

# MID-STATE TECHNICAL COLLEGE SPECIFIC STUDY TECHNIQUES FOR NURSING EXAMS

Adapted from Maria College Albany, New York

The registered nurse uses a variety of thinking processes when caring for clients. So, the nursing faculty will evaluate your thinking process on the unit exams. The types of thinking processes which the MSTC nursing faculty tests include are:

- Knowledge/comprehension
- Application
- Higher level (Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation)

A knowledge question requires the lowest level of thinking (memorizing and recalling information) while a higher level question requires the highest degree of thinking (comparing, contrasting, and investigating information).

## KNOWLEDGE/COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Knowledge questions require you to recall or remember information. To answer the questions correctly, you have to recall information. Knowledge/comprehension questions expect you to know terminology, facts, effects, categories and implications.

A right-handed person would write with their:

- a. left hand
- b. right hand\*
- c. both hands
- d. neither

To answer this question, you have to know what right-handed means and its effect on writing.

## APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Application questions require you to utilize the knowledge that you have learned. To answer an application question, you must take the remembered and comprehended information and apply it to client situations. Application questions test your ability to use information in a client scenario.

An elderly client's skin looks dry. When providing back care, the nurse should:

- a. apply a moisturizing body lotion\*
- b. wash the back with strong soap and water
- c. massage using short kneading strokes
- d. leave excess lubricant on the client's skin

To answer this question, you must know that dry skin is common in the elderly and that moisturizing lotion helps the skin to retain water and become more supple. When presented with this scenario, you have to apply your knowledge concerning developmental changes in the elderly and the consequences of using moisturizing lotion.

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## HIGHER LEVEL QUESTIONS

Higher level questions require you to analyze a variety of data and recognize the commonalities, differences, and relationships among the presented ideas. Higher level questions make the assumptions that you know, understand, and can apply the information. Now you must identify, examine, dissect, evaluate or investigate the information presented in the scenario. This type of question tests your analytical ability.

A client has dependent edema of the ankles and feet and is obese. The nurse should expect the health care provider to order which of the following diets?

- a. low in potassium and high in fat
- b. low in salt and low in calories\*
- c. high in calcium and low in vitamin C
- d. high in magnesium and high in carbohydrates

To answer this question, you have to understand the inherent relationship between salt in the diet and fluid retention, and obesity and caloric intake. You also must understand the impact of vitamins and minerals, carbohydrates, proteins and fats in a diet for a client with edema and obesity. When you answer this question, you must understand and examine the information presented, identify the interrelationships among the elements and arrive at a conclusion.

## PARTS OF THE QUESTION

The stem is the initial part of a multiple-choice item. The purpose of the stem is to present a problem in a clear and concise manner. The stem should contain all the details necessary to answer the question. The types of stems are:

- a. complete sentence  
example: What should the nurse do first when the client asks to get out of bed?
- b. incomplete sentence  
example: To best meet the client's needs, the nurse should:
- c. positive  
example: The nurse understands that the underlying issue with the client is:
- d. negative  
example: The nurse should avoid which of the following situations?

## TIPS FOR ANSWERING QUESTIONS

- Determine what the question is asking.
- Determine most important facts.
- Read the question again.
- Sometimes rephrase the question in your mind.
- Choose the BEST option (more than one answer may be correct. Choose the Best.)
- Always assess before intervening unless you were given assessment data.

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### MORE TIPS FOR ANSWERING QUESTIONS

If the question asks you what to do in a situation, use the nursing process to determine which step is next.

If the question asks what the client needs, use Maslow's Hierarchy to determine what to do first.

If the question indicated that the client doesn't have an urgent physiological need, always focus on safety. Remember to choose A, B, C, and then safety.

Always choose the physical answer before the psychological answer if there are any urgent physiological data in the question.

If the question involves communicating with a patient, use the principles of therapeutic communication.

### PRIORITY QUESTIONS

Read the stem carefully while looking for key words such as "first," "initially," "best," and "most." These words modify what is being asked. This type of question requires you to put a value on each option and then place them in rank order. All of the answers may be correct to some degree; however there is one answer that you would do **FIRST**.

Which of the following would be a *priority* for a nursing student the night before an exam?

- Working all night and getting no sleep
- Attending a party with free alcoholic beverages
- Studying with another student and testing each other\*
- Planning a vacation and making the reservations

The state licensing exam (NCLEX-RN) tests almost exclusively from the higher order, priority question standpoint. Therefore, as you progress through the nursing program, you will be tested progressively toward this goal. Below you will find a chart of the testing criteria for your four semesters in the MSTC Nursing Program. Please ask any full-time faculty member for more information on the testing criteria.

Semester	% Knowledge	% Comprehension	% Application	% Higher Level (Analysis, Synthesis, Evaluation)
<b>FIRST</b>	30	40	20	10
<b>SECOND</b>	20	30	35	15
<b>THIRD</b>	10	15	40	35
<b>FOURTH</b>	0	5	45	50

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