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CRBC Online Skills Exam - FAQs

General

What is online skills testing?
Online testing means that candidates will take the skills exam using the advanced technologies of Realtime Coach and ProctorU. Candidates will test in the convenience of their home, office, or other secure location. (Please review the Technical area below for equipment requirements). The exam will be administered via the Realtime Coach platform and monitored by a live, professional, online proctor using pre-recorded dictation.

What does the online skills exam consist of?
The online skills exam includes four-voice dictation from an actual court or deposition transcript, at 200 words per minute for 13 minutes. Only the last 10 minutes will be transcribed. The material will be dictated live and video recorded. 97.5% accuracy is required to pass.

How are the exams graded?
At the end of your exam, you will copy and paste your final transcript into the RTC "My Transcript" box. Your final transcript will then be reviewed by a qualified human grader. Any exam that is within 20 errors of passing is looked at by an additional grader. Exam results will be mailed from the Court Reporters Board of California (CRBC) within four to six weeks at the end of the testing window. Per board policy that was amended in November 2020, notification is pass/fail only. Actual scores are unavailable.

Skills Exam Grading Policies can be found here.
Skills Exam Punctuation Guidelines can be found here.

NOTE: It is very important to annotate who is speaking in your transcript. Some individuals are missing proper speaker identification after colloquy and are being charged 5 points for omitted speaker.

Are reference materials allowed?
A printed English dictionary may be used during the transcription portion of the exam.

NOTE: If there is any concern or confusion regarding spelling, hyphenation, or one-word/two-word designation, Merriam Webster's most current "Collegiate" dictionary will be considered the definitive and deciding reference. The CRBC is currently using the 11th edition as reference to grade the examination.

Candidates are also allowed printed CRBC skills exam instructions and two pieces of scratch paper.

How do I apply?
The examination application and fee must be submitted directly to the CRBC.
- The CSR exam eligibility requirements can be found [here](#).
- The first-time application can be submitted online [here](#).
- The re-examination application can be submitted online [here](#).

What are the examination fees?
There is a $40.00 application fee that is payable once per three-year cycle. In addition, there is a $25.00 examination fee per exam.

How long do I have to transcribe my exam?
Candidates will have two hours and 30 minutes to complete and submit their final transcripts. No breaks will be allowed, including smoking or restroom breaks.

NOTE: Final exam and notes must be converted to PDF before uploading into RTC.

Exam scheduling

When can I schedule my exam after I apply?
After the CRBC receives and processes all examination applications, a confirmation email will be sent to the candidates from Realtime Coach (customercare@learnrealtime.com) with scheduling information for your skills exam. Candidates should schedule their exam upon receipt of their confirmation email to secure their preferred test date and time during the exam testing window.

NOTE: All exams must be scheduled 72 hours in advance (based on proctor availability).

How do I schedule my exam?
Once you receive your confirmation email follow the instructions in the email to schedule your exam online through ProctorU during the designated testing window dates. Remember, all exams must be scheduled 72 hours in advance and during the testing window.

Can I extend my exam fee from one testing window to the next?
If, after an application has been submitted to the Board, an applicant finds that he or she is unable to appear for the exam, the Board must be notified immediately. An eligible applicant who fails to appear for the assigned examination subject shall forfeit his or her fee.

Can I cancel an exam?
In cases where an applicant must cancel, the CRBC can elect to hold the fee over for one exam only, if written request is mailed to the Board within 10 days of the exam testing window. There will be no refunds issued. There are no exceptions.

Practice exams
Is there any way to practice the online testing procedure before taking my real exam? Yes, and practicing is strongly encouraged! (*Make sure to listen to ALL 15 minutes of the practice file to ensure it doesn't pause/skip due to buffering.)*

The exam fee will include one practice dictation. The practice dictation is not intended for speed-building purposes, but rather as a means to become comfortable with the online testing process. Candidates may repeat the one practice dictation unlimited times in order to familiarize themselves with the process.

Once familiar with the process, it is recommended that candidates schedule a proctored practice exam. The exam fee will include two free proctored practice exams.

