



Improving Your Odds

Taking the ASE tests for automotive certification can be an intimidating experience. Whether this is your first attempt, a repeat attempt to pass a failed test, or a re-certification, test taking is not generally considered to be anyone's idea of a good time.

There are ways to improve your odds for success, however, and they don't necessarily include cramming 'til all hours of the night. Knowing the right answer isn't the only thing to consider as you prepare for the tests. Your frame of mind, your attitude toward the test, and a carefully planned approach to test taking are every bit as important as knowing the correct answers.

All the way through school they gave us tests, but few teachers ever taught us "how" to take one. Your test taking skills may prove to be the difference between success and failure.

Why Should I Take the Test?

Before we go any further we need to determine why these tests are important to you. Here are some positive things to keep in mind as you prepare yourself:

- ASE certification tests are the only way to receive nationally recognized credentials.
- Many employers now require ASE certification as a condition of employment.
- Your ASE certification is something you will have earned through study and years of practical experience. It's your name on the certificate when all is said and done.

Some technicians bring a negative attitude to the tests. This can work against them to a point where negative feelings produce negative results. Some of this negative baggage needs to be thrown overboard to lighten a test taker's load. Do you recognize any of these?

- Conflicts with your employer (who stands to benefit by having certified techs).
- Questions about the personal benefits of certification.
- A fear of failure.
- A common hatred of test taking.

Try to put these aside during the test. A positive attitude can mean the difference between success and failure.

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The Importance of Sample Questions

After registering and receiving your Preparation Guide from ASE, glance through the sample questions. Try to do this in a quiet setting, when your energy level is high, and your mind is clear. The sample questions are more important than you might think. If you can answer most or all of the sample test questions successfully, it'll give your confidence a huge boost.

Do not read the sample questions during the work day when your mind is crammed with the distractions of the moment. You'll miss more of the sample questions, kick your confidence in the stomach, and start to have doubts about your chances for success.

This can lead to "test taker's fright" and "my mind's gone blank" syndromes during the real test.

It may sound corny, but this is the time when you want to develop a positive attitude toward the test.

Studying for the Test

Depending on how many of the tests you're going to take, evaluate your own strengths and weaknesses. We all have certain jobs we prefer in the shop, and generally speaking, we prefer them because we're good at performing them. The jobs we like least are often the jobs we understand the least.

So if you plan to spend time studying, concentrate your study efforts in areas where you're weak. Talk to a fellow technician whose specialty is your weakness. If you supplement your studies with technical reference manuals or other written study aids, try to spread your study sessions over several evenings, a week or so before the tests.

Don't try to cram all night long the night before the exams in an effort to learn everything there is about auto repair. This can overload your brain and fatigue will work against you.

The best thing to do the night before the test is to eat a balanced meal, relax, and get a good night's sleep. Jay Leno will give you a night off for a good cause.

Oh, and make sure you know the exact location of the test site. If you get lost on your way to an unfamiliar location, and end up racing through the door at the last minute, your mind won't be clear.

Actually Taking the Test

Here are some suggestions to keep in mind when you actually sit down to take the tests.

1) The ASE tests are multiple choice tests. The one thing you should remember above all else is that the correct answer is in front of you in one of the multiple choice selections. Keep thinking, "The answer is right here. All I need to do is choose the best answer offered in the selections."

If you think you have a better answer than any of the possible choices, forget about it—immediately. Don't fret about what you think the answer should be.

No points are awarded for second guessing.

2) Read the words, all the words, and nothing but the words in each question. Don't read anything into the words. Don't read between the lines. Don't rush to get through the question. Remember this, in many cases the wording of the question will clue you about the correct answer.

Use the clues to your advantage. No points are awarded for speed reading.

3) Don't look at the test questions in an attempt to find something "tricky" in their content. The purpose of the questions is not to trip you up on some fine line of meaning or interpretation.

No points are issued for uncovering devious plots.

