

**NCLEX-PN®
TEST PLAN**

Effective | April 2005



NCLEX-PN® Examination

Test Plan for the National Council
Licensure Examination for Licensed
Practical/Vocational Nurses

Mission Statement

The National Council of State Boards of Nursing, composed of Member Boards, provides leadership to advance regulatory excellence for public protection.

Purpose and Functions

The purpose of the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) is to provide an organization through which boards of nursing act and counsel together on matters of common interest and concern affecting the public health, safety and welfare, including the development of licensing examinations in nursing.

The major functions of NCSBN include developing the NCLEX-RN® and the NCLEX-PN® examinations, performing policy analysis and promoting uniformity in relationship to the regulation of nursing practice, disseminating data related to NCSBN's purpose, and serving as a forum for information exchange for NCSBN members.

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NCLEX-PN® Test Plan

Test Plan for the National Council Licensure Examination for Practical/Vocational Nurses (NCLEX-PN® Examination)

Introduction

Entry into the practice of nursing in the United States and its territories is regulated by the licensing authorities within each jurisdiction. To ensure public protection, each jurisdiction requires candidates for licensure to meet set requirements that include passing an examination that measures the competencies needed to practice safely and effectively as a newly licensed, entry-level practical/vocational nurse. The National Council of State Boards of Nursing, Inc. (NCSBN), develops a licensure examination, the National Council Licensure Examination for Practical/Vocational Nurses (NCLEX-PN® Examination), which is used by state and territorial boards of nursing to assist in making licensure decisions.

Several steps occur in the development of the *NCLEX-PN® Test Plan*. The first step is conducting a practice analysis that is used to collect data on the current practice of entry-level practical/vocational nurses (*Report of Findings from the 2003 LPN/VN Practice Analysis: Linking the NCLEX-PN® Examination to Practice* [Smith & Crawford, 2003]). Newly licensed practical/vocational nurses are asked about the frequency and priority of performing more than 150 nursing care activities. The activity statements are then analyzed in relation to the frequency of performance and the impact on maintaining client safety. This analysis guides the development of a framework for entry-level nursing practice that incorporates specific client needs as well as processes that are fundamental to the practice of nursing. The next step is writing the *NCLEX-PN® Test Plan*, which guides the selection of content and behaviors to be tested. Variations in jurisdiction laws and regulations are considered in the development of the test plan.

The *NCLEX-PN® Test Plan* provides a concise summary of the content and scope of the examination. It serves as a guide for examination development as well as candidate preparation. Each NCLEX-PN examination is based on the test plan. Each examination assesses the knowledge, skills and abilities that are essential for the entry-level practical/vocational nurse to meet the needs of clients who require the promotion, maintenance or restoration of health. The following sections describe beliefs about people, nursing and clients that are integral to the examination, cognitive abilities that will be tested in the examination, and the categories and specific parts of the *NCLEX-PN® Test Plan*.

Beliefs

Beliefs about people and nursing influence the *NCLEX-PN® Test Plan*. People are finite beings with varying capacities to function in society. They are unique individuals who have defined systems of daily living that reflect their values, cultures, motives and lifestyles. Additionally, people have the right to make decisions regarding their health care needs. The profession of nursing makes a unique contribution in helping clients (individuals, families and significant others) achieve an optimal level of health in a variety of settings.

Nursing is both an art and a science. It is a learned profession based on an understanding of the human condition across the life span and the relationships of an individual with others and within the environment. The nature of nursing is continually evolving. Nursing practice is founded on a professional body of knowledge that integrates concepts from the biological, behavioral and social sciences. The goal of nursing is to promote comfort and quality health care. The nurse assists individuals throughout their life spans to attain optimal levels of functioning by responding to the needs, conditions and events that result from actual or potential health problems.