Security

How can CRBC be sure that candidates will not share content?
Testing information is confidential. By registering to take an online exam, the candidate agrees that the subject and words of the exam will not be disclosed to anyone. Exam subversion of any type is a misdemeanor pursuant to Business and Professions Code section 123. The candidate will sign an affidavit agreeing not to save the file in any format or location, nor share the content in any manner. Candidates that share the exam or notes with anyone outside of the CRBC or RTC may be subject to criminal prosecution and/or prohibition of taking future exams.

ProctorU's proctors are connected to candidates in realtime, with live audio and video connections. Additionally, proctors view a live feed of the candidate's monitor through screen-sharing technology. After authenticating their identity, candidates must show (using an external webcam) that their workspace is secure by giving a 360-degree pan of the entire room and desk or workspace.

ProctorU uses multiple levels of recording and reporting, including full session video and audio, and screen capturing. ProctorU's screen-sharing software provides the proctor with a list of current running processes. Proctors are able to remotely disable or close unauthorized software on the test-taker's computer. Additionally, ProctorU will require you to remove secondary monitors and will disable unnecessary software.

How will ProctorU know the correct person is taking the exam?
ProctorU has a layered authentication process that establishes the candidate's identity:
Via a webcam, a live proctor sees the user, checks their photo ID and takes their photo to keep on file. (Please note that if the webcam is moved after its location is approved by the proctor, the proctor will interrupt the session due to security concerns, and the exam will be terminated.)
Using techniques based on industry-leading fraud protection and banking standards, the user answers challenge questions to validate their identity.
Sophisticated keystroke analysis software creates a profile for each user.

Technical

What equipment/technical requirements do I need?
Please read: [How to take an Online Skills Exam with Realtime Coach and ProctorU](#) (**CRITICAL**!)
The above link contains detailed instructions on the three mandatory uploads that must be performed in order to complete your exam:
- Upload your notes file in PDF format (four minutes)
- Upload your transcript in PDF format
- Copy and paste your transcript into the Transcript area

Candidates will be allowed to print one rough draft for proofreading purposes. The printer must be hard-wired to the candidate's computer. The proctor must see the candidate shred the rough draft before completion of the exam.

PLEASE NOTE: Because the 15-minute dictation file is LARGE, it is imperative to ensure you have adequate bandwidth so you don't run into problems with buffering.

Realtime Coach offers videos on testing in their system: [Realtime Coach Tips/Tutorials](#)

Software

The only software permitted to be open on the candidate's computer will be:
- CAT software
- Dragon software
- Realtime Coach site
- Express Scribe software
- Audio Conversion Software (e.g. Audacity)
- Dictionary (loaded on hard drive, not online)

The most current edition of Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary will be allowed either in hard copy or as a pre-loaded program on the candidate's computer. No access to online dictionary sites will be permitted. No free-standing electronic spell-checkers will be permitted.

Note: The proctors are not trained or allowed to help you with your CAT software.

You MUST know how to do the following processes before testing:
- How to place your writer in test mode (if available)
- How to connect your writer to your CAT software (for realtime) or how to read your steno notes into your CAT software (non-realtime)
- How to edit a transcript in your CAT software
- Where to locate your files on your computer
- How to distinguish the various parts of the file from one another, such as a note file versus a transcript file
- How to mark and copy a portion of text in your CAT software

CRBC strongly recommends that you take your first online exam Monday through Friday, between 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. Eastern Time, so that there is access to Realtime Coach's technical support team that is standing by.

Click [Realtime Coach Technical Support](#) and bookmark the site to quickly reach Realtime Coach's technical support in the future or to ask them a technical question that is not covered in the critical link above.

ProctorU recommends scheduling your exam in advance and outside of their busiest period, which is 4 p.m. - 8 p.m. Eastern Time. Always allow yourself ample time in case there are delays in getting a proctor or there are technical issues that must be addressed prior to taking your exam.

What if I am unable to complete my exam due to a poor internet connection?

The likelihood of this happening is slim if you have tested your bandwidth before logging in to take the exam. The recommendations set forth by ProctorU and Realtime Coach (such as not using a wireless internet connection, shutting down all unnecessary programs running on your computer, using their suggested browsers, and taking advantage of the free proctored practice) will also help you avoid this scenario.

