

# About the Certified Nursing Assistant Exam

This document describes the certification examination in general, including both the written and skills performance segments, how to apply for the Exam, and the Exam test-taking process. You can use *CNA Certified Nursing Assistant Exam Cram* to prepare you for seeking certification for the first time or for review if you're repeating the Exam. Whether you have just completed an organized course of study for nursing assistants or are practicing and want to write the Exam, you can use this text to prepare for certification. In any case, congratulations on taking the first, and often the most difficult, step in reviewing for any examination—getting started.

The *CNA Certified Nursing Assistant Exam Cram* is intended to be a standalone study guide, but it can be used with other instructional textbooks and materials including, but not limited to, CDs/DVDs or computerized learning programs. The book is not intended to re-teach classroom content but to highlight important content you are likely to find included on the exam.

The *CNA Certified Nursing Assistant Exam Cram* will help you recall critical information needed to successfully pass the certification examination. The concise, simplified approach in the book focuses on key principles and procedures for safe practice as a certified nursing assistant and health team member, communication skills, values and ethics, body systems, common diseases and conditions, health and safety, functional health needs of residents, and specialized care, as well as a review of nursing skills and procedures included in CNA practice. The book focuses on the basic competencies of the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), meaning the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for safe CNA practice—the basic premise of CNA certification and licensure.

## The Written Examination

Depending on the state or jurisdiction's specifications with its testing service, the Written Examination (WE) is comprised of between 60 and 70 questions. Ten questions are used for statistical purposes and are not scored. The National Nurse Assessment Program Examination (NNAAP) is the largest nurse aide certification examination program in the United States. In August 2008, the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) acquired the exclusive rights to the examination and is currently developing the testing program; they will administer it through the assistance of a national testing service. The NNAAP written examination is comprised of 70 multiple-choice questions. Ten

of these questions are experimental in that they are included as pilot questions and, therefore, are not scored. Because the NNAAP is considered the largest nurse aide certification examination program in the United States (more than 200,000 paper and practical examinations are administered yearly—[www.ncsbn.org](http://www.ncsbn.org), 2008), the NNAAP content outline is the test plan reference for this publication.

## The Clinical Skills Test

The Clinical Skills Test (CST) is a performance examination to measure safe practice in the care of nursing home residents. Indirect care (that is, observing resident rights, communication skills, resident safety and comfort, as well as infection control) is included in each skill performance. Critical steps, or essential checkpoints assigned to each skill, are included to measure safe performance. To pass a skill, you are not required to perform the skill perfectly but to demonstrate basic safety according to the critical steps noted on the performance checklist.

You must successfully pass both the WE and the CST to pass the certification examination. When you become certified, you will be assigned a registration number by the state, one of 52 states that maintain CNA registries. Your registration number will be recorded on the state registry, identifying you as qualified to practice in that state. You might be allowed to practice in another state by reciprocity if you relocate, which means that another state might accept your credentials and allow you to practice pending satisfactory application to that state. In some cases, you can work only in the state that certifies you. Remember, certification does not imply that you are licensed; licensure is reserved for professional nurses (RNs) and licensed nurses (LPNs).

Table 1 provides a list of content recommended by the NNAAP for the exam.

**Table 1 NNAAP Content Outline**

<b>Skill Set</b>	<b>Areas of Study</b>	<b>Number of Questions</b>	<b>Percent of Exam</b>
Physical Care Skills	Activities of Daily Living, including	4	7%
	Hygiene		
	Dressing and Grooming		
	Nutrition and Hydration		
	Elimination		
Rest/Sleep/Comfort			
	Basic Nursing Skills, including	22	37%
	Infection Control		
	Safety/Emergency		
	Therapeutic/Technical Procedures		
	Data collection and Reporting		
	Restorative Skills, including	3	5%
	Prevention		
	Self-Care/Independence		

**Table 1 NNAAP Content Outline**

Skill Set	Areas of Study	Number of Questions	Percent of Exam
Psychosocial Care Skills	Emotional and Mental Health Needs	6	10%
	Spiritual and Cultural Needs	2	3%
Role of the Nurse Aide	Communication	6	10%
	Client Rights	9	15%
	Legal and Ethical Behavior	3	5%
	Member of the Health Care Team	5	8%

Although recall and application of key principles and procedures involved in safe practice as a nursing assistant is vital to your success on the exam, it is important that you also apply effective test-taking techniques that will arm you with the necessary tools to be successful. Test taking is a skill that can be learned and must be included in any review process to help build your self confidence in pursuing certification.

The best preparation for the exam is knowledge of the course content. However, referring to a book such as *CNA Certified Nursing Assistant Exam Cram* will assist you in using test-taking techniques to select the correct choice for questions for which you might be unfamiliar or for answers for which you are unsure.

## Applying for Registration and Examination

By federal law (BRA), you must be trained and evaluated according to standards of care that protect the elder client in long-term care facilities, particularly nursing homes. Each state or jurisdiction for which you seek registration has the responsibility for the training and evaluative, or certification, process. The certification examination (WE and CST) is based on a structured curriculum developed according to federal training guidelines. It is administered by the state or through an approved testing vendor.

Although certification requirements differ from state to state, the registration and examination process begins with your application to be registered in the state for which you elect to practice. Usually, a second application is required for testing. For specific information, contact each state as soon as you decide on a practice locale, and follow that state's requirements carefully and timely so as not to delay testing and registration. Special accommodations for testing may be made according to each state's requirements that include documented evidence concerning limitations of your literacy skills. Candidate handbooks or other information are helpful guides to your preparation and often are available online. Appendix B in the *CNA Certified Nursing Assistant Exam Cram* provides a list of state registries and/or accrediting agencies. Be sure to contact them directly via telephone, fax, or email to verify the current mailing address and any registration updates because this information can change without notice.

## The Cost of the Exam

Application fees and related costs for testing vary, ranging between \$100 to \$150 for both processes. You should contact the state in which you want to be registered and follow their specific directions for remitting all fees. Again, timeliness and accuracy with fee payments is crucial to avoid testing delays.

## Contact the Authors

We are most interested in your success and want you to pass the Exam the first time! If you would like to contact us after reviewing the *CNA Certified Nursing Assistant Exam Cram*, you can reach us at the following addresses:

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