The practical/vocational nurse uses “specialized knowledge and skills which meet the health needs of people in a variety of settings under the direction of qualified health professionals” (NFLPN, 2003). The practical/vocational nurse uses a clinical problem-solving process (the nursing process) to collect and organize relevant health care data, assist in the identification of the health needs/problems throughout the client’s life span and contribute to the interdisciplinary team in a variety of settings. The entry-level practical/vocational nurse demonstrates the essential competencies needed to care for clients with commonly occurring health problems that have predictable outcomes. “Competency implies knowledge, understanding and skills that transcend specific tasks and is guided by a commitment to ethical/legal principles” (NAPNES, 2003).

Classification of Cognitive Levels

The examination consists of items that use Bloom’s taxonomy for the cognitive domain as a basis for writing and coding items (Bloom et al., 1956; Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). The practice of practical/vocational nursing requires the application of all levels of cognitive ability. The majority of items are written at the application or higher levels of cognitive abilities.

Test Plan Structure

The framework of Client Needs was selected because it provides a universal structure for defining nursing actions and competencies for a variety of clients across all settings and is congruent with state laws/rules.

Client Needs

The content of the *NCLEX-PN® Test Plan* is organized into four major Client Needs categories. Two of the four categories are further divided into a total of six subcategories:

Safe and Effective Care Environment

- Coordinated Care
- Safety and Infection Control

Health Promotion and Maintenance

Psychosocial Integrity

Physiological Integrity

- Basic Care and Comfort
- Pharmacological Therapies
- Reduction of Risk Potential
- Physiological Adaptation

Integrated Processes

The following processes fundamental to the practice of practical/vocational nursing are integrated throughout the Client Needs categories and subcategories:

- *Clinical Problem-Solving Process (Nursing Process)* – a scientific approach to client care that includes data collection, planning, implementation and evaluation.
- *Caring* – interaction of the practical/vocational nurse and clients, families, and significant others in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust. In this collaborative environment, the practical/vocational nurse provides support and compassion to help achieve desired therapeutic outcomes.
- *Communication and Documentation* – verbal and nonverbal interactions between the practical/vocational nurse and clients, families, significant others and members of the health care team. Events and activities associated with client care are validated in written and/or electronic records that reflect standards of practice and accountability in the provision of care.
- *Teaching and Learning* – facilitation of the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes to assist in promoting positive changes in behavior.

Distribution of Content

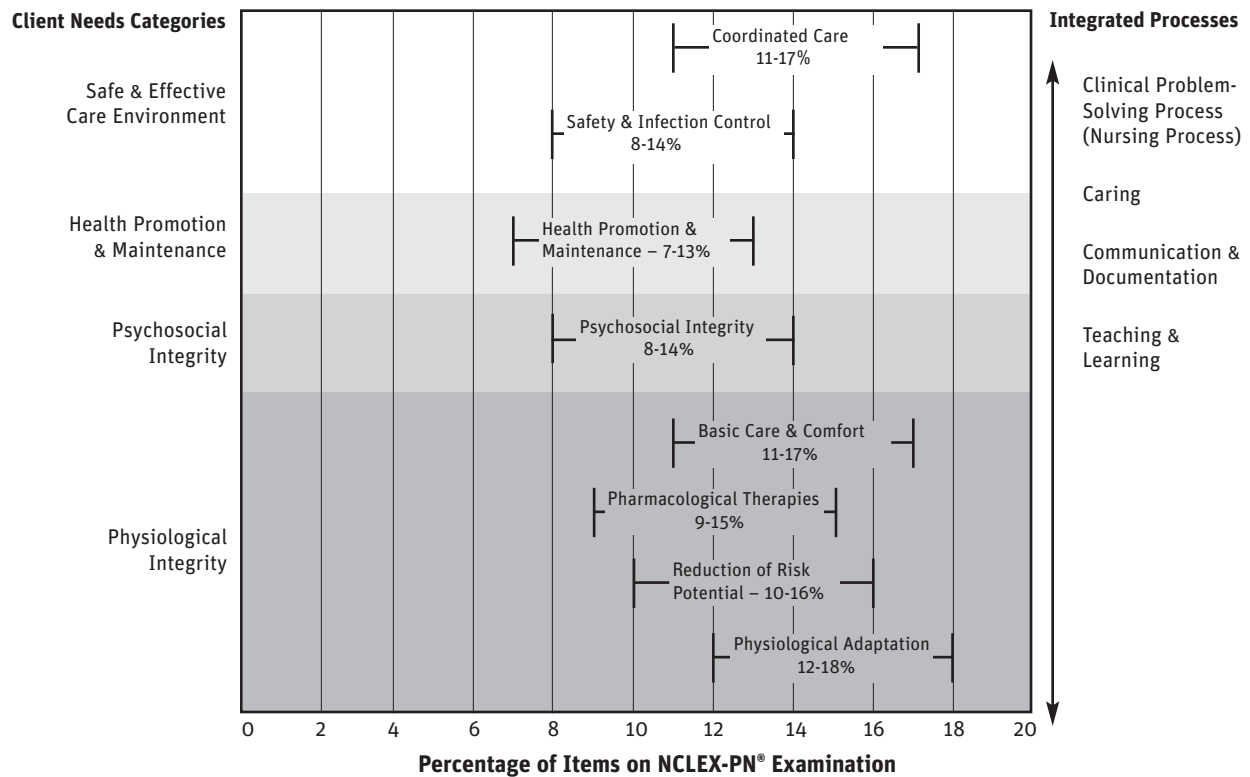
The percentage of test items assigned to each Client Needs category and subcategory in the *NCLEX-PN® Test Plan* is based on the results of the study entitled *Report of Findings from the 2003 LPN/VN Practice Analysis: Linking the NCLEX-PN® Examination to Practice* (Smith & Crawford, 2003), and expert judgment provided by members of the NCSBN Examination Committee.

