



NATIONAL COSMETOLOGY  
WRITTEN PRACTICAL 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 Written Practical 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 Written Practical examination, sample questions and answers. The time allowed for the Cosmetology Written Practical Examination is 120 minutes.

For each NIC National Written Practical 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 Written Practical examination and information and guidelines related to administration of the Written Practical 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, Written Practical, 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 WRITTEN PRACTICAL EXAMINATION  
CONTENT OUTLINE**

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The following outlines the scope of content covered by the NIC National Cosmetology Written Practical Examination. The percentages represent the percentage of items from each domain. Some of the items on this exam will contain images or media, or will ask the candidate to make multiple selections. The examination is comprised of 75 items of which 65 items are weighted and contribute to the candidate's final score.

**DOMAIN 1: Scientific Concepts (20%)**

**A. Infection Control and Safety Practices**

1. Recognize purpose and/or effects of infection control principles
  - a. Process of infection control: Recognize when cross-contamination occurs
  - b. Process of infection control: Prevention of cross-contamination
  - c. Process of infection control: Differentiate between the purpose of single- and multi-use tools
2. Apply blood contact procedures

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

1. Recognize purpose and effects of products and ingredients
2. Recognize physical interactions with chemicals
3. Recognize chemical reactions (e.g., overexposure, chemical burn)

**DOMAIN 2: Hair Care and Services (45%)**

**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 of hair enhancements
- 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: Hydroxide
  - e. Chemical hair relaxing/restructuring and curl reduction: Thio
  - f. Chemical hair relaxing/restructuring and curl reduction: Keratin
  - g. Chemical waving/texturizing: Alkaline
  - h. Chemical waving/texturizing: Acid
  - i. Chemical waving/texturizing: Non-thio
  - j. Chemical waving/texturizing: 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, 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: Tweezing
  - h. Hair Removal: Depilatory
  - i. Hair Removal: Hard wax

- j. Hair Removal: Soft wax
- k. Makeup application
- l. Electrical equipment

**DOMAIN 4: Nail Care and Services (20%)**

**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, 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

**NIC NATIONAL COSMETOLOGY WRITTEN PRACTICAL EXAMINATION CIB**

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**COSMETOLOGY WRITTEN PRACTICAL EXAMINATION**

**SAMPLE QUESTIONS**

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The following five (5) sample questions are similar to those on the NIC Cosmetology Written Practical Examination. Correct answers (keys) are listed following the sample questions.

1. The **FIRST** step prior to disinfecting implements is to
  - (A) rinse thoroughly with hot water.
  - (B) remove all hair and visible debris.
  - (C) completely immerse in a sanitizing solution.
  - (D) expose to UV light for 15 minutes.
  
2. The application of facial makeup will become unsafe when which of the following occurs?
  - (A) Product is transferred to a pallet
  - (B) Fingers are used to transfer product to a pallet
  - (C) Hand is used to brace during application
  - (D) Fingers are used for product application
  
3. During the client consultation for a manicure, the practitioner determines the client has brittle nails. Which of the following treatments is recommended for this condition?
  - (A) Apply a clear top coat
  - (B) Perform a paraffin treatment
  - (C) Conditioning oil manicure
  - (D) Buff with 3-way buffer

4. Please select all images of multi-use items.



5. Select the finger hole on the image below.



**KEY:**  
1: B  
2: B  
3: C  
4: A, C  
5: B