

Words of Inspiration:

My words are for those that are thinking they don't have enough background to take this exam and pass. I took the exam for the first time in April 2008 and passed. My job only requires that I have a theoretical knowledge of importing as my company out-sources this activity. For some reason I decided I needed to take this exam and I am sure glad I did. It has been a journey.

Going into the exam I felt like the underdog. I wasn't working for a freight forwarder and I barely even understood the acronyms they were using. I had to constantly flip back and forth. I started studying for the exam in January. I used a study plan of 2-3 chapters a week. I either came in two hours before work or stayed two hours after to study and studied only one day on the weekend to give myself a break and spend time with my family. It was a real sacrifice for my husband to take on more responsibility with my 3 year old and my life was on hold basically for 3 months.

In February, after I had really started second-guessing my ability to succeed, I found out that after 2 years of trying to get pregnant I finally was! It was great joy! However, I was distracted and then became extremely sick. This severely derailed my studying. I could barely get myself out of the bathroom much less drag myself to work and then study. I was thinking I wasn't taking this test.....but then again, I don't quit.

After taking a few weeks off, I got back into it. I had to increase the number of chapters because I was behind. I still managed to get the chapter review questions done and the previous test questions done after every chapter. This is EXTREMELY IMPORTANT. While doing those questions I made sure not to use my textbook, but the CFR. I then highlighted where I found the answer. This really worked for me. Of course, I tabbed as well...but not until later. Also, when you find out what you had wrong or weren't sure about your answer, look it up from the explanation that the on-line instructor sends and if you still don't understand...ASK! My poor on-line instructor had to argue back and forth with me many times.

Finally, by about mid March, I finally saw my doctor and he gave me a remedy for the morning sickness that included a B-6 vitamin. I honestly think it helped me focus and relax. Usually my own worst enemy is myself. Don't get overstressed about this test. Yes, it is tough, but know you can mitigate that by studying. It seems silly, but I would recommend that folks take Vitamin B before the test. Also, don't drink too much caffeine as it makes you unfocused and jittery.

I finished the last 8 chapters in the week before the class (thankfully they were shorter ones!). Going into the week long class, I had only gone through a handful of classification questions and had never taken a practice exam. Moreover, I didn't even know what a catalog rack was so I didn't know where to purchase one.

I got to the class and felt the least prepared. Most of the students had either taken it before, already worked for a freight forwarder, read each chapter twice, listened to the CD every day, classified till they couldn't think and I was the only one without a catalog rack. Thankfully, someone in the class had a spare and hooked me up with one after class was over and once I knew what it was! A catalog rack was best explained to me as the metal rack that holds an auto part catalog for those of you in the same boat as me. By the way, it may have made the difference so be sure to get one.

The week long class was invaluable. I was able to leave my job, my husband, my dirty house and my 3 year old and just focus on this test for 5 days right before the exam. Peter was invaluable and I realized I wasn't in as bad a shape as I thought. Moreover, classification was probably my strongest section. To me, it was easy. You get homework every night that really challenges you but I did better on my own than in the group. I needed to find the information on my own. I may be the only one to give this advice, but I would recommend studying alone. You can't take this exam in a group! However, class was so motivating. It was so great to be "in this" with so many smart and talented people. The last day of class you get this 1/2 exam that is so hard it made me think I would never pass the test. I ran out of time and it used every brain cell I had left. Nonetheless, I passed the mini-test and Peter finally divulged that it was the hardest questions he ever found on the exam compiled in one neat little torture test for us.

The exam was the very next Monday. I stayed at the hotel where the test was given and arrived an hour before and found out more than half the test takers beat me! The exam situation was good; I had plenty of room to take the test. I focused on time management and put times next to every 20 questions of where I should be and I stayed on target. Those questions I was unsure of I guessed and moved on while circling them in case I had time to go back. I ended up finishing with 20 minutes to spare and that was invaluable as I was able to go back

and look up some questions I was unsure of and that I think made the difference. There was an entire section on Trade Agreements that I couldn't have found answers for if they gave me the entire 4 hours. Don't dwell on these questions. Remember you can get 20 wrong and pass. I guessed on all 7 questions and ended up getting a few of them correct and didn't waste my time on looking up answers that would have been wrong anyway.

Be confident in what you know and don't dwell on what you don't. I left that exam feeling like a million bucks. Regardless whether or not I passed, I thought I did a great job. Moreover, don't talk to anyone on test day. There are a lot of over-achiever type stress cases taking this exam, don't let them ruin your confidence.

I ended up passing the test with a 76.25%. I have never been so proud of a 76% in my life! Good luck to all of you and if I could do it under all of these circumstances, you can too!