

HOW TO **PASS** THAT CERTIFICATION TEST

If you've decided that now is the right time to earn an NCRA certification, your next step will probably be to see what help is available to pass them.

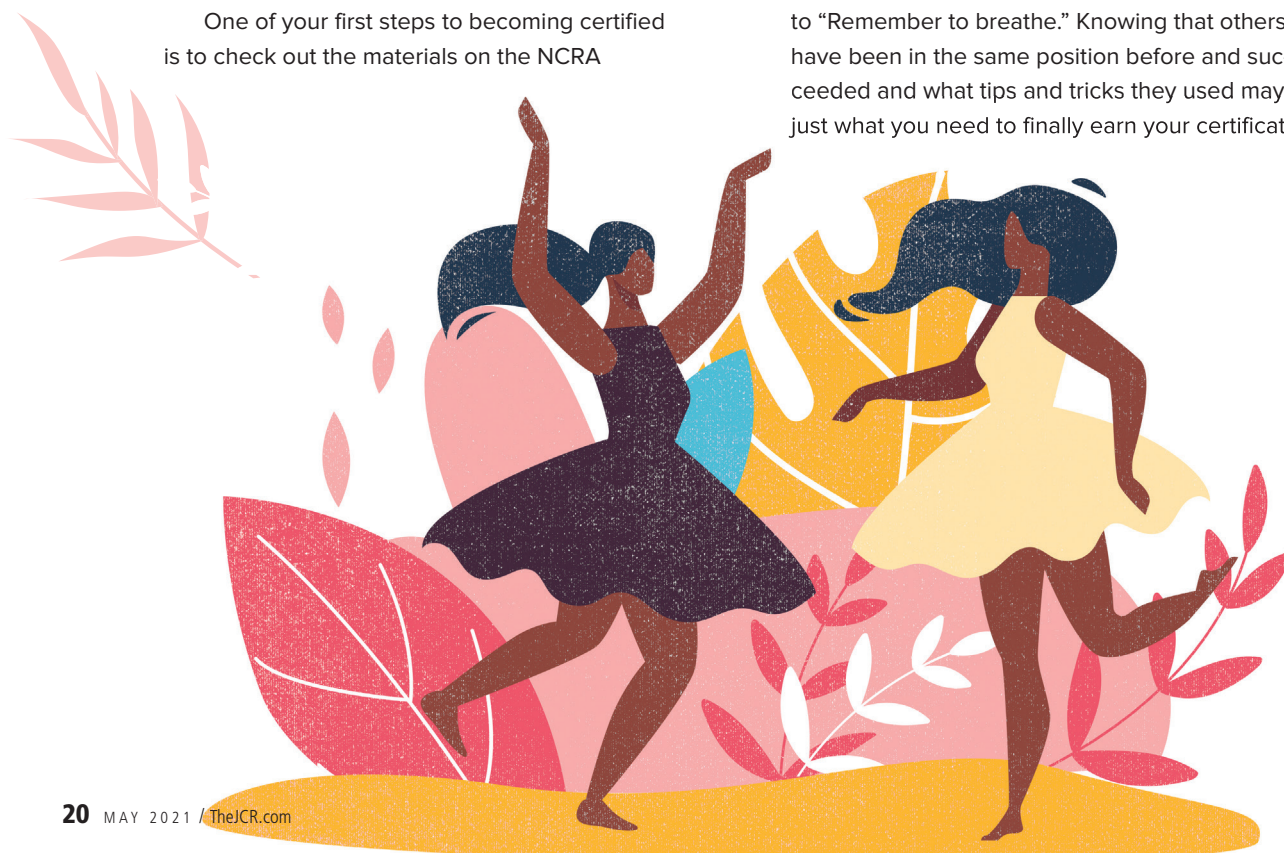
"There was no greater feeling of accomplishment than when I received my RPR certification! My test day did not start off well. Everything that could go wrong did. I was so stressed from the morning that I went into the test thinking, well, this is going to be bad. And because I wasn't focused on passing, my 'nerves' didn't get the best of me," says Yolanda Walton, FAPR, RPR, an official court reporter in Norwalk, Ohio, NCRA Director, and Board liaison to the Veterans Liaison Committee, which works with the New Professionals Advisory Committee. "And lo and behold I passed! I'm so glad my husband, Wally, hated that I didn't have initials after my name and guilted me into taking the test. That feeling of accomplishment having passed my RPR was extraordinary!"

Many people have already taken and passed these tests, and so can you!

