



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.*

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 and 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**

- 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**

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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 of which 100 items are weighted and contribute to the candidate's final score.

**DOMAIN 1: SCIENTIFIC CONCEPTS (30%)**

**A. Infection Control and Safety Practices**

1. Identify how disease and infection are caused and transmitted
2. Recognize purpose and/or effects of infection control principles
  - a. Levels of infection control:
    - i. Sanitation/Cleaning
    - ii. Disinfection
    - iii. Sterilization
  - b. Process of infection control:
    - i. Recognize when cross-contamination occurs
    - ii. Prevention of cross-contamination
    - iii. Differentiate between the purpose of single- and multi-use tools
3. Apply blood contact procedures
4. Identify requirements of government agencies:
  - a. OSHA standards
  - b. EPA

**B. Human Anatomy and Physiology**

1. Identify function and structure of the:
  - a. Hair and scalp
  - b. Skin
  - c. Nails
2. Identify 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

**C. Basic Chemistry of Products Used in Cosmetology**

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

**DOMAIN 2: HAIR CARE AND SERVICES (40%)**

**A. Client Consultation, Analysis and Documentation for Hair Care Services**

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

**B. Tools used in Hair Care Services**

1. Identify function, purpose and infection control procedures of tools used in hair services:
  - a. Equipment (e.g., chair, workstation)
  - b. Implements (e.g., razors, shears, combs/brushes)
  - c. Supplies and materials (e.g., towels, drape, neck strips)
  - d. Electrical tools (e.g. irons, blow dryers, clippers)
  - e. Proper disinfection procedures
2. Recognize safe practices for use of tools (i.e., equipment, implements, supplies, ergonomics)

**C. Hair Care**

1. Apply knowledge of principles and procedures for shampooing and conditioning
2. Apply knowledge of principles and procedures for scalp treatments and scalp massage
3. Apply knowledge of draping (e.g. chemical, shampoo, cutting)

**D. Hair Design**

1. Apply knowledge of principles, procedures and safety of hair cutting and shaping
2. Apply knowledge of principles, procedures and safety of hair styling:
  - a. Wet styling
  - b. Thermal styling
  - c. Natural hair styling (e.g., braiding)
3. Apply knowledge of principles, procedures and safety related to hair enhancements:
  - a. Extension application and removal:
    - i. Braid and sew attachment
    - ii. Bonding
    - iii. Fusion bonding
    - iv. Tube shrinking
    - v. Linking
4. Apply principles of balance and design (e.g. facial shape, physical structure)

**E. Chemical Services**

1. Apply knowledge of principles, procedures and safety for:
  - a. Hair coloring (including corrective color)
  - b. Hair lightening
  - c. Foiling
  - d. Chemical hair relaxing/restructuring and curl reduction
    - i. Hydroxide
    - ii. Thio
    - iii. Keratin
  - e. Chemical waving/texturizing:
    - i. Alkaline
    - ii. Acid
    - iii. Non-thio
    - iv. Keratin

**DOMAIN 3: SKIN CARE AND SERVICES (15%)**

A. Client Consultation, Analysis and Documentation for Skin Care Services

1. Evaluate condition of client's skin:
  - a. Skin type
  - b. Skin condition
2. Identify contraindications:
  - a. Disorders
  - b. Diseases
3. Determine services and products
4. Establish/Maintain client records (e.g., service history, client card, medical history)

B. Tools used for skin care services

1. Identify function, purpose and infection control procedures of tools:
  - a. Equipment (e.g., chair, steamer)
  - b. Implements (e.g., tweezers, brushes, extractors)
  - c. Supplies, products, and materials (e.g., creams, masks, towels, body and hair drapes)
  - d. Proper disinfection procedures
2. Recognize and understand safe practices for use of tools (i.e., equipment, implements, supplies, and ergonomics)

C. Facial skin care services

1. Apply knowledge of principles, procedures and safety for:
  - a. Cleansing
  - b. Steaming
  - c. Exfoliation
  - d. Extraction
  - e. Massage
  - f. Masks
  - g. Hair Removal:
    - i. Tweezing
    - ii. Depilatory
    - iii. Hard wax
    - iv. Soft wax
  - h. Makeup application
  - i. Electrical equipment

**DOMAIN 4: NAIL CARE AND SERVICES (15%)**

A. Client Consultation, Analysis and Documentation for nail care services

1. Evaluate condition of client's nails
2. Identify contraindications:
  - a. Disorders
  - b. Diseases
3. Determine services and products
4. Establish/Maintain client records (e.g., service history, client card, medical history)

B. Tools used in nail care services

1. Identify function, purpose and infection control procedures of tools:
  - a. Equipment (e.g., workstation, pedicure basin)
  - b. Implements (e.g., nippers, file)

- c. Supplies, products, and materials (e.g., towels, creams, polish)
- d. Proper disinfection procedures
- 2. Recognize and understand safe practices for use of tools (i.e., equipment, implements, supplies, and ergonomics)

C. Apply knowledge of principles, procedures and safety for basic manicure and pedicure

D. Apply knowledge of principles, procedures and safety for application, maintenance, and removal of nail enhancements:

- 1. Nail tips
- 2. Acrylics

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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) pediculous capitalis.
  - (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

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.iqtesting.com/registrationv2008/quickregister.aspx) or go to:  
<https://www.iqtesting.com/registrationv2008/quickregister.aspx> (\$39.00 fee applies)  
For assistance, please call IQT at 1-866-773-1114.