

Legal and Ethical Aspects of Nursing Practice Test (Sample)

Study Guide



Everything you need from our exam experts!

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Introduction

Preparing for a certification exam can feel overwhelming, but with the right tools, it becomes an opportunity to build confidence, sharpen your skills, and move one step closer to your goals. At Examzify, we believe that effective exam preparation isn't just about memorization, it's about understanding the material, identifying knowledge gaps, and building the test-taking strategies that lead to success.

This guide was designed to help you do exactly that.

Whether you're preparing for a licensing exam, professional certification, or entry-level qualification, this book offers structured practice to reinforce key concepts. You'll find a wide range of multiple-choice questions, each followed by clear explanations to help you understand not just the right answer, but why it's correct.

The content in this guide is based on real-world exam objectives and aligned with the types of questions and topics commonly found on official tests. It's ideal for learners who want to:

- Practice answering questions under realistic conditions,
- Improve accuracy and speed,
- Review explanations to strengthen weak areas, and
- Approach the exam with greater confidence.

We recommend using this book not as a stand-alone study tool, but alongside other resources like flashcards, textbooks, or hands-on training. For best results, we recommend working through each question, reflecting on the explanation provided, and revisiting the topics that challenge you most.

Remember: successful test preparation isn't about getting every question right the first time, it's about learning from your mistakes and improving over time. Stay focused, trust the process, and know that every page you turn brings you closer to success.

Let's begin.

How to Use This Guide

This guide is designed to help you study more effectively and approach your exam with confidence. Whether you're reviewing for the first time or doing a final refresh, here's how to get the most out of your Examzify study guide:

1. Start with a Diagnostic Review

Skim through the questions to get a sense of what you know and what you need to focus on. Your goal is to identify knowledge gaps early.

2. Study in Short, Focused Sessions

Break your study time into manageable blocks (e.g. 30 - 45 minutes). Review a handful of questions, reflect on the explanations.

3. Learn from the Explanations

After answering a question, always read the explanation, even if you got it right. It reinforces key points, corrects misunderstandings, and teaches subtle distinctions between similar answers.

4. Track Your Progress

Use bookmarks or notes (if reading digitally) to mark difficult questions. Revisit these regularly and track improvements over time.

5. Simulate the Real Exam

Once you're comfortable, try taking a full set of questions without pausing. Set a timer and simulate test-day conditions to build confidence and time management skills.

6. Repeat and Review

Don't just study once, repetition builds retention. Re-attempt questions after a few days and revisit explanations to reinforce learning. Pair this guide with other Examzify tools like flashcards, and digital practice tests to strengthen your preparation across formats.

There's no single right way to study, but consistent, thoughtful effort always wins. Use this guide flexibly, adapt the tips above to fit your pace and learning style. You've got this!

Questions

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- 1. If an older adult shows signs of potential elder abuse, what is the best initial nursing action?**
 - A. Cover the bruises with bandages**
 - B. Take photographs of the bruises**
 - C. Ask the patient if anyone has hit her**
 - D. Report the bruises to the charge nurse**

- 2. When asked to perform a procedure that the nurse has never done before, what should the nurse do to legally protect himself or herself?**
 - A. Go ahead and do it**
 - B. Refuse to perform it, citing lack of knowledge**
 - C. Discuss it with the charge nurse, asking for direction**
 - D. Ask another nurse who has performed the procedure**

- 3. Why are professional interpreters important, and what are the legal implications of language barriers in consent?**
 - A. They speed up care.**
 - B. They enhance hospital revenue.**
 - C. They ensure accurate communication and valid consent.**
 - D. They are optional.**

- 4. Which statement best reflects the purpose of advance directives?**
 - A. They provide patient preferences for life-sustaining treatment.**
 - B. They automatically compel clinicians to withhold treatment.**
 - C. They have no legal or ethical significance.**
 - D. They only apply to outpatient care.**

