



NATIONAL COSMETOLOGY  
WRITTEN EXAMINATION

CANDIDATE INFORMATION BULLETIN

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The National Cosmetology examination is the national licensure examination for Cosmetology, which is developed and administered by the National-Interstate Council of State Boards of Cosmetology (NIC). This Candidate Information Bulletin includes the content outline covered by the NIC National Cosmetology examination, sample questions and answers. The time allowed for the Cosmetology written examination is 90 minutes.

**SCIENTIFIC  
CONCEPTS  
30%**

**Infection Control**

- ◇ Microbiology
  - Bacteria
  - Viruses
  - Parasites
  - Immunity
  - Prevention
- ◇ Methods of infection control
  - Sanitation
  - Disinfection
  - Sterilization
- ◇ Federal regulations
  - OSHA guidelines
  - Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS)
  - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
  - Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
  - Universal precautions
- ◇ First Aid
  - Minor bleeding
  - Minor burns
  - Minor eye irritation

**Human Anatomy**

- ◇ Cells
- ◇ Tissue
- ◇ Organs
  - Heart
  - Lungs
  - Skin

**Basic Physiology (Body Systems)**

- ◇ Skeletal system
  - Skull
  - Bones of the face
  - Bones of the neck
  - Bones of the shoulders
  - Bones of the arms and hands
  - Bones of the legs and feet
- ◇ Muscular system
  - Scalp muscles
  - Mastication muscles

- Mouth muscles
- Muscles of the eye and nose
- Muscles of the arms and hands
- Muscles of the legs and feet
- Muscles of the neck
- Muscles of the shoulders and upper back
- ◇ Types of joints
- ◇ Circulatory system
  - Blood-vascular or cardiovascular system
  - Lymph-vascular system
- ◇ Endocrine system
- ◇ Respiratory system
- ◇ Integumentary system
- ◇ Nervous system
- ◇ Excretory system

**Ergonomics/Body Positioning**

**Basic Principles of Chemistry**

- ◇ Matter
- ◇ The pH scale
- ◇ Nutrition
- ◇ Medication
- ◇ Compounds
- ◇ Mixtures
- ◇ Product ingredients
- ◇ Product labeling
- ◇ Product safety

**Basic Principles of Electricity**

- ◇ Electric current
- ◇ Electricity in cosmetology
  - Electrotherapy
  - Light therapy

**HAIR CARE AND SERVICES  
40%**

**Trichology**

- ◇ Properties and structure of the hair and scalp
  - Shaft
  - Root
  - Keratinization

- ◇ Hair analysis and hair quality
  - Porosity
  - Elasticity
  - Texture
  - Density
- ◇ Stages of hair growth
- ◇ Hair loss
- ◇ Conditions of the scalp and hair
  - Disorders
  - Diseases

**Draping Procedures**

- ◇ Shampooing
- ◇ Haircutting
- ◇ Chemical services
- ◇ Thermal

**Shampooing, Conditioning, Massaging and Brushing Procedures**

- ◇ Hair analysis
- ◇ Scalp analysis
- ◇ Shampooing
  - Product selection
  - Procedure
- ◇ Conditioning
  - Product selection
  - Procedure
- ◇ Scalp treatments
- ◇ Scalp massage

**Principles of Hair Design**

- ◇ Elements of hair design
  - Form
  - Line/Direction
  - Growth pattern
  - Texture
  - Color

- ◇ Principles of balance and design
- ◇ Facial shapes

**Haircutting Procedures**

- ◇ Client consultation
  - Desired look
  - Face shape
  - Lifestyle and/or climate
  - Hair analysis

- ◇ Principles of haircutting
  - Areas of the head
  - Elevation or projection
  - Lines and angles
  - Crosschecking
  - Texturizing
- ◇ Tools and safety
  - Electrical
  - Manual
- ◇ Basic haircuts
  - Solid form or blunt haircut
  - Graduated form
  - Layered form
  - Combination form

**Hairstyling Procedures**

- ◇ Client consultation
- ◇ Wet styling
- ◇ Thermal styling
- ◇ Braiding

**Wigs, Hair Enhancements and Extensions**

- ◇ Client consultation
- ◇ Wigs and hair enhancements
  - Wig composition (e.g., human or synthetic)
  - Wig construction (e.g., cap and capless)
  - Wig care
- ◇ Hair extensions and additions

**Chemical Services Consultation**

- ◇ Hair analysis
- ◇ Scalp analysis
- ◇ Predisposition (skin patch) test
- ◇ Preliminary strand test
- ◇ Desired results

