

# **Physical Therapist Assistant Exam Review Guide**

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The purpose of the *Physical Therapist Assistant Exam Review Guide* is to help physical therapist assistant (PTA) candidates prepare for the National Physical Therapy Examination (NPTE) for Physical Therapist Assistants. All jurisdictions that license PTAs require the candidate to successfully complete the NPTE. These requirements may differ from state to state or within the same state. Licensure of healthcare practitioners by the states and other jurisdictions of the United States is a means by which the public is protected from incompetent or immoral practitioners. The Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy (FSBPT) develops, maintains, and administers the National Physical Therapy Examinations (NPTE) for physical therapists (PTs) and PTAs.

The NPTE for PTAs is offered on the computer at over 300 Prometric Testing Centers within the United States. The exam content is divided into three large groups of questions. The largest portion of the examination content, approximately 73%, falls into the actual delivery of physical therapy interventions to patients throughout the life span and affecting different body systems. Of the remainder of the examination, approximately 15% involves understanding and use of equipment and devices and the application of therapeutic modalities while the other 12% focuses on safety and professional roles, teaching/learning, and evidence-based practice. In terms of emphasis placed on the various systems, the FSBPT 2010 Candidate Handbook provides the following information: musculoskeletal (21.33%), neuromuscular (20%), cardiovascular/pulmonary (12.67%), integumentary (6%), other systems (12.67%), and non-systems (27.33%).

To sit for the NPTE for PTAs, the candidate must contact the state or jurisdiction in which he or she plans to apply for a license. Once the completed application has been returned to the appropriate agency, along with all necessary monies and documentation, the state forwards this paperwork to the Federation of State Boards

of Physical Therapy (FSBPT), which then sends an authorization-to-test letter providing a timeline for taking the examination.

The NPTE for PTAs is a 200-question (50 pretest with 150 scored), multiple-choice examination designed to determine if a candidate possesses the minimal competency necessary to practice as a physical therapist assistant. The 200 questions, each with four possible choices, are administered to candidates in four sections consisting of 50 questions each, with each section containing pretest items and scored items. The questions are designed to test a candidate's knowledge, comprehension, application, and analysis of a variety of clinical scenarios.

Candidates have four hours to complete the four sections, which are not timed individually, so candidates must effectively manage the allotted time. Therefore, time management is critical. Candidates are unable to return to previously completed sections once a new section is initiated. Candidates have the opportunity to take one scheduled break at the conclusion of section 2, immediately prior to beginning section 3. Additional unscheduled breaks can be taken at the conclusion of a given section; however, the elapsed time will not stop. It is important to complete all of the questions, even if educated guesses must be used for some of the questions. Given the importance of this test, every effort must be made to obtain a successful passing score—some states limit the number of times one may take the NPTE for PTAs. Three times per 12-month period is the limit for sitting for the examination, with some states allowing only three opportunities to take the NPTE for PTAs in total.

*Physical Therapist Assistant Exam Review Guide* is designed to equip candidates with excellent study tools intended to review the required level of didactic information and to prepare the candidate for the examination by focusing on the key topic areas. The NPTE for PTAs is aimed to test a candidate's ability to apply the didactic knowledge in clinical situations, so without this

knowledge the candidate will find the examination extremely difficult. The candidate is faced with wondering how much time should be spent on studying, and whether he or she is sufficiently prepared to take the examination. Usually, 4 to 6 weeks of independent, structured review is adequate.

Included in this book is the essential information of each subject area in an easy-to-study design. Illustrations, Key Point boxes, and tables are provided to help retain information. The information presented in this study guide is intended to be all-inclusive so candidates do not have to use a number of texts to study for the exam. While it is hoped that the majority of information presented is familiar to candidates, some areas may require additional study prior to the examination. In addition to the chapters covering musculoskeletal, neuromuscular, cardiovascular, pulmonary, pediatric, geriatric, and integumentary physical therapy, there are also chapters on special topics such as administration, research, pharmacology, orthotics/prosthetics, therapeutic modalities, gait and functional training, therapeutic exercise, pediatrics, geriatrics, and cardiovascular, pulmonary, integumentary, and pathological/psychological conditions. Given the important roles that therapeutic exercise and both the musculoskeletal

and neurologic systems play in the field of physical therapy, greater emphasis is placed on these subject areas, as reflected in the relative size of their respective chapters.

The questions at the end of each chapter are designed to assess the reader's theoretical knowledge. Ideally, the end-of-chapter questions should be attempted prior to taking the sample simulated NPTE for PTAs examination provided online.

The online simulated exam questions are designed to determine if the candidate has sufficient mastery of a particular content area and is able to apply it accurately to the clinical situation described in the question. The software is designed so the candidate has the ability to revisit questions he or she would like to view again. At the end of the examination, the software can help diagnose the strengths and vulnerabilities of the candidate's academic and clinical backgrounds by providing a performance analysis, which offers feedback with regard to areas of vulnerability and strength, emphasizing those areas that require additional study.

It is hoped that the contents of *Physical Therapist Assistant Exam Review Guide* and the online examination will help the reader organize and focus his or her study in the most efficient and effective manner.





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