- 5. Why is accurate, complete, and timely documentation essential in legal risk management?**
 - A. It delays care**
 - B. It provides evidence of care, supports decisions, aids communication, and helps defend against allegations of negligence; falsification is illegal and professional misconduct**
 - C. It is optional**
 - D. It should never be shared with the patient**

- 6. What are the ethical and legal implications of recording or sharing patient information without consent?**
- A. Violates confidentiality and privacy laws; consent or permissible disclosure must be obtained**
 - B. It is permissible in emergencies without consent**
 - C. It has no impact on licensure or discipline**
 - D. It is ethical if the information is non-sensitive**
- 7. What is the appropriate approach to surrogate decisions when patient values are known?**
- A. Follow surrogate wishes no matter what**
 - B. Always refuse surrogate input**
 - C. Use surrogate input but prioritize patient known values and best interests; document**
 - D. Do not involve surrogate in decision-making**
- 8. Which term describes the willingness to take credit and blame for actions?**
- A. Responsibility**
 - B. Accountability**
 - C. Credibility**
 - D. Liability**
- 9. Which statement best describes a common confidentiality exception for adolescent health care?**
- A. All information is confidential**
 - B. Disclosure only with parental consent**
 - C. Safety concerns requiring disclosure**
 - D. Confidentiality never overrides privacy**
- 10. Which element should be documented in consent discussions to protect patient autonomy and legal rights?**
- A. The exact time the consent was given**
 - B. The name of the surgeon performing the procedure**
 - C. The patient's stated preferences**
 - D. Identity of who provided consent, what information was given, patient understanding, decisional capacity, and witnesses or interpreters involved**

Answers

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1. D
2. C
3. C
4. A
5. B
6. A
7. C
8. B
9. C
10. D

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Explanations

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1. If an older adult shows signs of potential elder abuse, what is the best initial nursing action?

- A. Cover the bruises with bandages**
- B. Take photographs of the bruises**
- C. Ask the patient if anyone has hit her**
- D. Report the bruises to the charge nurse**

Suspected elder abuse must be addressed by promptly reporting it through the proper channels to protect the patient and trigger the mandatory reporting process. The best initial action is to notify the charge nurse, who will initiate formal reporting to the appropriate authorities (such as adult protective services) and coordinate next steps, including documentation and safety planning. This upholds professional responsibility, adheres to facility policy and legal requirements, and ensures the patient's safety is addressed without delaying action. Covering the bruises hides potential abuse and delays protection. Attempting to gather evidence by photographing or questioning the patient about abuse can violate privacy and may not be appropriate or safe to do without proper support and policy guidance. The priority is to escalate to the supervisor so the proper, lawful steps can be taken.

2. When asked to perform a procedure that the nurse has never done before, what should the nurse do to legally protect himself or herself?

- A. Go ahead and do it**
- B. Refuse to perform it, citing lack of knowledge**
- C. Discuss it with the charge nurse, asking for direction**
- D. Ask another nurse who has performed the procedure**

When a nurse is asked to perform a procedure they have never done, the priority is to ensure patient safety and stay within professional scope by obtaining proper guidance from a supervisor. Discussing the request with the charge nurse allows the nurse to receive direction about whether the task is appropriate, whether additional training or supervision is required, and who should perform or oversee the procedure. This protects the nurse legally by showing proactive reliance on authority, clarifies accountability, and helps ensure the patient receives care under competent supervision. Going ahead without guidance can expose both patient and nurse to risk and potential liability. Simply refusing because of lack of knowledge may leave the patient without needed care, and asking another nurse who has performed the procedure may not provide official authorization or supervision. The best course is to seek direction from the charge nurse to determine the appropriate, supervised path forward.