One of your first steps to becoming certified is to check out the materials on the NCRA

Certification Test Center at [NCRA.org/testing](https://www.ncra.org/testing). The Test Center website contains the information you need to take the Written Knowledge Test, including the Job Analyses you need to study, and detailed steps (including videos!) for the online Skills Test that show you how to set up and test your system to how to send your file in for grading. And when you are ready to start testing, you will find all the information on when and how to register on the Test Center, too. Testing staff also recommends that Skills Test candidates take advantage of the proctored practice test; doing so allows you to check to make sure that your computer and equipment meet the technology requirements before you proceed with online testing.

While all of the above is important information that creates the foundation for your success, you may also want to reach out to friends and colleagues for support — whether that may be banding together to do some practice (see page 22) or just the ever-practical but easier-said-than-done advice to "Remember to breathe." Knowing that others have been in the same position before and succeeded and what tips and tricks they used may be just what you need to finally earn your certification.



PRACTICE A VARIETY OF MATERIALS

By Lisa Conley Yungblut

For any skills/machine test or contest, I think the best thing is variety so that you stick with some sort of practice every day for about a month or so. Meaning, vary the speeds you're practicing from about 20 wpm below your target speed to about 40 wpm above your target speed, vary between high and low syllabic count material (if you can determine that), and vary material from different sources to get a variety of voices and speech patterns. Many reporters find having a set place and time to practice is helpful, but I also like to change that around a little bit; it's a personal preference, as is the length of time that you practice each day. If you're a working reporter and are on your machine several hours a day, you'll obviously need less time practicing, but you still need some practice from a timed dictation because that is very different from what you hear on the job.

For the WKT part of exams, there are some specific books for prep for the RPR and RMR that are very helpful to complete. Some amount of on-the-job experience is helpful, especially for the RMR. You can do fun things, such as sign up for the Merriam-Webster's Word of the Day and go to their website to play various vocabulary games for free. A Google or other search online will provide a lot of information about jury procedures, how our judicial court systems work and hierarchy, most common legal terminology, most common medical terminology, common Latin words and phrases. Just be sure, as always, that your online info is from a reputable source. A look through the information on NCRA's website is helpful to review all of their policies and procedures, Board positions and committees, membership categories, Advisory Opinions, ethics, the Job Analysis for each certification, and the retention policy for certifications.

During the actual testing, a positive attitude, confidence, and just taking some deep breaths go a long way to help you be successful!

Lisa Conley Yungblut, RDR, CRR, CRC, is an official court reporter based in Cincinnati, Ohio, and chair of the Veterans Liaison Committee, which works with the New Professionals Advisory Committee.

FIVE SHORT TIPS

By Lamarra George

1. Perform a moot test exam from start to finish.
2. Select a quiet place to take your exam.
3. Practice deep breathing techniques to calm nerves.
4. Think of the exam as five minutes of a job.
5. Practice at higher speeds to loosen up your fingers.

Lamarra George is a freelance court reporter based in Atlanta, Ga., and a member of the Veterans Liaison Committee.

PRACTICE LISTENING AT HIGHER SPEEDS

By Alexa Babcock

I passed the RPR before I ever passed my Kansas state testing. So when I decided to take the RMR years later, unlike probably many people, or most, believe it or not, I did not practice but maybe two times on my machine, total, before the testing — and they were for very short periods of time. Since I had a 30- to 45-minute (and sometimes even an hour) commute, I used my time in the car to listen to CDs of past tests at 300 words a minute. As I listened, I would try to relax my mind and thoughts process into just accepting words and speeds at that rate. To get comfortable with the whole mindset, speed, and ideology of the testing, I will always be an advocate for the brain telling the hands what to do, and in as peaceful environment as possible. I passed all three phases of the skills testing of the RMR test at the first setting.

My courthouse reporter girlfriends thought the test was terribly hard and challenging and they did not pass. I did think the content was tough. I'm sure in my mind the test was fair, but court can be tough and the testing reflects what we hear in court — plus other distracting issues that can happen in court. At that time, I did not know my girlfriends were taking the test at the same time I was, but it didn't matter, anyway, it was just comforting to see them at the time I arrived for the testing. It might not be what everyone would do, and it may seem rare to pass the testing all at one time and on the first attempt or first testing. It just seemed to work for me. I also acknowledge that I was in court all the time on the criminal docket, so was practicing in my own way, just job-wise.

For the Written Knowledge Test, I did obtain the book and I did work so hard on trying to memorize or understand the written portion of the test. The first time I took the WKT I did not pass by a couple of points — really, maybe by two points! The second time I took the WKT I had memorized and/or worked through the entire workbook, and I brought my points up by 11 points, far surpassing the passing grade.

Alexa Babcock, RMR, is based in Oklahoma City, Okla., and is a member of the Veterans Liaison Committee.