshmallows is required to prepare the treats?

- A. 9.00 c.
- B. 6.25 c.
- C. 2.50 c.
- D. 2.25 c.**

There is a 2:1 ratio of crisped rice cereal to marshmallows. What quantity of marshmallows is required when preparing crisped rice treats with 1 000 ml (4.5 c.) of cereal?

- | METRIC | IMPERIAL |
|------------------|-------------------|
| A. 2 250 ml | A. 9.50 c. |
| B. 1 565 ml | B. 6.25 c. |
| C. 625 ml | C. 2.50 c. |
| D. 565 ml | D. 2.25 c. |

Tips for studying for these types of questions

i. Review Math Concepts

Know any math concepts that could be used in your trade nationally. Do not just familiarize yourself with what you have used but with **ALL** concepts.

Possible Study Method: Internet Resources

Some online videos can be helpful study aids. If you have any math challenges, you may find YouTube videos that demonstrate how to apply the concepts you are struggling with. While the technology is relatively new, AI tools available online may be a resource for advice and explanations of concepts in the trade.

Practice Practice Practice every day.

ii. Study Procedures Carried Out for Your Trade Nationally

Know all the procedures used in your trade nationally. Do not just familiarize yourself with the procedures you have carried out, but **ALL** procedures described in the occupational standard.

Possible Study Method: Sticky Notes

Use one sticky note for each procedure you have to study. Write the procedure title at the top, and list the steps involved under the title.

Once you have prepared all your sticky notes for procedures related to the learning objectives in a specific course, post them on a wall in a room you walk by or go through every day. Read each note aloud by stating the title of the procedure and then the steps that are involved. Do this as often as you can.

Use a different colour of sticky notes for each Major Work Activity/Block from the RSOS or NOA.

Have someone test you at the end of every week. They name the procedure, and you tell them what steps are involved. You can also have the person read the steps to a procedure for you and you identify what the procedure is.

iii. Critical Thinking

Some questions are used to check problem-solving and analytical skills related to your trade.

For example:

Marshmallows are used to prepare crisped rice treats. The marshmallows do **not** melt evenly and become one large mass. What is the cause?

- A. Marshmallows are too old.**
- B. Too much crisped rice cereal in mixture.
- C. Too much butter in mixture.
- D. Cereal is too stale.

Crisped rice treats are being prepared, and temperature to melt butter and marshmallows is set too high. What is the result?

- A. Mixture becomes black during heating.
- B. Treats become too hard during cooling.**
- C. Treats become greasy to touch.
- D. Cereal becomes crumbly during mixing.

Some of these questions are complex and require an analysis of the situation and multiple calculations. Information may be presented in bullets at the beginning of the question. For example:

Given the following recipe:

- Crisped rice cereal: 3 c.
- Marshmallows: 2 c.
- Butter: 1 tbsp.
- Servings: 12

What are the scaled quantities to serve 30 portions?

- A. 5.6 c. of crisped rice cereal, 3.75 c. of marshmallows and 2.5 tbsp. of butter.
- B. 5.6 c. of crisped rice cereal, 5 c. of marshmallows and 2.5 tbsp. of butter.
- C. 7.5 c. of crisped rice cereal, 5 c. of marshmallows and 2.5 tbsp. of butter.**
- D. 7.5 c. of crisped rice cereal, 3.75 c. of marshmallows and 2.5 tbsp. of butter.

Tips for studying for these types of questions

i. Know all Diagrams

Be sure to know diagrams referred to in the Sub-tasks of the occupational standard of your trade. Familiarize yourself with the drawings, specifications and blueprints used at different types of job sites, not only those at your workplace.

Possible Study Method: Practice

Check which Sub-tasks refer to diagrams or drawings. Try to find drawings and diagrams used on the job that relate. Make sure you understand what the diagram and the elements on it (like symbols, scales, legend) mean and how they are used to perform the Sub-task.

ii. Know All Formulas

The key to knowing your formulas is knowing when to use which formula.

Possible Study Method: Poster Board

On a piece of poster board, write out every single formula that could be used in the trade. Remember to include NOT just what you have used but all formulas that *could be* used. Place the poster board on the wall in front of you, in the room where you will be studying.

Each day, take a piece of paper and write out one formula at a time. As you write out the formula, be sure you understand each step and what result it achieves. Next, understand in what situations that formula would be used.

iii. Know Your Trade's Code Book Layout

If your trade has a code book, the Red Seal Exam will reference the **national** code book. Be sure to familiarize yourself with it.

Possible Study Method: Practice

Work with the code book when code is referenced in the Sub-tasks of the occupational standard. Repeat until you are very comfortable finding the information in your current **national** code book.

