Study Guide
for the
Therapeutic
Recreation
Specialist
Certification
Examination
Third Edition

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# Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

SECTION ONE

CHAPTER ONE
Introduction to the Study Guide .............................................. 1
  Purpose of the Study Guide ................................................. 2
  How to Use the Study Guide ................................................. 2

CHAPTER TWO
What Is Competence and How Is It Measured? ............................ 4
  Validity, Reliability and Fairness ........................................... 5
  How Was the NCTRC Exam Developed? ..................................... 6
  How Has the Revised NCTRC Test Changed? ............................... 6
  References ............................................................................. 7

CHAPTER THREE
Strategies for Preparing and Taking the Test .............................. 8
  Preparing for the Test ........................................................... 8
  Taking the Test ....................................................................... 10
  References ............................................................................. 11

CHAPTER FOUR
Basic Information on the Test Content Outline ......................... 12
  Introduction ......................................................................... 12
  Background .......................................................................... 15
  Diagnostic Groupings and Populations Served ............................ 23
  Assessment ............................................................................ 31
  Planning the Intervention ....................................................... 35
  Implementing the Individualized Intervention Plan .................... 43
  Documentation and Evaluation ............................................... 48
  Organizing and Managing Services .......................................... 52
  Advancement of the Profession ............................................... 57

SECTION TWO

CHAPTER FIVE
Warm-Up Items .................................................................... 70

CHAPTER SIX
Practice Tests ....................................................................... 92

CHAPTER SEVEN
Diagnostic and Review Items .................................................. 134
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Chapter One
Introduction to the Study Guide

Welcome to the third edition of the Study Guide for the Therapeutic Recreation Specialist Certification Examination! We are excited to tell you that the third edition (2005) has changed significantly from the second edition (1997) and the first edition (1990).

The third edition has 90 warm-up items—40 more than the second edition, and two practice tests—instead of just one. Like the second edition, there are 240 diagnostic and review items that focus on specific areas, if you have trouble with the two practice tests.

As always, the absolute best information about the NCTRC exam comes from the NCTRC Candidate Bulletin. More detailed information about the exam—which is now computerized—such as when and where it is administered, and sitting requirements in order to qualify to take the exam are available at:

National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification
7 Elmwood Drive
New City, NY 10956
Telephone: 845 639-1439
Fax: 845 639-1471
Website: www.NCTRC.org

Section One of this Study Guide includes the following four chapters:

- Chapter One: Introduction to the Study Guide.
- Chapter Two: What is Competence and How is It Measured?
- Chapter Three: Strategies for Preparing and Taking the Test.
- Chapter Four: Basic Information about the Test Content.

Section Two of this Study Guide:

- Chapter Five: Warm Up Items (90 items)
- Chapter Six: Practice Test 1 (90 items)
- Practice Test 2 (90 items)
- Chapter Seven: Diagnostic and Review Items (240 items)
Purpose of the Study Guide

The purpose of this Study Guide is to assist candidates in preparing for the National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification’s (NCTRC) national certification examination for Therapeutic Recreation Specialists. The Study Guide’s mission is two-fold: a.) to provide information on reducing test anxiety and improving test performance; and b.) to provide numerous sample questions, similar to those actually found on the exam, which will allow candidates to practice and self-assess their own readiness for the test.

We have tried to provide enough background information to give you some idea of what to expect when you take or “sit” for the exam. Every attempt has been made to make this Study Guide both usable and “user-friendly.” We hope you will find it both a valuable resource and a learning tool. This Study Guide is meant to be used in conjunction with the NCTRC Candidate Bulletin, which provides very specific information about registering for and taking the national exam.

For many individuals, the thought of taking a certification examination can be unsettling. We often hear statements like, “I have never taken a comprehensive exam, there is so much information. How do I learn it all?” or “I’ve been out of school for ten years, how do I go about studying for the test?” Be assured that many of your colleagues across the nation have the same types of questions that you do. These kinds of questions, and others, hopefully will be answered by reading and completing this Study Guide.

We have tried to provide you with a condensed but complete set of materials. We trust that you will find the information and resources contained in the Study Guide to be helpful in getting ready for the national examination.

How to Use the Study Guide

We advise that you read the first four chapters before going to the sample test questions. The first three provide background information. You may find the third chapter helpful at several points in your own preparation.

The fourth chapter is important in that it gives you information about what will be on the test. The NCTRC Content Outline represents the result of several NCTRC committees working in conjunction with Educational Testing Service (ETS) and lays the foundation for the examination. The Content Outline contains eight areas, that are represented on the test. In our overview, we give you an idea of what information comes from each of the eight areas, as well as references to scrutinize if some content sounds unfamiliar to you.

Study the Content Outline and accompanying information thoroughly. This is the most complete information you will receive about what will be on the test.

Before we go further, we want to clarify an important point. The format used for the items is nearly identical to that used by NCTRC and ETS to develop the national certification test. However, do not expect to see the same items on the actual NCTRC test. The items in these chapters represent similar format and content as the NCTRC exam, but this does not mean they are the same items found on the test. Keep in mind that these are practice items.

The sample test items are divided into three chapters. The first is a set of 90 “warm-up” items that you may want to use if it has been a while since you have taken a multiple-choice test. Familiarize yourself with the style of the items and get back into the feel of taking a test. The content was randomly selected from all eight areas of the Content Outline. A scoring sheet is provided at the end of this chapter.
The second chapter in this section provides two complete practice tests that mimic the proportions of the actual test. We have developed items in the same proportional amounts as you will find on the actual exam. (For example, out of the 90 items, the area of Assessment has about 14 items.) More information about the percentages of items on the actual test is found in Chapter Four: Background Information.

We suggest you sit and take Practice Test 1 in one sitting, to get the feel of how you will fare physically and mentally during the actual test. While we cannot copy the real testing environment, especially since computers are used, we want you to get a notion of how physical and mental fatigue may affect you. If this is significant, you may want to review the chapter on Strategies for Test Preparation.

A scoring key is provided at the end of Practice Test 1, and should help you determine if you need to move on to Practice Test 2. A second answer sheet and scoring key are provided for Practice Test 2.

The scoring keys provide more detailed diagnostic information about which parts of the Content Outline you did well on, and which you did not. If there is one or more areas in which you did not do well, you may want to move on to the third chapter of items.

Depending on your scores for either or both exams, you may want to progress on to the third chapter in this section. The Diagnostic and Review Items cover each of the eight areas, with 30 questions each.

The purpose of the third chapter in this section is to give you even more practice taking items concerning certain content areas. Each of the eight areas is clearly labeled, with 30 items per area. Again, we remind you that these identical items will not be found on the actual NCTRC test. But if you find that you miss several items, say concerning documentation and goal writing, you will know this is an area on which you should concentrate your efforts before you sit for the national exam.

Remember, the Study Guide is meant to be a framework to help you prepare for and to let you know what to expect on the test. You may use it as a diagnostic tool of sorts to learn the areas where you need more preparation.