**Chemical Services**

- ◇ Chemical waving
  - pH balance of chemical waves
  - Chemical waving procedures
- ◇ Chemical hair relaxers
  - pH balance of chemical hair relaxers
  - Chemical hair relaxing procedures

**Haircoloring Procedures**

- ◇ Law of color
- ◇ Types of haircolor
  - Temporary haircolor
  - Semi-and demi-permanent haircolor
  - Permanent
  - Lighteners
- ◇ Haircolor applications
  - Virgin
  - Retouch
  - Color correction

**Facial Makeup Application**

- ◇ Makeup color theory
- ◇ Cosmetic application procedures
  - Basic
  - Specialty
  - Corrective
- ◇ Artificial eyelashes
  - Predisposition test
  - Application
- ◇ Eyelash and eyebrow coloring

**SAMPLE QUESTIONS**

The following sample questions are similar to those on the NIC Cosmetology Written Examination. Each question is followed by four answer choices. Only one choice is correct. Correct answers are listed following the sample questions.

1. Which of the following substances is usually contained in a toner?
  - a. Metallic dye
  - b. Compound dye
  - c. Vegetable tint
  - d. Oxidation tint
2. Which one of the following should be applied to the skin after removal of whiteheads?
  - a. A caustic
  - b. Deodorant
  - c. An antiseptic
  - d. Bleaching cream
3. Before disinfecting combs and brushes, they should be
  - a. wiped with a towel.
  - b. wiped with a tissue.
  - c. rinsed in cold water.
  - d. cleaned with soap and warm water.
4. What is the process used in tapering and thinning with scissors?
  - a. Clipping
  - b. Slithering
  - c. Razor cutting
  - d. Layer cutting
5. The action of chemical hair relaxers causes the hair to
  - a. stop growing.
  - b. harden and set.
  - c. form new curls.
  - d. soften and swell.
6. When should a predisposition test be performed?
  - a. When the scalp has cuts
  - b. Before applying peroxide
  - c. Before every application of oxidizing tints
  - d. Before any application of vegetable coloring

7. At what part of the nail does growth start?
  - a. Wall
  - b. Matrix
  - c. Lunula
  - d. Cuticle
8. What is the function of sebum?
  - a. To dry the skin
  - b. To harden the skin
  - c. To cleanse the skin
  - d. To lubricate the skin
9. Sterilization is the process of
  - a. keeping bacteria alive.
  - b. destroying offensive odors.
  - c. destroying beneficial microorganisms only.
  - d. destroying both harmful and beneficial bacteria.
10. Where should freshly laundered towels be kept?
  - a. On a clean shelf
  - b. In any convenient place
  - c. In a closed cabinet or drawer
  - d. In neat stacks by the shampoo bowl

**SKIN CARE AND SERVICES  
15%**

**Skin Histology**

- ◇ Composition of the skin
  - Layers of the skin
  - Nerves of the skin
  - Glands of the skin
  - Types of skin
  - Skin pigmentation
- ◇ Conditions of the skin
  - Disorders
  - Diseases
- ◇ Functions of the skin

**Skin Care Services Consultation**

- ◇ Skin analysis
- ◇ Health history

**Draping Procedures for Facial Services**

**Temporary Hair Removal Procedures**

- ◇ Shaving
- ◇ Tweezing
- ◇ Waxing
- ◇ Depilatories
- ◇ Threading
- ◇ Sugaring

**Facial Procedures**

- ◇ Skin care tools
  - Equipment
  - Implements
  - Products and supplies
- ◇ Facial treatments
  - Electrical therapy
  - Massage manipulations
  - Topical applications

**NAIL CARE AND SERVICES  
15%**

**Nail Care Service Consultation**

**Nail Structure**

- ◇ Nail composition
- ◇ Nail growth
- ◇ Nail conditions
  - Disorders
  - Diseases

**Manicure and Pedicure Procedures**

- ◇ Nail care tools
  - Equipment
  - Implements
  - Products and supplies
- ◇ Types of manicures and pedicures
  - Basic manicure and pedicure
  - Specialty manicures and pedicures
- ◇ Massage procedures
  - Hand and arm massage
  - Foot and leg massage
- ◇ Infection control procedures for pedicure basin

**Advanced Nail Care**

- ◇ Preservice and postservice procedures
- ◇ Nail tips
- ◇ Nail wraps and overlays
  - Acrylics
  - Gels
- ◇ Nail art

