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Prepare for Your First MECP Exam

GETTING STARTED

As you consider taking your first MECP exam, purchasing a study guide has to be the first step. MECP study guides are intended to be aids for each MECP Installation Technician Exam. Detailed information is presented in an uncomplicated way, and important points are summarized through the use of bold type and margin notes. There are many features in these guides that will help you get the most out of your study efforts. The study guides are one of a series of tools that a test participant should use. As new technologies and vehicle installation challenges arise, the subject matter in the MECP Exams is updated to reflect those new technologies and challenges.

If you have been away from the learning mindset for a while, you may also find the material in these books to be an excellent resource for “connecting the dots” of information you have not yet put into perspective in regard to what it means to you and your job. Which guide should you choose? That depends on where you are in your career path or what level of experience you have.

WHICH EXAM TO CHOOSE FIRST?

The MECP Basic Installation Technician Exam is an apprentice level assessment of what basic topics you know in the installation of mobile electronics. It's got no experience prerequisite and you may consider this exam if you consider yourself in any one of these categories:

- If you have no professional hands-on installation experience
- If you are attending or planning to attend a pre-employment training program at one of the MECP Educator Partner schools
- If you have been away from the testing process for a while and want to get a comfortable start in the MECP certification process at an exam level with which you feel more confident

The MECP Basic Installation Technician Exam is a stepping stone to the next level of MECP Installation Technician certification, the MECP Advanced Installation Technician. MECP requires a minimum of one year of hands-on experience to take the Advanced Installation Technician Exam, but it's not necessary to have taken an MECP Basic certification. This is ideal if you are and installation professional who considers yourself in any one of these categories

- You already have at least one year of professional hands-on work experience under your belt and you can document this through the [Verification of Experience](#) form (click link to download)
- You have already taken a Basic level exam and feel confident about your prospects for the Advanced level and meet the experience prerequisite
- You are interested in taking the MECP Master Installation Technician exam at some point and understand that the MECP Advanced level is one of the prerequisites
- Rather than renewing a Basic Installation Technician for another two years, you wish to move to the Advanced level which is valid for four years

Using the Margin Notes of Study Guides

These are key points taken from the text that emphasize material contained in the Installation Technician exams. You are encouraged to read the related material carefully and add your own study notes in the wide margins provided on each page.

Understanding the Illustrations in the Study Guides

Illustrations are carefully planned to reinforce concepts introduced in the text. Where necessary, specific details such as measured values or electrical references are also included in the diagrams.

When Bold Type Appears in the Study Guides

Important terms in the text are defined and printed in **bold**. Many of these terms relate to test questions, and you should have a clear understanding of each.

Glossary of Terms

A robust glossary of important terms is included at the end of each Installation Technician Study Guide. Both hands-on experience and the study guide will be your basic source of information needed to pass the exams. None of the *MECP Installation Technician Study Guides* were written to be the definitive source concerning every possible mobile electronics installation. The information in each guide has been compiled to give you more than enough material to assist you in understanding the finer details of topics with which you may already be somewhat familiar and help increase your daily working knowledge of the field. Every attempt has been made to document correct and up-to-date information about installation related topics and basic applied electronics. The language used in the guides is intended for mobile electronic installation technicians and may not describe an application from an “absolute textbook” electronics or physics application. However, the terminology is used throughout the mobile electronics industry.

MAKING THE MOST OF THE STUDY GUIDES

First and foremost, the *MECP Installation Technician Study Guides* are *not* “How To” guides. These publications are written specifically for installation professionals who wish to become MECP Certified Installation Technicians in the field of mobile electronics.

Here’s how *you* can make the most of this information:

- Take notes. Write in the margins (that’s why they’re there).
- Lean on your experience, but do not assume any bad habits or shortcuts you may have picked up are going to be acceptable as the “industry standard” of knowledge.
- Study additional sources of information to round out your knowledge.
- This is not meant to be the definitive source for installation instructions; refer to the appropriate manufacturer’s publications for actual installation information.

WHAT IS AN MECP CERTIFIED INSTALLATION TECHNICIAN?

