Rutgers School of Nursing
Test Success
Tips for Succeeding in Your
Multiple Choice, Nursing Exams
Understand Parts of a Multiple Choice Question

1. **Case (Scenario)** - Description of the patient and what is happening.
2. **Stem** - That part of the question that asks the question.
3. **Distractors** - Incorrect but feasible choices.
4. **Correct Response** - The answer to the question.
SAMPLE QUESTION:

Case Scenario:

A patient who is visibly upset says to the nurse. “I want to talk with the head nurse, no, get me the supervisor and the director of nursing and the owner of the hospital. I am mad.”

Stem:

The best initial response for the nurse to make is:

Distractors:

A. “Whom do you wish to see first?”
B. “Don’t be angry.”
C. “Why do you want to talk to them when I can help?”

Correct Answer

D. “You seem upset.”
ANSWER

A. “Whom do you wish to see first?”
   Incorrect. Does not promote communication and does not allow exploration and understanding of the issue.

B. “Don’t be angry.”
   Incorrect. Discounts feelings and does not promote communication.

C. “Why do you want to talk to them when I can help?”
   Incorrect. Places the patient on the defensive. Does not defuse the situation.

D. “You seem upset.”
   Correct. The nurse uses the technique of paraphrasing. Acknowledges the patient’s feelings. Promotes Communication.
CARDINAL RULES OF TEST-TAKING

• Read all instructions carefully.
• Read all test questions carefully. (Stem)
• Answer only what is being asked; do not read into a question anything beyond what is there.
• Pace yourself.
• Make sure you answer all of the questions on the exam.
READING THE QUESTION

1. Paraphrase the question: What is the question asking for in your own words? *(Stem)*
2. What are the **key words** in the question?
3. What is the **time frame**?
4. What are the answering options?
**KEY WORDS**

**Patient**—Factors such as age, sex, and marital status may be relevant.

- Age of a child may be very relevant.
- Who is the client—the patient, family or maybe even a staff member.

**Problem/Behavior**—the problem may be a disease, symptom or a behavior.

**Details of the Problem**—e.g. duration of disease, symptom, or behavior.
TIME FRAME

Whenever time is mentioned…it is important.

- Early vs. Late
- Pre Operative vs. Post Operative
- Surgical Day
ANSWERING OPTIONS

• Try to answer the question \textit{before} looking at the answers.

• Come up with the answer in your head \textit{before} looking at the possible answers.

• Read \textbf{all} the choices.

• Recall class lectures.

• If all else fails, use an educated guess.
EDUCATED GUESS STRATEGIES

Always use the process of elimination as a first step.

Beware of negative terms such as none, not, and never.

When you are undecided between two answers, try to express each in your own words. Then analyze the differences between the two.

Use logic and common sense to reason out the correct answer.
ELIMINATE OPTIONS

Read all of the distracters.

Eliminate distracters that are clearly incorrect.

With the elimination of each distracter, you increase the probability of selecting the correct option by 25%.
Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) is a condition wherein a blood clot forms in a vein of the deep system. DVTs can occur anywhere in the body, but are most frequently found in the deep veins of the legs, thighs, and pelvis. They may infrequently arise from the upper extremities usually because of trauma, or from an indwelling catheter (tubing) or device.
PRIOR TO NURSING SCHOOL\textsuperscript{2,3}

1. Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) is:
   a. blood clot in lungs
   b. varicose veins in lower extremities
   c. vasoconstriction of veins in legs
   d. blood clot in extremities.
2. The nurse is caring for a patient who had a (kō-lə-sis-tək-tə-mē) cholecystectomy 12 hours ago.

To prevent deep vein thrombosis (DVT) the nurse will teach the patient to…:

1. Keywords?
2. Time Frame?
3. Your First Response?
2. The nurse is caring for a patient who had a **cholecystectomy** (kō-lē-sis-tek-tē-mē) 12 hours ago. To prevent deep vein thrombosis (DVT) the nurse will teach the patient to…:

a. keep legs immobile while in bed.
b. avoid ambulation except to go to the bathroom.
c. elevate the legs above the level of the heart at all times.
d. ambulate as soon as possible and frequently.
The correct answer is:
d. ambulate as soon as possible and frequently.
To answer this question you need to be able to draw on a wealth of information. You need to know at least 4 pieces of information:

a) That cholecystectomy is a surgery
b) That surgery increased the risk for DVT
   c) What DVT is
   d) What does and does not prevent DVT
NURSING EXAMS

Exams not only test how much you remember or understand about a subject.

They are also designed to test your ability to think at the five higher cognitive levels. See examples.

Thinking like a nurse is essential to safe and competent nursing practice at the entry level.
FIVE COGNITIVE LEVELS

1. Remembering
2. Understanding
3. Applying
4. Analyzing
5. Evaluating
HOW TO PREPARE FOR EXAMS USING THE COGNITIVE LEVELS

EXAMPLE: STUDYING MEDICATIONS: FUROSEMIDE (LASIX)

**Remembering:** Memorize the classification of Furosemide (Lasix).

**Understanding:** Develop an understanding of the action of Furosemide (Lasix).

**Applying:** Identify specific patient situations where Furosemide (Lasix) would be used; Identify specific patient situations requiring the care of the patient receiving the medication.
HOW TO PREPARE FOR NURSING EXAMS USING THE COGNITIVE LEVELS
EXAMPLE: STUDYING MEDICATIONS: FUROSEMIDE (LASIX)

**Analyzing**: Differentiate among the side effects of Furosemide (Lasix) and other medications. Determine priorities and explore relationships among data.

**Evaluating**: Make decisions based on reflection; what is the expected outcome of Furosemide (Lasix).
SUMMARY

Understand parts of exam.
Understand the question.
Identify keywords & time frame.
Eliminate options.
Apply your knowledge successfully.
Recommended Videos

1. The Science Behind Memory
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mpdG3ZN1RLo
Video produced by Rutgers Today

2. Managing Test Anxiety for Health Professional Students
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SPaO3BXFiyQ
Video produced by Dr. Cathy Evans and Dr. Sharon Switzer-McIntyre. Illustrated by Meg Kirkland, University of Toronto.
REFERENCES


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