Be aware that Red Seal Exam questions will **not** explicitly state that a question refers to Code. You will need to figure that out based on what is being asked.

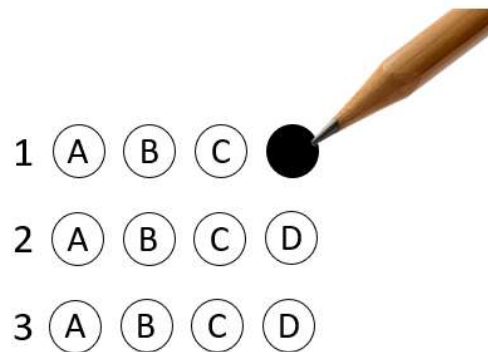
How Many of Each Type of Question Should I Expect?

On the Red Seal website, in the trade's [Exam Breakdowns](#) page, you can see how many questions there are on each Task. You can also see how many questions of each type there are overall. This can help you choose the best study methods for your trade's exam. Use that information to fill in the following chart. In addition to the suggested study methods, include some that you have found helpful.

Question Type	Percentage of Exam Questions of this Type	Possible Study Methods
i. factual knowledge		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• index cards•
ii. procedural knowledge		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• sticky notes• online videos• AI tools•
iii. problem-solving skills		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• study diagrams• poster board for math formulas• review national code book•

Answering Red Seal Exam Questions

The exam questions come in an exam booklet. You are also given a bubble sheet to record your responses on like this:



You should check the number on the bubble sheet against the number in the exam booklet often to make sure they match.

It can be helpful to place a piece of paper over the bubble sheet to keep from skipping questions when you are filling the sheet in.

It is important to check that you have only filled in ONE response for each question. Be sure to allow yourself time to review the bubble sheet when you have finished the exam.

Make sure that you have filled in the answer bubble dark enough, without going outside the bubble. Answers that are too light or are outside the bubbles may not be picked up by the machine that reads the bubble sheets. If you need to erase an answer to change it, be sure to erase it completely so that the exam sheet is scored correctly.

Watch Your Time

The time allowed to write the exam is 4 hours. Find out the number of questions on your trade's exam on the Red Seal website in the trade's [Exam Breakdown](#) page and divide that number into 240 minutes.

$$240 \text{ minutes} / \text{ ______ } \text{ number of questions} = \text{ ______ } \text{ Average time per question}$$

Some questions will not take very long, giving you more time for those that do.

Preparing to Write the Red Seal Exam

1. Take care of the administrative tasks that you need to do.

For example:

- Proof of apprenticeship completion or trade experience.
- Payment of fees.
- Know what you need to bring (e.g., government issued photo ID, proof of apprenticeship, etc.)
- Request accommodations you need, such as for a learning disability.
- Confirm the language (English/French) of the exam you will take.

Check with your [apprenticeship authority's office](#) for more details.

2. Familiarize yourself with what the exam is going to be testing.

Every single exam question is linked to a Sub-task that is in the occupational standard.

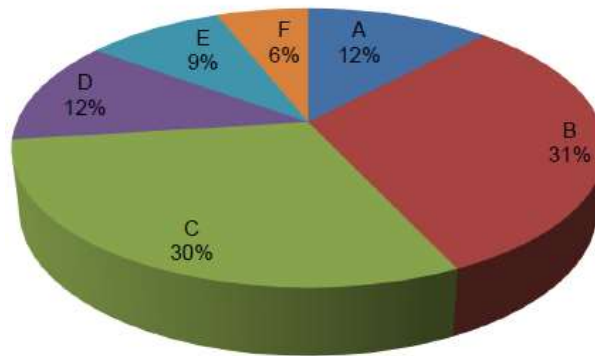
To get a better explanation of what each Sub-task is about, look it up in occupational standard for the [trade](#). This document can be found on the Red Seal website. It gives much more detail about the skills and knowledge you need for each Sub-task.

Look at the [Red Seal Exam Breakdown](#) for your trade to see how many questions there are for each section of the exam.

The printable [self-assessment tool](#) includes a pie chart that shows the distribution of questions on the Red Seal Exam for your trade. There is also a table that provides the number and percentage of questions on each Major Work Activity and Task.

For example:

The Red Seal Exam for this trade has 120 questions.



	Exam Section	Approximate Percentage of Questions	Number of Questions out of 120
A	Occupational Skills	12%	14
B	Health and Safety Considerations	31%	37
C	Preparing the Work Area	30%	36
D	Installation and Reinforcing	12%	14
E	Maintenance and Upgrading	9%	12
F	Repair and Replacement	6%	7

3. Prepare your own study plan.

Look for ways to learn more about the Tasks and Sub-tasks of the occupational standard, especially the ones that you do not know very well. Check with your trade instructor about resources or reading you could do.

Be aware that Red Seal Exams are work-based, **not** textbook-based, but reviewing these types of resources can be helpful.

Remember that if at least 70% of provinces and territories state that a Sub-task is performed by the journeypersons in a trade, that Sub-task will be testable on the Red Seal Exam. **It is essential to be familiar with the occupational standard of your trade when preparing for the Red Seal Exam.**

Talk to your fellow workers in the trade about good learning resources and learn from one another. Consider finding a tutor for areas that you are unfamiliar with.

Look at the Sample Questions on the Red Seal website to get a good understanding of the format of Red Seal Exam questions.

Use the Internet to find explanations of concepts that you are unsure about. Not all sites or sources are reliable. Try to use reputable sources like manufacturers' instructional videos, training providers' materials or instructional videos. Check in with qualified tradespeople and employers to see if these online resources and videos are true to Canadian workplaces.

If anyone tries to give you or sell you copies of the actual Red Seal Exam or its questions, **do not trust** this claim. Report fraud to your apprenticeship authority.

Most importantly, try to **gain experience** in these activities. The best way to learn these tasks is by doing them! After all, that's what apprenticeship is all about. Ask your employer or mentor about getting more practice and experience in the areas where you might need it.

Practice Questions: *Buyer Beware*

There are examples of questions for each trade on the [Red Seal website](#) in the section called [Sample Questions](#). While these exact questions won't show up on the actual exam, they are written by the same people, in the same format as real exam questions.

The Red Seal Program **does not** endorse any test preparation companies that claim to have Red Seal Exam questions or practice questions.

If you find a resource with practice questions and choose to use them, here are some tips on how to use them effectively.

- Use them to test your knowledge and learn concepts the questions are about. It is very unlikely that questions on a practice test developed by an external source will be similar to those on the Red Seal Exam, so memorizing practice questions may not be helpful.
- Use them before **and** after studying as a gauge of how much you know in each area, and where you should focus your preparation for the Red Seal Exam.
- When you have completed a section, correct your test and spend some time going through every choice.
 - Why is the right answer the right answer?
 - Why are the wrong choices wrong? Understanding why the wrong options are not correct is helpful in learning the material and understanding details about it.
 - If you got a question wrong, why did you choose the answer you chose, and do you understand what your mistake was?

Trade Terminology

The Red Seal Exam is based on the occupational standard.

Read through the occupational standard. Pay attention to the skills and knowledge statements under each Sub-task, and the Range of Variables list that follow them.

Do you understand all the terms that are used in the occupational standard? Many of these same terms will show up on the Red Seal Exam.

There are also some sections at the end of each standard that can help:

Tools and Equipment: A list of the tools and equipment used in the trade. Make sure you know the correct names. Note that brand names and slang expressions are **not** used on the exam.

Glossary: Definitions for technical terms used in the standard. Again, brand names and slang expressions are **not** used on the exam.

Acronyms: Acronyms used in the trade and what they mean. For example PPE – Personal Protective Equipment

Finding Resources Online

The Internet can be very useful for learning more about your trade. However, some sources of information are better than others.

Here is a suggestion for filtering good from bad:

Put each resource through a CRAAP test

- **C**urrency, **R**elevance, **A**uthority, **A**ccuracy, **P**urpose.

Currency Was the information developed fairly recently?

- Avoid outdated work techniques or trade information.

Relevance Does the information address the topics covered in the occupational standard?

- Ensure all information you reference is relevant to your trade as it is practised in Canada.

Authority Do you recognize the source of the information to be trustworthy?

- Apprenticeship authorities and approved training providers are trustworthy sources. Unions often also provide good study materials.

Accuracy Does the information seem accurate and truthful?

- All Red Seal Exam questions and answers are confidential. Any site that says they have the real questions and answers is either dishonest or breaking the law.
- The Red Seal Program does **not** endorse any test preparation companies or websites.

Purpose Is the purpose of the material to educate you in your trade?

- Be wary of websites trying to sell you products. Check with co-workers, other students or teachers to see if they have ever used these products.

Dealing with Stress and Exam Anxiety

The Red Seal Exam is an important step to getting your Red Seal endorsement. It is normal to have some anxiety and stress before or during your exam. Here are some tips that may be helpful:

- **Plan your time.** Allow yourself enough time to learn and study before your exam.
- **Schedule your study time.** Use a calendar to devote specific time to studying each week leading up to your exam. Consider writing in each day where you left off and where to start the next time.
- **Breathe.** Calm and deep breathing may help you to refocus and to find the answers more easily.
- **Talk positively to yourself.** Remind yourself of why you are taking the exam. Remember the time and effort you have put into your training and exam preparation.
- **Fill your mind with positive images:** Your last vacation, your favourite activity, someone who helps you to feel grounded. Once you feel more calm, return to your studies.
- **Look for tools that reduce stress** through mindfulness and meditation. Many apps, podcasts and videos are freely available on mobile devices and online.
- **Physical activity** helps to deal with stressful situations like exams. Proper nutrition is also key to dealing with anxiety.
- **Get a good night's sleep.** It is best to be well rested before an exam rather than staying up late to study. Poor sleep actually makes your memory worse.
- **Prepare for the exam day.** Make sure you know exactly where and when the exam will take place. Be sure to allow yourself plenty of time to get there.
- **Ask for help.** Consider if it would be helpful to consult a specialist to help you manage anxiety and stress.

Know the Rules for the Exam Room

Here are some general rules that you should know in advance. There might be specific rules that apply in your province or territory. Be sure to read any materials about the exam in advance, and pay attention to instructions given by the exam room supervisor.

You must:

- **Not** cheat. This will result in expulsion from the exam session and other penalties.
- **Not** copy any exam information or leave with any exam material. Any attempts to share, reproduce or leave with any exam information will result in expulsion from the exam session and other penalties.
- **Not** bring any materials into the room.
- Place all items required during the exam on the desk. Accessing personal items, including reaching into pockets, is **not** permitted during the exam.
- Remove all outerwear (e.g., jackets, hats, hoodies) during the exam.
- **Not** bring backpacks, purses or pouches to the exam.
- **Not** bring any electronic devices into the exam room. These include but are not limited to: picture, video, voice recording and transmitting devices, calculators (if you need one, it will be provided), cell phones, tablets, media players, watches, headsets, earbuds, cameras, microphones.
- Have all other items approved by the examiner before bringing them into the exam room (water, food, etc.).
- Use only the pencils, erasers, calculators and scrap paper provided.
- **Not** communicate with or disrupt other candidates.
- Ask the examiner for approval to leave the exam room.
- Return all materials to the examiner after completion.
- **Not** attempt to open any computer applications during the exam (programs, websites, etc.).
- **Not** look at another candidate's exam materials.

Some Tips for Writing Multiple-Choice Exams

- Read each question carefully and completely. Do not assume you know what the question is asking after you've read only part of it.
- Process the question you read. Look for the key words that will trigger the thought process.
- Pay close attention to words like *not*, *always*, *never*, which alter the question and can be easy to miss.
- Manage your time. Divide the time allowed by the number of questions on the exam to gauge how much time per question you have. Some questions will not take you that long, and others may take a bit longer. At the halfway point, check if you have completed half of the exam and adjust your pace accordingly.
- Separate long questions into smaller parts to make them easier to understand.
- Read (process) what the question is asking. Think of the answer based on your experience, preparation and training. Find the answer from the list of options.
- If it is possible, try to answer the question before looking at the choices. If your answer is there, there's a good chance it's the correct one.
- As you read all the options, take note of those you know are wrong to narrow your options.
- If you are answering a question that involves calculation, estimate what the correct answer is first. Once you calculate the answer, you can decide whether it seems right.
- Draw a diagram or jot down a formula on the scrap paper you are given if it helps answer a question.
- If you don't know the answer, jot down the question number, move on and come back later. It's better to finish the easier questions first and come back to the more difficult ones later. (Each exam question is worth the same, no matter if it is easy or difficult.) **Be sure to also skip that question on the bubble sheet until you come back to it.**
- Answer all questions, even if you have to guess. You have at least a 25% chance of guessing correctly. Do **not** leave any question unanswered.
- Eliminate the answers that you know are wrong, and choose from the rest. This increases your chances from 25% of choosing the correct response up to 33% or 50%!

- It is usually best to stick with your first answer. Unless you know you misread or misunderstood the question the first time, it is often best to go with the first answer you chose.
- If there is still time remaining after answering all questions, take some time to review everything and make sure your responses are marked on the correct line of the bubble sheet.

If you are not successful on your Red Seal Exam, think about where you may have made mistakes.

- Consider whether you were prepared enough.
- Figure out if there were certain topics heavily tested on the exam that you did not spend much time studying.
- Think about how anxious you were.
- Try to come up with why you had the result you did, and solutions to avoid the same situation the next time you attempt the exam.