

Prehospital Trauma Life Support (PHTLS) Post Test Practice (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

- 1. Why is it important to address "exposure" during the assessment process?**
 - A. To establish the patient's vital signs**
 - B. To identify environmental factors that may worsen the patient's condition**
 - C. To ensure proper medication administration**
 - D. To improve patient comfort**
- 2. What should be the focus of care when addressing compartment syndrome?**
 - A. Immediate referral for surgical intervention**
 - B. Monitoring vitals and pain levels**
 - C. Administering antibiotics**
 - D. Performing a thorough evaluation of consciousness**
- 3. What is the main goal of the primary survey in trauma assessment?**
 - A. Identify potential injuries**
 - B. Determine the need for surgery**
 - C. Stabilize the patient's condition**
 - D. Gather patient history**
- 4. What is the management protocol for a patient with abdominal evisceration?**
 - A. Flush the organs with saline**
 - B. Cover exposed organs with a sterile dressing**
 - C. Sew the organs back into the abdomen**
 - D. Leave the organs exposed for inspection**
- 5. Which mechanism is most commonly associated with spinal cord injuries in adults in the United States?**
 - A. Falls**
 - B. Sports injuries**
 - C. Vehicle crashes**
 - D. Workplace accidents**

- 6. Which patient should be treated first according to PHTLS prioritization guidelines?**
- A. A patient with a severe burn**
 - B. A patient with a stable airway**
 - C. A patient with an unstable airway**
 - D. A patient with a broken limb**
- 7. What complication is associated with a severe pelvic fracture?**
- A. Infection risk**
 - B. Distributive shock due to massive blood loss**
 - C. Inability to walk**
 - D. Positioning difficulties**
- 8. What is the preferred fluid for resuscitation in trauma patients with suspected hemorrhagic shock?**
- A. Crystalloids or normal saline**
 - B. Colloids only**
 - C. Intravenous steroids**
 - D. Isotonic solutions only**
- 9. What is the purpose of conducting a rapid trauma assessment?**
- A. To identify non-life-threatening injuries**
 - B. To quickly identify life-threatening injuries requiring immediate intervention**
 - C. To gather patient demographic information**
 - D. To perform a detailed neurological examination**
- 10. What is the primary goal in the management of traumatic brain injuries?**
- A. To stabilize vital signs**
 - B. To ensure proper nutrition**
 - C. To reduce swelling in the brain**
 - D. To achieve rapid recovery of function**

Answers

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

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Explanations

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1. Why is it important to address "exposure" during the assessment process?

- A. To establish the patient's vital signs**
- B. To identify environmental factors that may worsen the patient's condition**
- C. To ensure proper medication administration**
- D. To improve patient comfort**

Addressing "exposure" during the assessment process is crucial because it allows responders to identify environmental factors that could exacerbate the patient's condition. This step involves assessing the patient for any additional injuries or conditions that may be influenced by their environment, such as extreme temperatures, wet or contaminated surroundings, or hazardous materials. Understanding these factors helps in making informed decisions about treatment and transport. For instance, if a patient is exposed to cold environments, they may be at risk for hypothermia, necessitating warming measures. Furthermore, if the environment is potentially contaminated, it informs decontamination procedures. Therefore, managing exposure is key to providing comprehensive care and ensuring the safety and stability of the patient as part of the overall trauma management strategy. Vital signs, medication administration, and patient comfort are important elements of patient care, but addressing environmental factors directly influences the patient's immediate needs and outcomes in trauma situations.

2. What should be the focus of care when addressing compartment syndrome?

- A. Immediate referral for surgical intervention**
- B. Monitoring vitals and pain levels**
- C. Administering antibiotics**
- D. Performing a thorough evaluation of consciousness**

The focus of care when addressing compartment syndrome should be immediate referral for surgical intervention. Compartment syndrome is a critical condition characterized by increased pressure within a closed muscle compartment, which can lead to muscle and nerve damage if not treated promptly. Decompressive fasciotomy, a surgical procedure, is often necessary to relieve the pressure and restore normal blood flow. Timeliness is crucial in these cases; failure to address the syndromic condition swiftly may result in irreversible damage to tissues and loss of function. While monitoring vitals and pain levels is certainly important in the overall assessment and management of patients, it does not directly address the underlying issue of compartment syndrome. Similarly, administering antibiotics and evaluating consciousness, while relevant in other contexts, do not provide the immediate intervention required to prevent the severe complications associated with this syndrome. Thus, prompt surgical evaluation and intervention form the cornerstone of effective management of compartment syndrome.

3. What is the main goal of the primary survey in trauma assessment?

- A. