



NATIONAL COSMETOLOGY  
THEORY EXAMINATION  
CANDIDATE INFORMATION BULLETIN (CIB)

**EXAMINATION CONTENT AND IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS**

*Please visit your examination provider's website for the most current bulletin prior to testing.*

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The National Cosmetology Theory Examination is the licensure examination for Cosmetologists, which is developed by the National-Interstate Council of State Boards of Cosmetology (NIC). This bulletin contains **IMPORTANT INFORMATION** regarding the examination, including content outline covered by the theory examination, sample questions and answers. The time allowed for the Cosmetology Theory Examination is 90 minutes.

For each NIC National Theory Examination, there are TWO (2) parts to every Candidate Information Bulletin (CIB) stored as separate documents:

- **Examination Content and Important Instructions** – This document provides information about the scope of content covered in the Theory examination, as well as information and guidelines related to administration of the Theory examination.
- **References** – This document provides a list of references used to develop and support the content covered in the examination. The references are always the same for the Theory and Practical examinations.

**BE CERTAIN TO DOWNLOAD AND/OR PRINT, AND REVIEW BOTH DOCUMENTS THAT MAKE UP THE NIC EXAMINATION CIB.**

**PLEASE REVIEW ALL INFORMATION CAREFULLY!**

**IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS**

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- Do not leave the examination area without permission. Permission must be obtained to leave the examination area for any reason, including restroom usage or at the completion of the examination. Picture ID is required for re-entry into examination.
- With the exception of verbal instructions, the proctors and examination administration personnel are not allowed to communicate with candidates.
- If you have an emergency situation please notify the proctor.
- The following provides examples of materials and actions that are prohibited during the examination administration:
  - Possession of cellular phones, watches (of any kind), pagers, tablets, computers, projectors, cameras, or any other electronic or recording devices, printed materials, or handwritten notes.
  - Communicating to other candidates.
  - Exhibiting disruptive behavior.
    - *The above referenced items or actions are not an exhaustive list. Failure to comply with any of these conditions or exhibiting ANY behavior that suggests an effort to cheat will result in your immediate dismissal from the examination and your actions reported to the proper authorities.*

**COSMETOLOGY THEORY EXAMINATION  
CONTENT OUTLINE**

The following outlines the scope of content covered by the NIC National Cosmetology Theory Examination. The percentages represent the percentage of items from each domain. The examination is comprised of 110 items, 100 of which are weighted and contribute to the candidate's final score.

**DOMAIN 1: SCIENTIFIC CONCEPTS (35%)**

1A Scientific Concepts - Infection Control and Safety Practices

1. Identify cause/transmission of diseases and infections
2. Identify the purpose and differentiate among the categories of infection control
  - a. Sanitation
  - b. Disinfection
  - c. Sterilization
3. Recognize how cross-contamination occurs and how it can be prevented (e.g., single use and multi-use items)
4. Apply blood exposure procedures
5. Identify requirements of government agencies
  - a. OSHA
  - b. EPA

1B Scientific Concepts - Human Anatomy and Physiology

1. Identify structure and functions of the:
  - a. Hair and scalp
  - b. Skin
  - c. Nails
2. Recognize signs and symptoms of conditions, disorders, and diseases related to:
  - a. Hair and scalp
  - b. Skin
  - c. Nails
3. Identify muscles and joints and their functions related to:
  - a. Head and face
  - b. Arms and hands
  - c. Legs and feet
4. Identify functions of:
  - a. Nervous system
  - b. Circulatory system

1C Scientific Concepts - Basic Chemistry used in Cosmetology

1. Recognize purpose and effects of ingredients
2. Recognize interactions between chemicals
4. Recognize chemical reactions (e.g., overexposure, chemical burn)
5. Recognize the values of the pH scale

**DOMAIN 2: HAIR CARE AND SERVICES (45%)**

2A Hair Care and Services - Client Consultation, Analysis and Documentation

1. Evaluate condition of client's hair and scalp
2. Recognize conditions that would prohibit service (i.e., contraindications)
3. Utilize preliminary tests (e.g., predisposition and strand tests)
4. Recommend services or products based on client needs
5. Establish/Maintain client records (e.g., service history, client card, medical history)

2B Hair Care and Services - Tools used in Hair Care Services

1. Identify purpose, function, and infection control procedures of items
  - a. Equipment (e.g., chair, workstation)
  - b. Implements (e.g., razors, shears, combs/brushes)
  - c. Supplies and materials (e.g., towels, drapes, neck strips)
  - d. Electrical tools (e.g. irons, blow dryers, clippers)
2. Demonstrate safe practices
  - a. Tools/Implements
  - b. Ergonomics

2C Hair Care and Services - Hair Care Principles and Procedures

1. Demonstrate shampooing and conditioning
2. Demonstrate scalp treatments and scalp massage
3. Demonstrate draping (e.g. chemical, shampoo, cutting, styling)
4. Recognize differences in Hair Care principles and procedures based on various hair types and textures

2D Hair Care and Services - Hair Design Principles and Procedures

1. Demonstrate hair cutting and shaping
2. Demonstrate hair styling:
  - a. Wet styling
  - b. Thermal styling
  - c. Natural hair styling (e.g., braiding)
3. Apply, maintain, and remove hair enhancements:
  - a. Wigs and hairpieces
  - b. Hair additions (i.e., taping, bonding, fusion, linking)
4. Apply principles of balance and design (e.g. facial shape, physical structure)
5. Recognize differences in Hair Design principles and procedures based on various hair types and textures

2E Hair Care and Services - Chemical Services Principles and Procedures

1. Perform hair color services (e.g., virgin, retouch, lightening, foiling, balayage, color formulation, color correction)
2. Perform chemical hair relaxer/restructurizer and curl reduction (e.g., hydroxide, thio, keratin) service
3. Perform chemical waving/texturizing (e.g., alkaline, acid, non-thio) services
4. Understand the chemical products used for the various hair texture types

**DOMAIN 3: SKIN CARE AND SERVICES (10%)**

3A Skin Care and Services - Client Consultation, Analysis, and Documentation

1. Evaluate the client's skin:
  - a. Skin type
  - b. Skin condition
2. Recognize conditions that would prohibit service (i.e., contraindications)
3. Recommend services or products based on client needs
4. Establish/Maintain client records (e.g., service history, client card, medical history)

3B Skin Care and Services - Tools used for Skin Care Services

1. Identify purpose, function, and infection control procedures of items:
  - a. Equipment (e.g., chair, steamer)
  - b. Implements (e.g., tweezers, brushes, extractors)
  - c. Supplies, products, and materials (e.g., creams, masks, towels, wax, head coverings)
2. Demonstrate safe practices
  - a. Tools/implements
  - b. Ergonomics

3C Skin Care and Services - Skin Care Principles and Procedures

1. Apply knowledge of a basic facial
2. Apply knowledge of hair removal
3. Apply knowledge of makeup application
4. Apply knowledge of electrical equipment

**DOMAIN 4: NAIL CARE AND SERVICES (10%)**

4A Nail Care and Services - Client Consultation, Analysis and Documentation

1. Evaluate condition of client's nails
2. Recognize conditions that would prohibit service (i.e., contraindications)
3. Recommend services or products based on client needs
4. Establish/Maintain client records (e.g., service history, client card, medical history)

4B Nail Care and Services - Tools used in Nail Care Services

1. Identify purpose, function, and infection control procedures of items:
  - a. Equipment (e.g., workstation, pedicure basin)
  - b. Implements (e.g., nippers, file)
  - c. Supplies, products, and materials (e.g., towels, creams, polish)
2. Demonstrate safe practices
  - a. Tools/implements
  - b. Ergonomics

4C Nail Care and Services - Nail Service Principles and Procedures

1. Apply knowledge of a basic manicure and pedicure
2. Apply, maintain, and remove nail enhancements

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**COSMETOLOGY THEORY EXAMINATION  
SAMPLE QUESTIONS**

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The following sample questions are similar to those presented in the NIC Cosmetology Theory Examination. Each item has four answer options. Only one option is correct or the answer. An answer key is provided following the sample questions. Performance on the sample questions may not represent performance on the NIC examination.

1. Which of the following will reinforce and reconstruct the hair shaft?
  - (A) Scalp treatment
  - (B) Balancing shampoo
  - (C) Hair brushing
  - (D) Protein conditioner
2. When damaged, which of the following will cause the hair growth to be inhibited?
  - (A) Papilla
  - (B) Shaft
  - (C) Cuticle
  - (D) Arrector pili
3. A condition caused by an infestation of head lice is
  - (A) tinea barbae.
  - (B) scabies.
  - (C) pediculosis capitis.
  - (D) tinea capitis.
4. Debris is removed from tools and implements using which of the following procedures?
  - (A) Cleaning
  - (B) Disinfection
  - (C) Sterilization
  - (D) Decontamination
5. What implement adds shine and smooths wavy ridges on the natural nail during a manicure?
  - (A) Coarse file
  - (B) Metal file
  - (C) Nail brush
  - (D) Nail buffer
6. What is another name for the dermis layer of the skin?
  - (A) Spiny layer
  - (B) Horny layer
  - (C) True skin
  - (D) Basal cell

**NIC NATIONAL COSMETOLOGY THEORY EXAMINATION CIB**

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7. The massage movement intended to soothe muscles is
  - (A) petrissage.
  - (B) tapotement.
  - (C) friction.
  - (D) effleurage.
  
8. What product can be used to equalize the porosity of the hair?
  - (A) Shampoo
  - (B) Fillers
  - (C) Lightener
  - (D) Developer

**KEY: 1: D, 2: A, 3: C, 4: A, 5: D, 6: C, 7: D, 8: B**

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**To take the NIC Cosmetology Online Practice Exam (English Only) [CLICK HERE](https://www.iqttesting.com/registrationv2008/quickregister.aspx) or go to:  
<https://www.iqttesting.com/registrationv2008/quickregister.aspx> (\$39.00 fee applies)  
For assistance, please call IQT at 1-866-773-1114.**