Client Needs

Percentage of Items from each Category/Subcategory

Safe and Effective Care Environment	
■ Coordinated Care	11-17%
■ Safety and Infection Control	8-14%
Health Promotion and Maintenance	7-13%
Psychosocial Integrity	8-14%
Physiological Integrity	
■ Basic Care and Comfort	11-17%
■ Pharmacological Therapies	9-15%
■ Reduction of Risk Potential	10-16%
■ Physiological Adaptation	12-18%

Distribution of Content for the NCLEX-PN® Test Plan



Overview of Content

All content categories and subcategories reflect client needs across the life span in a variety of settings.

Safe and Effective Care Environment

The practical/vocational nurse provides nursing care that contributes to the enhancement of the health care delivery setting and protects clients* and health care personnel.

- *Coordinated Care* – The practical/vocational nurse collaborates with health care team members to facilitate effective client care

Related content includes but is **not limited to**:

- | | |
|---|---|
| ■ Advance Directives | ■ Continuity of Care |
| ■ Advocacy | ■ Establishing Priorities |
| ■ Client Care Assignments | ■ Ethical Practice |
| ■ Client Rights | ■ Informed Consent |
| ■ Concepts of Management and Supervision | ■ Legal Responsibilities |
| ■ Confidentiality | ■ Performance Improvement (Quality Assurance) |
| ■ Consultation with Members of the Health Care Team | ■ Referral Process |
| | ■ Resource Management |

* Clients are defined as individuals, families and significant others.

- *Safety and Infection Control* – The practical/vocational nurse contributes to the protection of clients and health care personnel from health and environmental hazards.

Related content includes but is **not limited** to:

- Accident/Error Prevention
- Handling Hazardous and Infectious Materials
- Home Safety
- Injury Prevention
- Internal and External Disaster Plans
- Medical and Surgical Asepsis
- Reporting of Incident/Event/Irregular Occurrence/Variance
- Safe Use of Equipment
- Security Plans
- Standard/Transmission-Based/Other Precautions
- Use of Restraints/Safety Devices

Health Promotion and Maintenance

The practical/vocational nurse provides nursing care for clients that incorporates knowledge of expected stages of growth and development, and prevention and/or early detection of health problems.