**Answers**  
1. d   4. b   7. b   10. c  
2. c   5. d   8. d  
3. d   6. c   9. d

**PLEASE CALL PSI at  
1-800-211-2754 to take  
the COSMETOLOGY  
ONLINE PRACTICE  
TEST  
(\$30.00 fee applies)**

**COSMETOLOGY REFERENCES**

*Milady's Standard Cosmetology, 2012*

Milady  
5 Maxwell Drive  
Clifton Park, NY 12065  
(800) 347-7707  
[www.Milady.com](http://www.Milady.com)

*Salon Fundamentals, Cosmetology, 2010*

Pivot Point International, Inc.  
Evanston, IL 60201  
(800) 886-4247  
[www.pivot-point.com](http://www.pivot-point.com)

*Cosmetology Career Concepts, Haircutting, Hairdesigning, Haircoloring, and Success Dynamics, 2010*

CLiC International  
396 Pottsville-St. Clair Highway  
Pottsville, PA 17901  
(800) 207-5400  
[www.clicusa.com](http://www.clicusa.com)

NIC Health and Safety Standards

NIC, Inc., October 2002  
[www.nictesting.org](http://www.nictesting.org)

NIC Cleaning and Disinfecting of Circulating and Non Circulating Tubs and Spa's for All Industry Modalities

NIC, Inc., August 2007  
[www.nictesting.org](http://www.nictesting.org)

**OPTIONAL REFERENCES**

*Milady's Standard Cosmetology, 2004 & 2008*

Milady  
5 Maxwell Drive  
Clifton Park, NY 12065  
(800) 347-7707  
[www.Milady.com](http://www.Milady.com)

*Salon Fundamentals Cosmetology, 2006 & 2007*

Pivot Point International, Inc.  
Evanston, IL 60201  
(800) 886-4247  
[www.pivot-point.com](http://www.pivot-point.com)

*Milady's Standard Nail Technology, 2007*

Milady  
5 Maxwell Drive  
Clifton Park, NY 12065  
(800) 347-7707  
[www.Milady.com](http://www.Milady.com)

*Cleaning and Disinfecting of Circulating and Non Circulating Tubs and Spa's  
for All Industry Modalities.*

**The recommended cleaning and disinfecting standard for all circulating and non circulating tubs or spas are: (the use of eye goggles and nitrile protective gloves are recommended and exposure of the client's feet, or other skin areas of the body to disinfectants should be avoided).**

After each client or service:

1. Drain the tub.
2. Clean the tub according to manufacturer's instructions. Take special care to remove all film, especially at the water line. Rinse the tub well.
3. Fill the tub with water.
  - a. Add appropriate disinfectant into the water according to the following:
    - i. At Minimum, use an EPA registered, bactericidal, virucidal, fungicidal, and pseudomonacidal (Formulated for Hospitals) disinfectant that is mixed and used according to the manufacturer's directions, **EXCEPT TUBS THAT HAVE COME IN CONTACT WITH BLOOD OR BODY FLUIDS.**
    - ii. **If a Tub has COME IN CONTACT WITH BLOOD OR BODY FLUIDS** at minimum, an EPA registered disinfectant that is effective against HIV –1 and human Hepatitis B Virus or Tuberculocidal that is mixed and used according to the manufacturer's directions shall be used.
  - b. Allow the disinfectant to stand for non circulating tubs or to circulate for circulating tubs for the time specified according to the manufacturer's instructions.
4. **At the end of the day remove all removable parts (filters, screens drains, jets, etc)** clean and disinfect the removable parts as follows:
  - a. Scrub with a brush and soap or detergent until free from debris.
  - b. Rinse.
  - c. Completely immerse in an EPA registered, bactericidal, virucidal, fungicidal, and pseudomonacidal (Formulated for Hospitals) disinfectant that is mixed and used according to the manufacturer's directions.
  - d. Rinse.
  - e. Air dry.
5. Replace the disinfected parts into the tubs. (drains, jets, etc) or, store them in a disinfected, dry, covered container that is isolated from contaminants.

Salons are choosing to purchase extra drains and removable parts so the parts can immediately be changed out with pre disinfected parts saving time between clients. If so, any part which has COME IN CONTACT WITH BLOOD OR BODY FLUIDS must at minimum be disinfected with an EPA registered disinfectant that is effective against HIV –1 and human Hepatitis B Virus or Tuberculocidal that is mixed and used according to the manufacturer's directions. Storage as in number 5 above.

**Adopted August 2007**