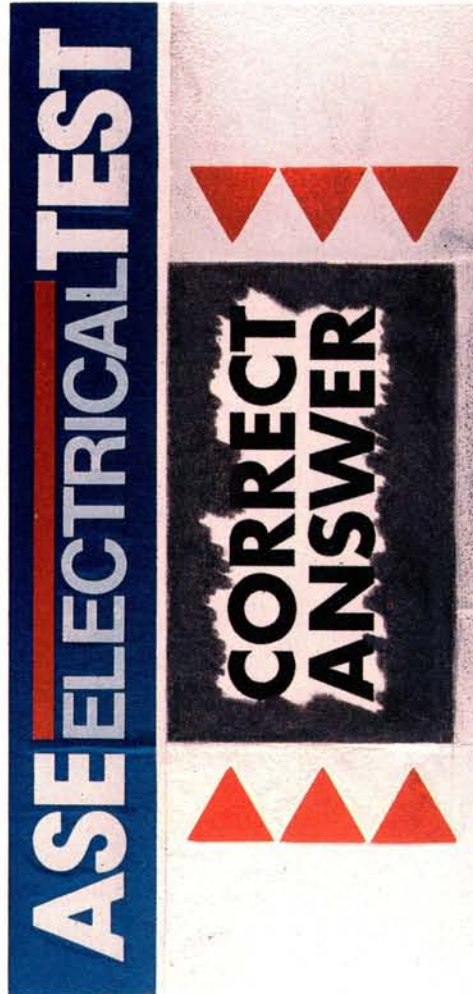
4) Go through the test questions in numerical order, answering the ones that come most easily to you.

Answering the questions you find to be easy will give you positive feedback in a hurry, and build your confidence. A string of rapid successes will help to get you past any initial nervousness you experience.

Points are awarded for correct answers, easy or hard. Pick the fruit closest to the ground.

5) If a question gives you a hard time, skip over it. Don't forget to skip a line on the answer sheet at the same time. If you skip question number 10 in the question booklet, also skip it on the answer sheet, or you'll be entering your answers on the wrong lines.

Remember, you want to get as many correct answers as possible. Wasting time on a question you may get wrong anyhow, keeps you from answering the "easy" ones in a hurry.



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Here's another thing to consider. Have you ever tried to think of a person's name and drawn a blank? It might be the name of an old acquaintance, or the name of a famous actor in a trivia game. You try and you try, but you can't remember. This, even though it's on the "tip of your tongue."

Then, 20 minutes later, after you've given up trying to remember the name, it pops into your head unexpectedly. Apparently your mind was searching your brain's data banks on its own.

Let your subconscious work on digging out the correct answer while you move on to the next question.

6) After you've completed all the easy questions, go back to the ones you skipped. Resist the temptation to start changing your choices on the questions you've already answered. Once in a while, you may notice that you misread a question to begin with. But statistics say that your first response is usually the best response.

How you treat the "hard" questions is very important. A combination of common sense and calculated risk taking can improve your odds for success.

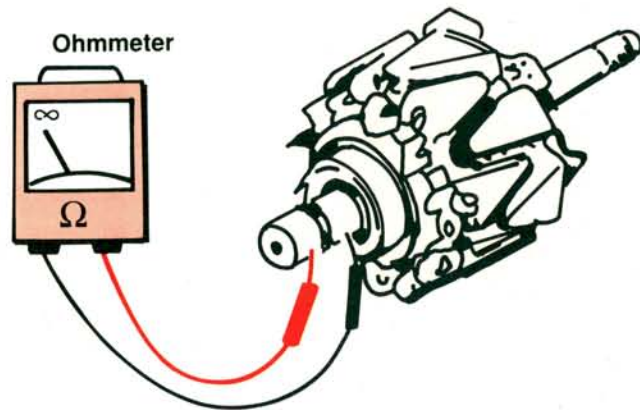
Let's look at some sample questions and show you how to work your way through the various types of questions used in the test.

Types of Questions Asked

There are several general types of questions asked in the tests. Here are samples from the ASE preparation guide. The first type is the simplest one.

Pick One

You are asked to select one of the choices as the correct answer.



The ohmmeter reading in the setup shown above indicates that the rotor winding is:

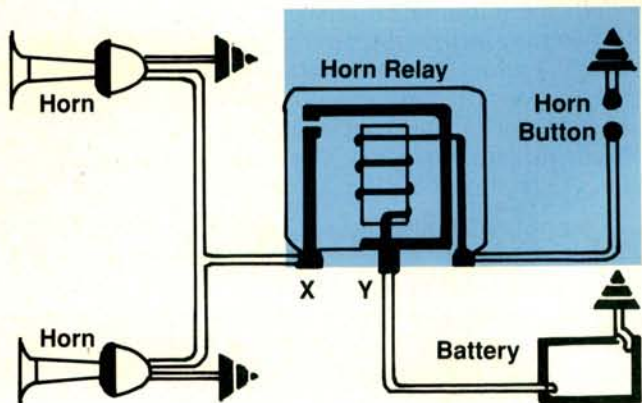
- 1) shorted
- 2) grounded
- 3) complete
- 4) open

This question asks you to select only one possible correct answer. Since the needle on the ohmmeter points to the infinity symbol, answer (4) is the only possible choice.

