

Frequently Asked Questions about the VITA/TCE Test and Certification
For Tax Year 2010

(These apply to both the paper and to the online tests unless otherwise noted.)

1. **Question:** What are the features that will help those taking the test online?

Answer:

- There are **tabs** for each exam level instead of displaying them all on one page. Just click on the **Basic** tab to start the Basic exam. After the Basic exam, continue with your certification path. Students must pass Basic before proceeding to other exams.
- On the home page of the test on Link & Learn Taxes there is a Practice Test. The link is located at the top of the page. The purpose of the Practice Test is to help new users with online testing and navigation. You can download the scenarios and answer the questions online from the Practice Test. The results have no bearing on the student's certification and the Practice Test can be taken more than once.
- Another feature is a back button that will take you to the previous question so you can change answers.
- At the end of the test there are resource links and helpful explanations for incorrect test answers. These are excellent tools that will help foster learning.
- This is the third year for The Electronic Tax Software Practice Lab, web-based tax preparation software, which is available for completing test scenarios. Use the tutorial at "Getting Started" in the Practice Lab and the blue tabs in the Volunteer Resource Guide for tips on navigation.

2. **Question:** How do I take the VITA/TCE certification test online?

Answer: After accessing **Link & Learn Taxes** at www.irs.gov, you have two choices.

- We recommend you complete the courses for which you wish to be certified and then complete the applicable test(s) for certification.
- If you are an experienced volunteer you can select the returning student path and then take the applicable test(s) for certification.
- **You will need to complete the self registration for a login and password for the online test. Safeguard your login and password and keep it for future reference.** Even though you registered last year you **must** register again. You can use the same login and password as last year or make up a new one.
- Volunteers should contact their site coordinator or Instructor for access to the Practice Lab.

3. **Question:** On Link & Learn Taxes do I have to take the Basic and Intermediate courses before taking any of the other three courses?

Answer: The instructions for taking the **courses** online and the instructions for **certification** are different. An explanation is provided below. (See Question 4 for the exception for Puerto Rico.)



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Instructions for taking the **courses** online

On Link & Learn Taxes each course is **self-contained**. If you select the Basic tab it includes just the Basic course. If you select the Intermediate tab it includes Intermediate and Basic course lessons. If you select the Advanced tab it includes Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced lessons. The Military course includes Basic, Intermediate, and Military lessons, The International course includes Basic, Intermediate and International lessons.

Instructions for Certification online

For the certification (testing) - **you must pass the Basic test, next the Intermediate test, and then proceed forward with any of the other three tests; Advanced, Military or International.**

For example, after completing the Advanced course a person who chooses to be certified in Advanced must first achieve a minimum passing score of 80% on the Basic test, and then achieve a passing score of 80% on the Intermediate test to proceed to the Advanced test. In addition, a minimum score of 80% on the Advanced test is needed for the Advanced certification.

4. **Question:** What is the exception for Puerto Rico?

Answer: The Puerto Rico courses on Link & Learn are **not** self-contained. Students should complete the Basic course before completing the two levels in the Puerto Rico course. For certification: Students who want to be certified for the Puerto Rico courses must achieve a passing score on the Basic test before the student can proceed to the Level I Puerto Rico test. Next students can proceed to Level II Puerto Rico test. To complete certification for each level, the student needs to achieve a minimum score of 80% on each Puerto Rico exam.

5. **Question:** Can I use references to complete the test?

Answer: The test is an open book test. You can use forms, instructions and other reference material to take the test. You should complete the test on your own. It is a disservice to the taxpayers you assist if you gain assistance from others.

6. **Question:** How do I obtain certification on the new optional specialty modules on COD or HSAs?

Answer: Those individuals with Advanced, Military, or International certification should complete the HSAs or COD courses on Link and Learn Taxes, and then proceed to the COD or HSAs exams online. Volunteers should check with their site coordinator to determine if these certifications are needed at their site.



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7. **Question:** What tax year does the test use for answers to the questions?

Answer: For the paper test and the online test the answers will only be based on **2010** tax rates, deductions, and exemptions. It is very important that volunteers have the experience and become familiar with the tax year for the returns they will be preparing at VITA/TCE sites. There are links to draft **2010** tax forms, EIC and Tax tables, and Publication 4012, included in the online test. Draft **2010** tax forms are also included in the paper test/retest booklet.

6. **Question:** What if I do not pass a test on my first attempt?

Answer: On the paper test there is a test and retest. For the online test you are allowed a total of 2 attempts at certification for each test. For the online test the questions are randomized from the pool of questions from the paper test and retest. The result is a different test on each attempt.

7. **Question:** Are there tools to help me with certification online?

Answer: There is a Practice Test to help with navigation on the test home page. In addition there are remediation links available next to each question and explanations for wrong answers at the end of an online test. The remediation links refer back to the topic in Link & Learn Taxes.

8. **Question:** How much time does it take to complete the test?

Answer: The final time it takes for each certification test will depend on the person's training and experience. In general Basic takes approximately 45 minutes; Intermediate takes approximately 1 hour; Advanced 45 minutes; Military and International each take approximately 1.5 hours.

9. **Question:** What if I am unable to complete an online test in one session?

Answer: The online system will bookmark where you stop in an online test. When you log back into the online test it will show "in progress" for the test you were taking. Just click on that link to continue with the test.

10. **Question:** What if I need to change an answer on the online test?

Answer: In the online test there is the "back" button so you **can** change your answer to a question. At the end of the test there will be a message displaying your answers and any questions that have not been answered. You will need to complete all questions and then hit



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the submit key. Use the **HELP** link at the top of the screen which provides test tips that will avoid input errors.

11. **Question:** What documentation can I obtain if I certify through the online test with Link & Learn Taxes?

Answer: Once you successfully complete a test you can print a course certificate. You will need to load Adobe Acrobat Reader 7.0 or later on your computer.

14. **Question:** Is the Volunteer Agreement available in the online test?

Answer: Yes, the Volunteer Agreement is available. Once you successfully complete a test online you can print or save a copy of your Volunteer Agreement. There is a link on the test home page in the upper right hand corner of the screen. You will need to load Adobe Acrobat Reader 7.0 or later on your computer.

15. **Question:** Can volunteers choose to sign the Volunteer Agreement electronically on Link and Learn Taxes?

Answer: **Yes – This is a new feature this year.** This information is displayed on the certification reports in the last column that states: *The date the student signed the volunteer agreement.*

16. **Question:** What is the passing score for certification?

Answer: The passing score for the test for each course is 80%.

17. **Question:** Why is it important to use the updated Publication 4012, Volunteer Resource Guide for **Tax Year 2010**?

Answer: There are test questions that require you to research in Publication 4012, Volunteer Resource Guide for **Tax Year 2010**. The 2010 Publication 4012 is available in your training materials.

18. **Question:** What if I forget my password for the online test?

Answer: At the bottom of the online test login screen click the “forgot your password” function to reset your password. Be sure to enter your email address correctly during the registration process in order that you can receive e-mail notifications about your login or password.