MECP stands for **Mobile Electronics Certified Professionals**. It was designed and developed by the Mobile Electronics Division MECP Committee of the Consumer Electronics Association, (CEA®).

The purpose of this certification program is to foster a level of professionalism and to achieve a level of knowledge for all industry professionals. MECP is also a learning and educational tool that allows installers of all levels – through continued study and daily experience – to grow to the next level of expertise. An MECP Basic Installation Technician represents someone who demonstrates an entry level commitment of the basic knowledge required to get started on the job. Why stop there? MECP encourages all installation technicians to always consider the highest MECP installer levels, the Advanced and Master Installer certifications. Advanced and Master Installers should be the ambassadors to others interested in bettering themselves in the trade.

MECP is a network of schools, manufacturers, retailers, installers and concerned industry professionals from the U.S. and Canada whose primary goal is to help make this industry

educationally sound with ongoing testing and training. MECP Installation Technicians play an important role in that goal.

WHY CERTIFICATION IS ESSENTIAL: CUSTOMER PERCEPTIONS

When a customer makes a commitment to upgrade their car audio, security, navigation or wireless communications system, they're looking to *your* expertise to provide them with the professionalism and service that accompanies their purchase decision and to see that it's all installed and integrated properly.

Today's customers are more demanding than ever before. They expect your product knowledge to be current and your installation skills to be highly professional. Accordingly, you will need to keep pace with the latest technologies to ensure the final product lives up to your customer's expectations. An MECP Certified Installer is someone who is concerned about quality and function behind the panels as well as what is seen by the customer.

In the automotive industry, there's a statistic – a happy, satisfied customer tells 5 friends about their positive experience; but an unhappy, dissatisfied customer tells 15 - 20 people about their negative experience. Just a couple of dissatisfied customers can quickly wipe out the good reputation of a company. It is often the case that having an MECP Certified Installer on staff can help to avoid situations where substandard installation practices take place because the Certified Installer knows better.

The difference between a well prepared, experienced installation professional and the fly-by-night installer lacking experience may not be outwardly obvious to a customer. Having an industry recognized certification in your field validates your professionalism right off the bat. Having an MECP certification will surely differentiate you from the competition. It is a status that less than one-third of all working installers challenge themselves to achieve. While many new to the business stop when they achieve an MECP Basic Installer Certification, it is very important that you **continue to learn** new information and **challenge your knowledge** so that you are prepared for situations that happen today and, through the growth of technology, that will happen in the future.

Remember that you are in the entertainment business. People do not have to buy what we sell and install. It's important to make sure the customer's purchase is more entertaining, more productive or is easier to use than what they had before. That means they are getting a good entertainment value for their consumer electronics dollar. That's just common sense, but a certified professional makes a commitment to offer this value proposition to EVERY customer. The MECP Certified Installer is valued by his/her experience and professionalism that customers can't simply find just anywhere and it's why these individuals typically enjoy higher than average incomes, job security and eventually move on to leadership positions.

BOTTOM LINE BENEFITS

The MECP Certification has its benefits:

- Demonstrates your commitment, dedication and professionalism.
- Qualifies people within their profession.
- Qualifies the people who do the work.
- Demonstrates an *"I care"* attitude.
- Reinforces the quality and integrity of your operation.
- Challenges you to keep pace with the needs of the industry.
- Rewards you with the respect of customers and employers who seek a professional.
- Places you in the company of an elite few once you achieve Advanced and Master status.
- With many employers, MECP certification often qualifies you for advancement in the company and increase pay incentives.

THE MECP EXAMS AND HOW THEY ARE WRITTEN

The MECP Basic Installation Technician exam and the Mobile Product Specialist exams have 150 multiple-choice questions. The MECP Advanced and Master Installation Technician exams have 200 questions. You will have three hours to take any of these exams.

The exam questions were written and developed by a committee of Honorary MECP Master Installation Technicians and other industry experts who are regarded (through 3rd party verification) as "Subject Matter Experts." The questions are designed to test your daily working knowledge of mobile electronics installations and your understanding of hands-on applications at each level of certification commensurate with the experience prerequisite.