Pick Two

These questions have prompted some shop jokes over the years because of their format. They are the old Technician A and Technician B questions.

Here's a sample:



The horns in the circuit shown above only blow when a jumper wire is connected between terminals X and Y of the horn relay. Technician A says that a bad horn relay could be the cause. Technician B says that

a ground in the circuit between the horn relay and the horn button could be the cause. Who is right?

- (A) A only
(B) B only
(C) Both A and B
(D) Neither A nor B

Don't let the A and B thing distract you. Concentrate instead on the diagram and how it relates to the problem. Then think about how you would normally tackle this problem.

- You know that jumpering terminals X and Y will connect the horns directly to the battery. (Go ahead, draw your own jumper wire on the diaphragm if it helps you visualize what's going on.) If your jumper wire causes the horns to blow, the problem lies in the area we've highlighted in blue. That includes the horn relay. So technician A is correct. It could be a bad relay.
- The little ground symbol in the upper right tells us that the circuit is switched to ground to activate the relay. If ground is applied to the relay, (through the switch in the horn button), it should activate the relay and blow the horns. But technician B says that a constant ground is causing the no-blow condition. If the relay IS good, then a constant ground will make the horns blow all the time.

Looks like (A) is the answer.

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“Except” Questions

This is the third format. You’re asked to select the one item which would NOT cause the problem.

All of these could cause high starter current EXCEPT:

- (A) Worn starter bushings
- (B) A bad starter relay
- (C) Grounded field coils
- (D) A grounded armature

We need to eliminate three items from this list which could cause high starter current. Whatever remains is the correct answer. Take your pencil and cross off each item as you choose it. That will save you the time of re-reading every selection to remember which ones you’ve chosen.

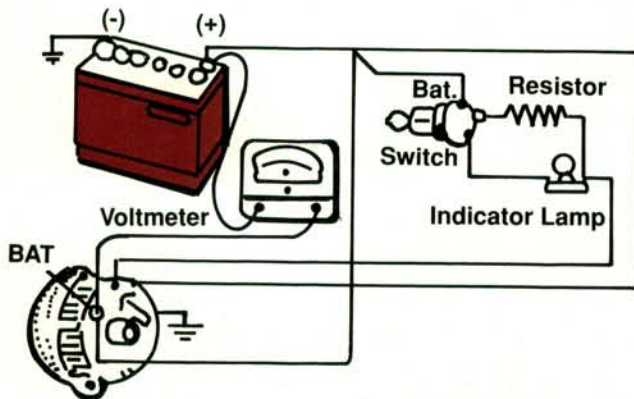
So what causes high current draw? Mechanical resistance and a short to ground are the most likely causes. The worn starter bushings can cause a high mechanical resistance and a short to ground when fields and armatures start coming in contact with one another.

Shorts to ground in either the armature or field coils are also probable causes of high current draw. Now that we’ve crossed off letters A, C, and D, the bad starter relay (selection B) becomes the least likely cause—and the most likely answer to this question.

Select the “Best” Answer

Earlier we mentioned that you might disagree with an answer on the test. Or you might feel that the “best” answer is not even offered. In cases like this you’ll be forced to choose the best answer from the choices you are offered.

Here’s an example.



In the charging system shown above, the meter reading will show:

- (A) Charging output voltage
- (B) Indicator lamp applied voltage
- (C) Charging system voltage drop
- (D) Ignition switch voltage drop

For either (A) or (B) to be considered correct (normal voltage tests), the meter negative lead would need to be connected to the battery negative post. That eliminates both (A) and (B).

The meter leads are connected between the positive battery post and the BAT terminal of the alternator. Looks like a voltage drop test, and since the charging circuit, not the ignition switch is being tested, selection (C) should be your choice.

You may be tempted to disagree with the wording of the (C) selection, since we are not testing the entire charging circuit, just the voltage drop between the battery positive terminal and the alternator BAT terminal. But it’s clear that (C) is the choice that will earn you points.

Our point? Don’t fight with the tests. They are not perfect. Look for the best choice from the options you’re given and move on.

You can always write a letter of suggestion after your certificate comes in the mail.

Good luck to you all.

—By Vince Fischelli