Related content includes but is **not limited** to:

- Aging Process
- Ante/Intra/Postpartum and Newborn Care
- Data Collection Techniques
- Developmental Stages and Transitions
- Disease Prevention
- Expected Body Image Changes
- Family Interaction Patterns
- Family Planning
- Health Promotion/Screening Programs
- High Risk Behaviors
- Human Sexuality
- Immunizations
- Lifestyle Choices
- Self-Care

Psychosocial Integrity

The practical/vocational nurse provides care that assists with promotion and support of the emotional, mental and social well-being of clients.

Related content includes but is **not limited** to:

- Abuse or Neglect
- Behavioral Interventions
- Behavioral Management
- Coping Mechanisms
- Crisis Intervention
- Cultural Awareness
- End-of-Life Concepts
- Grief and Loss
- Mental Health Concepts
- Mental Illness Concepts
- Religious or Spiritual Influences on Health
- Sensory/Perceptual Alterations
- Situational Role Changes
- Stress Management
- Substance-Related Disorders
- Suicide/Violence Precautions
- Support Systems
- Therapeutic Communication
- Therapeutic Environment
- Unexpected Body Image Changes

Physiological Integrity

The practical/vocational nurse assists in the promotion of physical health and well-being by providing care and comfort, reducing risk potential for clients, and assisting them with the management of health alterations.

- *Basic Care and Comfort* – The practical/vocational nurse provides comfort to clients and assistance in the performance of their activities of daily living.

Related content includes but is **not limited** to:

- Assistive Devices
- Elimination
- Mobility/Immobility
- Non-Pharmacological Comfort Interventions
- Nutrition and Oral Hydration
- Palliative/Comfort Care
- Personal Hygiene
- Rest and Sleep

- *Pharmacological Therapies* – The practical/vocational nurse provides care related to the administration of medications and monitors clients who are receiving parenteral therapies.

Related content includes but is **not limited** to:

- Adverse Effects
- Expected Effects
- Medication Administration
- Pharmacological Actions
- Pharmacological Agents
- Side-Effects

- *Reduction of Risk Potential* – The practical/vocational nurse reduces the potential for clients to develop complications or health problems related to treatments, procedures or existing conditions.

Related content includes but is **not limited** to:

- Diagnostic Tests
- Laboratory Values
- Potential for Alterations in Body Systems
- Potential for Complications of Diagnostic Tests/Treatments/Procedures/Surgery or Health Alterations
- Therapeutic Procedures
- Vital Signs

- *Physiological Adaptation* – The practical/vocational nurse participates in providing care for clients with acute, chronic or life-threatening physical health conditions.

Related content includes but is **not limited** to:

- Alterations in Body Systems
- Basic Pathophysiology
- Fluid and Electrolyte Imbalances
- Medical Emergencies
- Radiation Therapy
- Unexpected Response to Therapies

Administration of the *NCLEX-PN*® Examination

The *NCLEX-PN*® Examination is administered to candidates by Computerized Adaptive Testing (CAT). CAT is a method of delivering examinations that uses computer technology and measurement theory. An extensive multi-step process is followed in the development of items. Examination items are primarily four-option and multiple-choice. Other types of item formats include multiple response, fill-in-the-blank (e.g., calculation, ordered response), and hotspot. All item formats, including standard multiple-choice, may have charts, tables or graphic images.

With CAT, each candidate's examination is unique because it is assembled interactively as the examination proceeds. Computer technology selects items to administer that match the candidate's ability level. The items, which are stored in a large item pool, have been classified by test plan area and level of difficulty. After an item is answered, the computer calculates an ability estimate based on all of the candidate's previous answers. An item determined to measure the candidate's ability most precisely in the appropriate test plan area is selected and presented on the computer screen. This process is repeated for each item, creating an examination tailored to the candidate's knowledge and skills while fulfilling all *NCLEX-PN*® Test Plan requirements. The examination continues with items selected and administered in this way until a pass or fail decision is made.

All practical/vocational nurse candidates must answer a minimum of 85 items. The maximum number of items that a practical/vocational nurse candidate may answer is 205 during a five-hour maximum testing period. The maximum five-hour time limit to complete the examination includes the tutorial, sample questions and all breaks.

More information about the NCLEX® examination, including CAT methodology, is listed on the NCSBN Web site: www.ncsbn.org.

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