- Most questions are multiple choice; however there are some "True or False" questions.
- Multiple choice questions have four possible answers. Only one answer is correct in every question.
- There are no "trick questions" or "hidden meanings" in the questions. Read and answer the question exactly as it is written.
- MECP exam questions follow psychometric guidelines so there are no "none of the above" or "all of the above" type answers, or other confusing methods. The questions are direct and intended to test your knowledge on the subject, not how well you can take a test.

There are now two distinct ways in which MECP computer based testing is administered. This has been done to open it up to a wider variety of test participants so the hours you work or your geographical location is less of a burden for scheduling and taking the test. Whatever type of testing you participate in, MECP has committed to uphold the highest standards of both the test participant session AND the supervised proctoring that ensures the validity of the test so that everyone has the same challenge for a passing achievement.

- **Computer based testing at a Testing Center** administered at an authorized third party testing center. There are over 1000 locations in the US where this computer based testing can take place and you can locate a testing center or schedule the test by visiting www.mecp.com. This is the most convenient and individually flexible testing method because it's based on your schedule and time of preparation. You can take the test whenever you wish (and whenever the test center can schedule your appointment). It's the way most installation technicians and sales people now take their MECP exams.
- **Computer based testing using an MECP approved proctor** administered and supervised by an MECP approved proctor and accessible **ONLY** by an MECP issued voucher. This testing option is **not available to the general public**. It is just like computer based testing only it is done at an off-site, pre approved location for organizations like schools, government, or other institutions where an authorized proctor administers the test to groups larger than most authorized testing centers could accommodate. When MECP does testing on a computer at large industry events like CES, this is an example of supervised MECP proctor testing. Many industry sales reps and regional distributors can also administer MECP exams as an authorized proctor. Please be aware that this type of testing is NOT sitting down in front of your computer at home and taking the test "online" without supervision or proctoring.
- **Written tests are no longer offered for MECP exams as of January 2006.**

PREPARING FOR THE EXAM

Some people get “test anxiety” and while they know all of the answers, they *freeze up* during the test. That can be frustrating – but if you’re thoroughly prepared, the odds are on *your* side that rather than feeling anxious...you’ll be ready to “ace” the exam. Remember with the MECP test question development process, there are no hidden meanings or trick questions to worry about. Here are some easy steps that will help you to be fully prepared when you take your exam:

- Read the *Table of Contents* to find the sections you need to focus your studies.
- Scan through the appropriate sections to get a “feeling” for how the information is organized.
- Read each Study Guide section – preferably three to four times. Progress one section at a time if that is more sensible for your schedule. Repetition equals retention!
- Choose a time when your mind is rested and ready to study. Reading through the guide on the way to your exam is not necessarily a good strategy for comprehensive study.
- Note important topics or areas where you are weak in the margin.
- Re-read each section a few days later until you feel you know the information.
- A week before the exam: re-read or review the chapter one more time to refresh your memory.
- In between reading the chapters, review the **Glossary** so you’re familiar with the key terms and definitions.
- Wherever possible, seek the assistance of additional learning resources such as experienced, certified colleagues who have also gone through the process and the other study materials suggested by MECP.
- One thing you should be cautious of is resources on the Internet. There are many helpful forums and informational websites with content that may be relevant to your study efforts. Keep in mind though that just because it’s on the Internet does not make it true. There is a mix of good and bad information out there so just remember to validate what you read with the study guide information.

THE DAY BEFORE THE TEST

- Review each chapter and the sample questions.
- Do not try to “cram” for the test the day before the test (it didn’t work in high school...it doesn’t work here either).
- If you have properly read this study guide supplement and you have the necessary hands-on experience, the information should already be in your head and the correct answers will come to you quickly during the test.
- Last-minute cramming can confuse you and make you even more anxious about the test.
- Review each area in which you feel you may be weak and review your notes in the margins.
- Get plenty of rest the night before.

THE DAY OF THE TEST

- If you are coming straight from work, allow some extra time to relax and unwind before you start the test (at least 15 - 20 minutes).
- During that time, “clear” your head of the day’s activities.
- *Do not* try to re-read the *Study Guide* at any time.
- Stay relaxed and confident that you *will* do well on the test.

