

THE LEARNING CENTRE FOR SKILLED TRADES

Ontario Hairstyling Exam Prep

Study Guide



Exam Overview

The Ontario Hairstyling exam evaluates the knowledge and skills required to work safely and competently as a licensed hairstylist. The exam consists of approximately 120 multiple choice questions, and a mark of 70% or higher is required to pass.

Exam Format	Details
Question Type	Multiple choice
Number of Questions	Approximately 120
Passing Grade	70%
Sections Covered	9 sections (see below)

Exam Sections

Questions are drawn from the following nine areas. Use this guide to review each area, then reinforce your learning with the official practice questions linked at the end of this guide.

- Common Occupational Skills
- Hair & Scalp Care
- Cutting Hair
- Styling Hair
- Chemically Waving Hair
- Chemically Relaxing Hair
- Colouring Hair
- Specialized Services
- Business Operations

1. Common Occupational Skills

Professionalism, safety, and the foundational knowledge every hairstylist applies across all services.

Key Study Topics

- Provincial health, safety, and sanitation regulations (Ontario Regulation 136/18 and infection prevention and control standards)
- Cleaning, disinfecting, and sterilizing tools, equipment, and workstations
- Client consultation, record-keeping, and communication

- Anatomy and physiology relevant to hairstyling (skin, hair, bones and muscles of the head and neck)
 - Workplace safety, WHMIS, and proper posture/ergonomics
 - Professional ethics and salon etiquette
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2. Hair & Scalp Care

Analysis and treatment of the hair and scalp prior to any chemical or mechanical service.

Key Study Topics

- Hair and scalp analysis (texture, porosity, elasticity, density, growth patterns)
 - Identifying scalp and hair conditions, including contraindications for service
 - Shampooing, conditioning, and scalp treatment techniques
 - Selecting products appropriate to hair type and condition
 - Draping and client positioning for comfort and protection
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3. Cutting Hair

Precision cutting theory and technique across a range of tools and hair types.

Key Study Topics

- Sectioning, elevation, and cutting angles
 - Cutting techniques: blunt, layered, graduated, and texturizing
 - Tool selection: shears, clippers, razors, thinning shears
 - Head shape, facial features, and growth pattern analysis for design
 - Safety practices specific to cutting tools
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4. Styling Hair

Wet and dry styling techniques to achieve a finished look.

Key Study Topics

- Blow-drying and thermal styling (curling irons, flat irons)
- Wet setting techniques (rollers, pin curls, finger waves)
- Updos, braiding, and long-hair design
- Use of styling products and heat-protection principles
- Finishing techniques and texture control

5. Chemically Waving Hair

Principles and procedures of permanent waving.

Key Study Topics

- Chemistry of permanent waving solutions and neutralizers
 - Rod selection, wrapping patterns, and processing
 - Pre-service analysis and strand testing
 - Timing, processing checks, and safety precautions
 - Aftercare and troubleshooting common problems
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6. Chemically Relaxing Hair

Principles and procedures of chemical hair relaxing and texture services.

Key Study Topics

- Types of relaxers and their chemistry (e.g., sodium hydroxide vs. thio-based)
 - Scalp protection and pre-service analysis
 - Application technique, timing, and processing checks
 - Neutralization and post-service care
 - Safety precautions and contraindications
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7. Colouring Hair

Colour theory and application across temporary, semi-permanent, and permanent services.

Key Study Topics

- Colour theory: the colour wheel, levels, and tone
 - Types of colour products and developers
 - Application techniques: full colour, foiling, balayage, corrective colour
 - Strand and patch testing procedures
 - Formulating for grey coverage and colour correction
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8. Specialized Services

Additional services that extend beyond core cutting, colour, and chemical work.

Key Study Topics

- Hair extensions and hairpiece application
 - Basic wig and hairpiece care
 - Facial hair services (where applicable to scope of practice)
 - Scalp and hair treatments for specialized conditions
 - Emerging service trends and product innovations
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9. Business Operations

The business side of working in or operating a salon.

Key Study Topics

- Client retention, rebooking, and retail sales
- Salon pricing, inventory, and cost management
- Employment standards and regulatory requirements in Ontario
- Booking systems and time management
- Marketing and building a professional client base

Study Strategies

Build a study schedule

- Break the 9 sections into a weekly plan rather than cramming — spread review across several weeks.
- Spend extra time on sections that carry hands-on technical detail: Cutting, Chemically Waving, Chemically Relaxing, and Colouring.

Practice active recall

- Use flashcards for terminology (chemistry terms, tool names, anatomy).
- Test yourself without notes, then check your answers — recognition is not the same as recall.
- Explain a topic out loud as if teaching it; gaps in your explanation reveal gaps in your understanding.

Use the official practice questions

- Complete the 20 practice questions from the Red Seal website (link below) under timed, quiet conditions.
- Review every question you got wrong and identify which of the 9 sections it belongs to.

On exam day

- Read each question fully before looking at the answer choices.
- Eliminate clearly incorrect options first, then choose the best remaining answer.

- Flag uncertain questions and return to them after completing the rest of the exam.
 - Manage your time: with 120 questions, aim for a steady pace and leave time to review flagged items.
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Practice Questions

20 official practice questions are available from the Red Seal program:

<https://red-seal.ca/eng/questions.shtml?tid=98>

Questions About This Exam Prep Course?

Contact Michelle Herbert for more information about our exam prep course:

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