3. Why are professional interpreters important, and what are the legal implications of language barriers in consent?

- A. They speed up care.**
- B. They enhance hospital revenue.**
- C. They ensure accurate communication and valid consent.**
- D. They are optional.**

Helping patients understand what they are agreeing to is essential for patient autonomy and legal protection in healthcare. When language barriers exist, without a professional interpreter the information about the procedure, risks, benefits, and alternatives may be misunderstood or incomplete. A professional interpreter renders the medical information accurately and completely, checks for understanding, and clarifies questions, ensuring the patient's consent is informed and voluntary. This not only supports ethical practice but also strengthens the legal validity of consent, reducing the risk of claims alleging that the patient did not truly understand or that consent was coerced or improperly obtained. Interpreters also protect confidentiality and help navigate cultural nuances that can affect decision-making. Relying on family members or ad hoc interpreters can introduce errors and breaches of privacy, which is why professional interpretation is the standard. The other options miss the core purpose: interpreters do not primarily speed care or boost revenue, and their use is not optional when a patient has limited proficiency in the primary language.

4. Which statement best reflects the purpose of advance directives?

- A. They provide patient preferences for life-sustaining treatment.**
- B. They automatically compel clinicians to withhold treatment.**
- C. They have no legal or ethical significance.**
- D. They only apply to outpatient care.**

Advance directives document patient preferences for life-sustaining treatment so decisions about care can reflect what the patient would want when they cannot speak for themselves. They usually cover choices about resuscitation, mechanical ventilation, artificial nutrition and hydration, and may name a health care proxy to make decisions if needed. The key point is honoring the patient's autonomy and values by guiding clinicians and surrogates to provide care that aligns with those wishes, reducing uncertainty and family distress during difficult times. They are not a blanket rule that requires withholding treatment; they are preferences that clinicians interpret within the medical situation and legal framework. They do have legal and ethical significance and apply across all care settings, not just outpatient care.

5. Why is accurate, complete, and timely documentation essential in legal risk management?

A. It delays care

B. It provides evidence of care, supports decisions, aids communication, and helps defend against allegations of negligence; falsification is illegal and professional misconduct

C. It is optional

D. It should never be shared with the patient

Accurate, complete, and timely documentation creates a legal record of care. It shows what was done, when, and by whom, and it records the patient's condition, responses, and the rationale for decisions. This documentation supports clear communication among all members of the care team, ensures continuity of care, and demonstrates adherence to professional standards. In legal risk management, the chart often serves as the primary source of evidence if a claim of negligence arises, so entries that reflect the actual care provided help defend against allegations. Falsification or fabrication of records is illegal and constitutes professional misconduct, which can lead to serious disciplinary and legal consequences.

6. What are the ethical and legal implications of recording or sharing patient information without consent?

A. Violates confidentiality and privacy laws; consent or permissible disclosure must be obtained

B. It is permissible in emergencies without consent

C. It has no impact on licensure or discipline

D. It is ethical if the information is non-sensitive

Recording or sharing patient information without consent clashes with both ethical duties and legal protections that guard patient privacy. Nurses are entrusted with confidential information, and that trust exists because patients have a right to control who sees their personal health data and for what purpose. Legally, disclosures are permitted only with patient authorization or under narrowly defined exceptions (for treatment, payment, health care operations, or when required by law), and even then they must be minimized and safeguarded. A disclosure without proper authorization can trigger civil liability, professional discipline, and even licensure consequences. Hospitals and providers often have emergency provisions, but these are limited and require appropriate justification, documentation, and adherence to policy. They do not justify indiscriminate sharing of information. Even information that seems non-sensitive is protected by confidentiality rules and should be shared only with those who need it to provide care or to fulfill legal requirements.

7. What is the appropriate approach to surrogate decisions when patient values are known?

- A. Follow surrogate wishes no matter what**
- B. Always refuse surrogate input**
- C. Use surrogate input but prioritize patient known values and best interests; document**
- D. Do not involve surrogate in decision-making**

When patient values are known, decisions should be guided by applying those values through substituted judgment while also weighing what's in the patient's overall best interests. The surrogate's role is to convey what the patient would choose if able to speak for themselves, based on prior wishes and core values, and the clinician uses that input to inform the plan of care. This should be done transparently, with careful consideration of prognosis, risks and benefits, quality of life, and alignments with what the patient values as important. Thorough documentation of the surrogate input, the patient's known values, and the reasoning behind the final decision helps ensure accountability and can guide future care if circumstances change. Surrogate input is important, but it is not followed unconditionally if it would conflict with the patient's known values or best interests. If known values are unclear, decisions should still be guided by the patient's best interests while continuing to involve the surrogate to clarify preferences. Choices that ignore known values or exclude surrogate input fail to honor patient autonomy and the ethical framework for surrogate decision-making.

