

CALIFORNIA COSMETOLOGY LAST-MINUTE CRAM SHEET

Exam tomorrow? Use the time you have left intelligently.

This is a rapid-priority review for the current California cosmetologist written examination. It is not a substitute for the official candidate bulletin or your full course materials.

CURRENT EXAM FORMAT

100 scored questions + 10 unscored pretest questions. 120 minutes total. California uses PSI's national cosmetologist theory examination.

STUDY BY WEIGHT, NOT BY HABIT

Safety & Infection Control: 30% | Client Consultation + Hair/Skin/Nail Analysis: 19% | Chemical Texture Services: 12% | Haircoloring: 10% | Hair Removal: 8% | Nail Care: 8% | Skin Care: 4% | Eyelash & Eyebrow: 4% | Haircutting: 3% | Hairstyling: 2%

The first two areas alone = 49% of the scored exam.

If you are genuinely short on time, do not give every topic equal study time.

1. SAFETY & INFECTION CONTROL - 30%

Your highest-priority review area

KNOW THESE DISTINCTIONS

Cleaning = physical removal of visible dirt and debris. | Disinfection = use of an appropriate disinfectant on nonporous tools and surfaces. | Sterilization = destruction of all microbial life, including bacterial spores.

HIGH-VALUE SAFETY TOPICS

Exposure prevention and infectious disease basics; cleaning/disinfection procedures for contaminated tools, machines, and workstations; single-use vs. multi-use items; exposure-incident procedures; labeling and storage of disinfected tools; Safety Data Sheets (SDS); chemical labeling/storage; federal safety rules; identifying adverse reactions; client barriers/draping; ventilation; electrical safety.

TEST-MINDSET SHORTCUT

When two answers differ mainly in convenience versus client protection, look carefully for the choice that best prevents contamination, avoids an unsafe service, or protects the client and practitioner. Use this as a reasoning aid - not as a substitute for knowing the actual rule.

2. CLIENT CONSULTATION + HAIR, SKIN & NAIL ANALYSIS - 19%

Your second-biggest priority

BEFORE ANY SERVICE

Use client intake and consent information to identify possible contraindications. Know when to alter or decline a service, and when the client should seek medical advice. Base the service on the condition of the hair, skin, scalp, and nails - not only on what the client requests.

ANALYSIS + CONTRAINDICATIONS

Review hair, skin, and nail structure and analysis; hair/scalp diseases and disorders; skin diseases and disorders; nail diseases and disorders; allergic-reaction (patch) testing; signs of adverse reactions during and after services; contraindications to manicure/pedicure services; contraindications to nail enhancements.

REMEMBER

A good consultation is a safety decision. If the condition of the client, hair, skin, scalp, or nails makes the planned service unsafe, the correct response may be to modify, postpone, or decline it.

3. CHEMICAL TEXTURE - 12%

WHAT TO REVIEW

Virgin-hair application and removal; chemically treated hair; relaxers, chemical texturing products, and permanent waving; assessing results; safe use of chemical texturing products; precautions before, during, and after the service.

WATCH FOR

Questions where the hair or scalp condition changes whether - or how - the chemical service should be performed.

4. HAIRCOLORING - 10%

HIGH-VALUE COLOR TOPICS

Application of haircolor to different hair types; strand testing; hair and scalp preparation; facial-hair color applications such as eyebrows/eyelashes; safe chemical mixing; overprocessed hair; metallic or compound dyes and minerals; lighteners; color theory, formulation, and product selection.

5. HAIR REMOVAL - 8%

CORE REVIEW

Safe use of depilatories, waxing, sugaring, tweezing, and threading; appropriate tools, supplies, and products; infection-control precautions and cross-contamination; gloves when appropriate; contraindications to hair-removal services.

6. NAIL CARE - 8%

CORE REVIEW

Safe use of nail products, tools, and equipment; filing and buffing; cuticle removal; manicure and pedicure procedures; ventilation and particulate control; infection control at the nail station; natural-nail procedures and repair; artificial nail enhancements, maintenance, repair, and removal.

SMALLER AREAS - 13% COMBINED

4% SKIN CARE | 4% EYELASH & EYEBROW | 3% HAIRCUTTING | 2% HAIRSTYLING

Know safe facial and massage procedures, exfoliation, hot towels and devices; eyelash enhancement and tinting safety; haircutting across hair types and safe use of cutting tools; textured styling, additions, blowdrying, thermal curling, and thermal-tool precautions.

YOUR EXAM TOMORROW: A SIMPLE 3-HOUR STUDY PLAN

Allocate time roughly by expected value

60 min Safety & Infection Control

40 min Client Consultation + Hair/Skin/Nail Analysis

25 min Chemical Texture Services

20 min Haircoloring

20 min Hair Removal + Nail Care

15 min Rapid review of everything else

FINAL 15-MINUTE PASS

Re-scan the distinctions most likely to blur under pressure: clean vs. disinfect vs. sterilize; contraindication vs. safe modification; strand/patch testing; client protection; single-use vs. reusable; safe chemical handling.

FINAL RAPID REVIEW

Know these before you walk in

1. Cleaning removes visible debris; disinfection is for appropriate nonporous tools/surfaces; sterilization destroys all microbial life.
2. Single-use items are discarded after use; reusable items must follow proper cleaning/disinfection procedures.
3. Consultation is about safety and contraindications, not just client preference.
4. Recognize when a service should be altered, delayed, or declined.
5. Know the purpose of patch and strand testing.
6. Chemical services require hair/scalp analysis and attention to prior chemical history.
7. Ventilation, electrical safety, SDS information, chemical labeling/storage, and PPE can all matter.
8. For hair removal and nail care, infection control and contraindications are recurring themes.
9. Do not spend the same amount of time on a 2% topic as on a 30% topic if time is limited.

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