

Introduction

Have you ever sat down to take a test and found that you felt poorly prepared to answer the questions? For so many, this is the case. This book will help you to prepare for the NCLEX RN or PN using tried-and-true techniques used by the experts. This Introduction discusses the changes that have occurred in the NCLEX exam. You will learn about the future of the exam and how you can be a successful candidate. Whether you are taking the exam for the first time or have taken the exam several times, this book is designed for you.

The *Exam Prep* books help you to understand and appreciate the subject material that you need to know to pass nursing school and the exam. This book includes an in-depth discussion of all topics covered on the NCLEX. We take you on a self-guided tour of all of the areas covered on the NCLEX test plan and give you tips for passing. This book also contains practical tips for your nursing practice. You will find a user-friendly “Fast Facts” quick reference sheet containing lab values, normal fetal heart tones, and much more. Study tips, exam prep tips, case studies, math review, and test banks will help you practice those difficult pharmacology questions and help you manage the questions and alternative items that you will encounter on the exam. This book also includes chapters on the cultural aspects of nursing care and legalities. Each chapter concludes with a series of practice questions to help reinforce your understanding of the topics within the chapter and to help you prepare for the exam.

The nurse is a valued member of the health care team. The National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) is responsible for allocating the number and type of questions that the nurse must take as well as the percentage of questions in each category. The differences between the test questions for a PN and RN are often subtle. Some examples of these differences are

- ▶ **Client care responsibility**—Because the RN is ultimately responsible for the coordination and management of client care as well as delegation of duties, RN candidates will get more questions on these topics whereas PN candidates will be tested on their knowledge and application of how to care for clients.
- ▶ **Intravenous therapy and medication**—The RN is responsible for initiating IVs and giving medication, but the PN is expected to be able to monitor IV lines and medication and know how to recognize problems and the steps to take to correct them.

- ▶ **Blood administration**—The RN is primarily responsible for initiating a blood transfusion, but the PN is expected to know the signs of a transfusion reaction and the action to be taken if such a reaction occurs.
- ▶ **Central line care**—The RN is primarily responsible for central line care, but the PN is expected to know how to care for the central line site and be aware of signs of an air emboli.

Each chapter in the *Exam Prep* is extremely useful to the nurse seeking licensure as a practical nurse or registered nurse.

Organization

This book is organized by body systems. This method uses a format that most students find helpful for learning material quickly and easily.

- ▶ Each chapter begins with an outline of topics—this is a list of subtopics covered in the chapter.
- ▶ Each chapter has helpful notes, tips, and cautions that will help you study for the exam.
- ▶ Each chapter includes an in-depth discussion of the topics in that unit.
- ▶ Each chapter includes pharmacological agents used in the care of the client.
- ▶ Each chapter includes diagnostic studies used to determine client needs.
- ▶ Each chapter ends with a case study. This allows the student to use critical-thinking skills in the treatment of the client.

Instructional Features

This book provides multiple ways to learn and reinforce the exam material. Following are some of the helpful methods:

- ▶ **Study strategies**—Study strategies are discussed in a chapter called “Study and Exam Preparation Tips.”
- ▶ **Key terms**—A list of key terms that the student must know appears as a glossary.
- ▶ **Notes, tips, and cautions**—Notes, tips, and cautions contain various kinds of useful or practical information such as tips on nursing practice.
- ▶ **Apply Your Knowledge**—Questions covering the material in that particular chapter are included at the end of each chapter. There are three test banks of 160 items and test banks of management and pharmacology questions. You will also find a CD of test questions to help you practice the NCLEX format. These help you to determine what you need to study further and what you already know.

- ▶ **Suggested Readings and Resources**—At the end of each chapter, this section directs you to additional resources for study. This book is also designed to be a tool used by nursing students and nurses in practice.

Extensive Practice Test Options

This book provides you with many opportunities to assess your knowledge and practice for the exam. The test options are as follows:

- ▶ **Exam questions**—Each chapter ends with a series of questions relevant to the chapter material.
- ▶ **Case studies**—Each chapter includes a case study in which you can practice applying all the information to a real-life scenario.
- ▶ **Practice exams**—This book includes three complete practice exams that reflect the type of questions you will see on the NCLEX exam. Use them to practice and to help you determine your strengths and weaknesses so that you can return to your weakest areas for further study.
- ▶ **CD exam**—The exam engine included on the CD includes questions from the book as well as additional questions for your review. Be sure to use the study mode first and then try the exam mode. The CD allows you to repeat the exam as often as you need, so don't hesitate to try again and again if you need to.