AT THE TEST SITE

Bring the following:

- Your Testing Confirmation (usually sent to you via e-mail).
- Your acceptance letter and/or test voucher (if applicable).
- At least one form of photo identification and a second form of ID (such as a credit card). If you do not bring these forms of identification, you could forfeit your testing session.
- Validation of experience if you have not already provided it (for Advanced or Master exams).
- Two sharpened #2 pencils. This will be required to work out minor math related problems, draw diagrams, or whatever else you may need to help you “visualize” the correct response to a test question. For security reasons, you will be given scratch paper at the test site so you do not need to bring your own.
- It is NOT necessary to bring a calculator. Calculators are not allowed on any of the exams except the Master exam and, in that case, an on-screen calculator is provided for you.

Arrive at the test site on time or a little early:

- Check in at the room or designated testing area.
- Have all of your information available to give to the proctor (test supervisor).
- Listen carefully to the proctor’s instructions. Your proctor will explain any last minute changes if there is any that apply.
- They will tell you how to begin the exam on your computer station.
- They will also instruct you on how to handle any breaks if you need them.
- Do not talk during the test.
- The appearance of cheating will **immediately disqualify you** from the test, so make sure you follow the proctor’s directions in all areas. The testing centers often have CCTV cameras monitoring the testing rooms in addition to a proctor being present.
- No smoking is allowed in the test room for obvious safety and health reasons.
- If you must leave the room, do so quietly, leaving all your test materials on the table. Understand that the test time still counts down while you are away. You may be limited to a short bathroom break or a breath of fresh air to collect your thoughts. Otherwise, plan all of the necessary diversions BEFORE you enter the test room.

- If you have a question or there is a problem with your test, raise your hand or wait for the proctor to come to you.
- Please be courteous to others taking the test, as you would expect them to be with you.
- Everyone wants to do well on the test and does not need unnecessary distractions. Do not make unnecessary noises or do not engage in any talking while testing.

HOW TO TAKE MECP EXAMS

It's common to be anxious when taking a test – most people are. That can lead to unnecessary, sloppy mistakes. Here are some tips that will help you improve your performance:

- Make sure that you enter your name as you would like it to appear on your certificate. If your name is Robert but you go by “Bob,” please enter your name accordingly.
- Read each question *twice* before you look at the answers. Often people will assume they know the answer because they’ve “been there, done that,” which may not necessarily be the case with that particular question. Attention to detail is important, just as it is in the installation profession!
- Do not attempt to “read into” a question. Remember there are no trick questions.
- Answer the question as stated – leave all preconceived notions at home.
- If you come to a question that you cannot answer, flag it for review or skip it and come back to it after you finish that section.

Marking the Answers in Computer Based Testing:

- Please check your answers carefully before marking them.
- Remember you can review **any** answer before selecting “finished” with your Computer Based Test.
- You may flag answers you are not sure about so you can review them later. This allows you to focus on answers about which you are more definite and come back to the less defined answers.
- You can skip questions if you are not sure at all. You will be given an opportunity to go back and review these before completing the exam.
- Take extra time to review your answers if you have additional time left in the exam. It will allow you to look at any answers you flagged or were unsure about while still within the allotted three hour time limit.

AFTER THE TEST

When you are finished:

- Follow the instructions on the screen for finishing the exam.
- Leave the room quietly.
- If you're waiting for someone else to finish the test, wait in the lobby or somewhere away from the test room.

- Computer Based Testing allows you to receive your test results **immediately** following the exam. If you passed, your certificate will be mailed to you in approximately 4 weeks.

Congratulations and Continued Success!

CONTACTING MECP

For general inquiries call MECP Customer Services at (866) 858-1555, email mecp@mecp.com or visit the MECP web site at www.mecp.com. The website will allow you to locate a testing center in your area and sign up (using a credit card) right there while online. It also contains many other tips for taking exams, study materials and up-to-date information about MECP.

You can also locate an MECP test site directly by visiting:

<http://www.prometric.com/MECP/default.htm>