

TAKING A NURSING TEST: PRIORITIZATION & SELECTING THE BEST RESPONSE

General Tips for Answering Test Questions:

- Always identify the stem of the question and read it carefully. If you are uncertain, time permitting, read it twice.
- Try and formulate the answer in your mind before reading the answer choices- this technique helps prevent selecting distractors as your answer choice.
- Answer choices that include absolutes such as always, never, none, must, etc., are usually incorrect.
- Nursing tests are written for an ideal world. Assume you have the materials needed to perform skills if they are answer choices and that you have unlimited time.
- Pay attention to time frames in questions such as preoperative, first day postoperative, early sign, late sign, etc., as these affect expected outcomes for the patient.
- Pay close attention to specific details included about that patient such as race, age, and gender as these might be crucial to selecting the best answer.
 - Example:
 - Which safety precaution is the nurse's **priority** when caring for a **29yo female patient** receiving chemotherapy?
 - A. Double gloving when handling chemotherapeutic agents
 - B. Handwashing frequently
 - C. Wearing a mask when accessing the patient's central line
 - D. Making sure the patient receives a pregnancy test before administration of any chemotherapeutic agent
 - Correct Answer: D
 - Rationale: At first glance all of the answer choices included are correct. A patient receiving chemotherapy is going to be prone to infection making B and C necessary nursing actions. The nurse should double glove when handling chemotherapeutic agents because they can cause harm to the nurse (A). However, the question asks for the safety priority and specifically includes a female patient of child bearing age- making D the MOST correct answer choice.
- Pay attention to answer choices that include false words such as not or except- these questions are looking for a WRONG or inappropriate nursing actions.
 - Examples:
 - Which action by the student nurse **requires correction** from the clinical instructor when the student nurse is administering an IV push medication?
 - A 13yo male present to the ED with right lower quadrant abdominal pain, nausea, and a white cell count of 18,000. The nurse should perform all of the following actions **except**?

Prioritization Techniques:

- Look for key words that indicate you will need to prioritize such as initial, best, first, and priority.
 - Example:
 - The nurse is monitoring the patient's telemetry and notes the patient is in sinus bradycardia with a HR 30bpm and obtains a blood pressure reading of 60/40. What should be the nurse's **initial** response?

ABCs – Life Saving Tips for Managing Priority Questions:

- Follow your ABCs of nursing- **A**irway, **B**reathing, and **C**irculation.
- Use Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.
- Follow the nursing process when selecting appropriate nursing actions. Always ask yourself- has the patient been fully assessed? Do I need to assess my patient?
- Try to select nursing actions that immediately benefit the patient such as raising the head of the bed if the patient is having trouble breathing.
- Do not call the doctor unless the patient has been fully assessed and there is not an answer choice of an independent nursing action that immediately benefits the patient.