Final Review

The final review section of the book provides you with two valuable tools for preparing for the exam:

- ▶ **Fast Facts**—This is a condensed version of the information contained in the book and is an extremely useful tool for last-minute review.
- ▶ **Exam questions**—Three complete practice exams are included in this book plus more on the CD-ROM. All questions are written in the style and format used on the actual exam. Use these exams to prepare for the real exam until you are comfortable with your level of knowledge.

Other Valuable Tools

This book also includes several other valuable tools for preparing for the NCLEX exam:

- ▶ Appendix A, “Things You Forgot,” contains a list of information commonly used by nurses.
- ▶ Appendix B, “Need to Know More?” includes a list of websites and organizations that are helpful resources for the nurse in practice.

- ▶ Appendix C, “Calculations,” provides you with a quick-and-easy guide to medication administration.
- ▶ Appendix D, “Most-Prescribed Medications in the United States,” is a list of commonly prescribed drugs with the generic and brand names and common nursing implications for use.
- ▶ Appendix E, “Alphabetical Listing of Nursing Boards in the United States and Protectorates,” is a useful list for nurses.
- ▶ A glossary of terms and definitions used throughout the book.
- ▶ An index provides a complete source of the location of specific information.

About the NCLEX Exam

The Computer Adaptive Test (CAT) provides a means for individualized testing of each candidate seeking licensure as a professional nurse. Selecting from a large test bank, the computer chooses questions based on the candidate’s ability and competence as demonstrated on the prior question.

For the RN exam, the minimum number of questions is 75 with a maximum of 265. For the PN exam, the minimum number of questions is 85 with a maximum of 205. The average candidate’s exam comprises 160 items. You must answer the question that appears on the screen before another question is given, and you cannot skip questions or return to a previous question. It is imperative that you read each question carefully before you select a response. We suggest that you cover the answers with your nondominant hand and read the stem before looking at the answers. RN candidates are allowed six hours to take the exam, whereas PN candidates have a maximum time of five hours.

The NCLEX consists of questions from the cognitive levels of knowledge, comprehension, application, and analysis. The majority of questions are written at the application and analysis levels. Questions incorporate the five stages of the nursing process:

- ▶ Assessment
- ▶ Analysis
- ▶ Planning
- ▶ Implementation
- ▶ Evaluation

There are also questions from the four categories of client needs (noted in bold in Table I.1). Client needs are divided into subcategories (noted in italics in Table I.1) that define the content within each of the four major categories tested on the NCLEX. Table I.1 outlines the categories and subcategories of client needs.

TABLE I.1 NCLEX RN and NCLEX PN Exam Categories and Subcategories

Client Needs	Percentage of Items from Each Category/ Subcategory (RN Exam)	Percentage of Items from Each Category/ Subcategory (PN Exam)
Safe, Effective Care Environment		
<i>Management of Care</i>	13–19%	11–17%
<i>Safety and Infection Control</i>	8–14%	8–14%
Health Promotion and Maintenance	6–12%	7–13%
Psychosocial Integrity	6–12%	8–14%
Physiological Integrity		
<i>Basic Care and Comfort</i>	6–12%	11–17%
<i>Pharmacological and Parenteral Therapies</i>	13–19%	9–15%
<i>Reduction of Risk Potential</i>	13–19%	10–16%
<i>Physiological Adaptation</i>	11–17%	12–18%

The percentage of questions allotted to each category is determined by the National Council and depends on the results of a survey the council sends out every three years to new graduates. Based on the 130 activity statements, the percentages change accordingly. It is safe to say that as the patient population changes, these categories will also change. This book reflects those changes particularly as they relate to the need for nurses in management roles, cultural diversity, and client criticality.

Computerized adaptive testing offers the candidate several advantages over the former paper-and-pencil exam. The test questions are stored in a large test bank and classified by test plan areas and level of difficulty. Depending on the answer given by the candidate, the computer presents another question that is either more difficult or less difficult. This allows the computer to determine the candidate's knowledge of the subject matter more precisely.