8. Which term describes the willingness to take credit and blame for actions?

- A. Responsibility**
- B. Accountability**
- C. Credibility**
- D. Liability**

Accountability is the willingness to take credit and blame for actions. In nursing, being accountable means you are answerable for the outcomes of your decisions and care, and you own the consequences—good or bad—and report them as needed to protect patients and uphold professional standards. Responsibility, by contrast, refers to the duties you are assigned to perform, not necessarily the entire outcome you're responsible for. Credibility concerns how trustworthy or believable your statements are, not your ownership of outcomes. Liability is about legal responsibility, often tied to damages or negligence, rather than the everyday professional obligation to own actions within your role. So, the term that best captures the idea of taking both credit and blame for what you do is accountability.

9. Which statement best describes a common confidentiality exception for adolescent health care?

- A. All information is confidential**
- B. Disclosure only with parental consent**
- C. Safety concerns requiring disclosure**
- D. Confidentiality never overrides privacy**

When caring for adolescents, confidentiality is essential to encourage honest disclosure, but it is not absolute. The most common exception is safety concerns that require disclosure. If there is a real risk that the adolescent could harm themselves or others, or if there is abuse or neglect, health professionals are ethically and often legally obligated to break confidentiality to protect the patient or others. The disclosure should be limited to what is necessary and guided by applicable laws and reporting requirements. This means that while most information stays confidential, imminent danger creates a legitimate exception where sharing information with the appropriate people (and sometimes authorities) is warranted to prevent harm. For example, if a teen expresses a plan to commit suicide or to harm someone, or if abuse is suspected, the clinician would take steps to ensure safety, which may involve informing a parent or guardian or other authorities, depending on the jurisdiction and the situation. In contrast, blanket statements like all information being confidential or confidentiality never overriding privacy ignore these important safety safeguards and are not accurate. Similarly, stating that disclosure requires parental consent for all matters ignores the many situations where minors can consent to certain services themselves and where safety concerns supersede the need for parental consent.

10. Which element should be documented in consent discussions to protect patient autonomy and legal rights?

- A. The exact time the consent was given**
- B. The name of the surgeon performing the procedure**
- C. The patient's stated preferences**
- D. Identity of who provided consent, what information was given, patient understanding, decisional capacity, and witnesses or interpreters involved**

Documenting consent must show that the patient was informed, understood, and able to decide, with the process witnessed or interpreter-assisted when needed. The option that records who provided consent, what information was given, the patient's understanding, decisional capacity, and who witnessed or interpreted provides a complete, verifiable account of the consent process. This combination protects patient autonomy by demonstrating that the decision was voluntary and informed, and it also creates a legal record in case questions arise later. Recording the exact time helps with timing but doesn't prove understanding or capacity. Naming the surgeon is part of the medical record but doesn't capture the consent process itself. Documenting the patient's stated preferences is important, yet insufficient on its own without showing information provided, understanding, and capacity plus witness or interpreter involvement.

Next Steps

Congratulations on reaching the final section of this guide. You've taken a meaningful step toward passing your certification exam and advancing your career.

As you continue preparing, remember that consistent practice, review, and self-reflection are key to success. Make time to revisit difficult topics, simulate exam conditions, and track your progress along the way.

If you need help, have suggestions, or want to share feedback, we'd love to hear from you. Reach out to our team at hello@examzify.com.

Or visit your dedicated course page for more study tools and resources:

<https://legalethicalaspectsofnursing.examzify.com>

We wish you the very best on your exam journey. You've got this!

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