If internet failure does occur, the proctor will initially investigate the issue. If the failure is within the first five minutes of the exam, an automatic exam reload will occur. If the failure is more than five minutes into the exam, the exam will end, and the proctor will file an incident report with the Board. The executive officer will review the incident report on a case-by-case basis to make a determination whether to allow retesting within the same exam cycle and if additional fees will be waived.

What type of location/environment do I need?

You need a quiet location that meets the mandatory technical requirements. Place a sign on the door/entrance stating that you are taking an exam and cannot be disturbed. Other things to consider: turn off all phones; if you are sharing an internet connection with other members of your household, ask them not to play video games or stream movies; and remove all distractions that may make noise (animals, etc.) prior to putting on your headphones to take the exam. For security reasons, do not speak during your exam or the proctor will terminate the session. Pick the best location that is conducive to a secure, quiet testing environment. Read through the candidate instructions to make sure you meet the criteria such as a cleared desk with only one monitor and keyboard or a laptop. If your exam is interrupted for any reason that is beyond ProctorU and Realtime Coach's control, it will be considered a breach of security and will result in a failed test.

What is the role of the proctor?

RTC partners with ProctorU to enable you to test online in the comfort of your own home, office, or whatever location you choose. ProctorU works with a large population of certification & training organizations, higher education and other integrated partners including: LexisNexis, Paralegal Institute, National Association Boards of Pharmacy, UNC at Chapel Hill, New York Law School, and many more (visit proctoru.com for a complete client list). They have thousands of proctors at proctoring centers across the country.

Proctors are provided with overall general guidelines for proctoring our testing candidates. They are not trained on steno machines or the operation of steno machines. Their role in your testing experience is to ensure that you are following CRBC's testing rules and are not receiving any assistance during the testing process to produce your exam transcript.

If you violate any of CRBC's testing rules such as removing your headphones, moving the camera, speaking during the exam (unless answering a proctor), leaving the room, moving outside of the camera's range, or someone walks into the room, the proctor will create an incident report and your exam will result in an automatic failure.

What is CRBC's security policy?

All online testing candidates are required to acknowledge the following prior to taking their exam:

Business & Professions Code, Section 123: "It is a misdemeanor for any person to engage in any conduct which subverts or attempts to subvert any licensing examination or the administration of an examination, including, but not limited to:

(a) Conduct which violates the security of the examination materials; removing from the examination room any examination materials without authorization; the unauthorized reproduction by any means of any portion of the actual licensing examination; aiding by any means the unauthorized reproduction of any portion of the actual licensing examination; paying or using professional or paid examination-takers for the purpose of reconstructing any portion of the licensing examination; obtaining examination questions or other examination material, except by specific authorization either before, during, or after an examination; or using or purporting to use any examination questions or materials which were improperly removed or taken from any examination for the purpose of instructing or preparing any applicant for examination; or selling, distributing, buying, receiving, or having unauthorized possession of any portion of a future, current, or previously administered licensing examination.

(b) Communicating with any other examinee during the administration of a licensing examination; copying answers from another examinee or permitting one's answers to be copied by another examinee; having in one's possession during the administration of the licensing examination any books, equipment, notes, written or printed materials, or data of any kind, other than the examination materials distributed, or otherwise authorized to be in one's possession during the examination; or impersonating any examinee or having an impersonator take the licensing examination on one's behalf. Nothing in this section shall preclude prosecution under the authority provided for in any other provision of law. In addition to any other penalties, a person found guilty of violating this section, shall be liable for the actual damages sustained by the agency administering the examination not to exceed ten thousand dollars ($10,000) and the costs of litigation.

(c) If any provision of this section or the application thereof to any person or circumstances is held invalid, that invalidity shall not affect other provisions or applications of the section that can be given effect without the invalid provision or application, and to this end the provisions of this section are severable."

I have read the above statements and understand the law regarding misuse of confidential material. I accept the responsibility for maintaining strict confidentiality of licensing examination material and information to which I have access and agree to keep these materials confidential.