The pass/fail decision is not based on how many questions the candidate answers correctly, but on the difficulty of the questions answered correctly. Even though candidates might answer different questions and different numbers of questions, the test plan remains the same. All NCLEX examinations conform to this test plan. Each time you answer a question correctly, the next question gets harder until you miss a question; then an easier question is given until you answer correctly. This way the computer concludes whether a candidate has met the passing standard. If you are clearly above the passing standard at the minimum number of questions, the computer stops asking questions. If you are clearly below the passing standard, the computer stops asking questions. If your ability estimate is close to the passing standard, the computer continues to ask questions until either the maximum number of questions is asked or time expires. Should time expire, the last 60 questions are reviewed. To pass, the candidate must remain above the passing standard on the last 60 items.

The CAT exam offers another advantage. The candidate can schedule the exam at a time that is convenient and usually receives test results in 7 days or sooner. The

candidate can retake the exam after 45 days in most states. We suggest that you review this text and others, and, if needed, take a review seminar prior to taking the NCLEX. Allow at least one week to study and prepare for the exam. Remember: You want to take the exam only one time. The student can visit the National Council's website at www.ncsbn.org for information regarding how to schedule your test.

Advice for Preparing for the Exam

Judicious use of this book, either alone or with a review seminar such as the one provided by Rinehart and Associates, will help you achieve your goal of becoming licensed to practice nursing. We suggest that you find a location where you can concentrate on the material each day. A minimum of two hours per day for at least two weeks is suggested. This book provides you with tips, notes, and sample questions. These questions will acquaint you with the types of questions you will see during the exam. The mock exam is formulated with those difficult management and delegation questions that you can score to determine your readiness to test. Pay particular attention to the notes, tips, and warnings throughout the book as well as the “Fast Facts” chapter. Using these elements will help you gain knowledge and reduce your stress as you prepare to take the test.

Advice for Test Day

From our years of experience in nursing and teaching, we have this advice for you:

- ▶ **Remember to know where you are going**—Be sure that you know the exact location of the exam. It is easy to get caught in traffic, and if you are late, you forfeit the exam time and your money. You will have to reschedule your exam and pay again.
- ▶ **Have your authorization number and forms of ID with you**—If you forget to take your identification, you will have to reschedule and will forfeit your testing time. Remember you will be photographed and fingerprinted prior to entering the testing site, so do not let this upset you.
- ▶ **Eat a high-protein meal prior to the exam**—You want good food for thought prior to taking the exam. Studies have shown that a meal high in vitamins such as B9 help us think more clearly during stressful times.
- ▶ **Take your time during the test**—Remember, you do not have to complete all the questions.
- ▶ **If you need to take a break, get up and walk around**—The clock will continue to tick, so don't take too much time.
- ▶ **Dress in layers**—The testing site might be cold or warm.

Hints for Using This Book

Each *Exam Prep* book follows a regular structure, along with cues about important or useful information. Here's the structure of a typical chapter:

- ▶ **Outline of topics**—Lists the topic headings within the chapter.
- ▶ **Headings and subheadings**—These are the main chapter topics and ancillary subtopics, designating the core content for study within the chapter.
- ▶ **Case studies**—This allows the student to use critical thinking skills in a specific client situation. The answers and complete explanations for the case study are included.
- ▶ **Key Concepts**—This section of the chapter includes the following three components for you to review and study to ensure your understanding of the chapter topics:
 - ▶ **Key Terms**—A list of the key terms from the chapter that you should be able to define.
 - ▶ **Diagnostics**—When appropriate, this section lists diagnostics used in the care of the client with a condition covered within the chapter.
 - ▶ **Pharmacological agents used in the care of the client with disorders found in the chapter**—This information is found in a table form and includes the generic name and brand name of the drug by category, the action of the drug, the potential side effects, and the nursing implications and care of the client taking that category of drugs.
- ▶ **Apply Your Knowledge**—Exam questions about the chapter content with answers and explanations are included in each chapter.
- ▶ **Suggested Reading and Resources**—Each chapter concludes with a supplementary resource list (including books, websites, and journals) relevant to the chapter content.

We suggest that you study from the front of the book and proceed in a logical sequence. When you have completed the case study and questions at the end of each chapter, you might feel the need to research using the resource list.

Contact the Author

We are interested in your study and success, and want you to pass on the first attempt. If after reviewing with this text, you would like to contact us, you can do so at Rinehart and Associates, PO Box 124, Booneville, MS 38829 or visit our website at www.nclexreview.net. You can contact us by phone at (662) 728-4622.

Remember, knowing the material is important, but being able to apply that knowledge is a must. When you understand the material, passing the NCLEX exam will be easy.

Good luck!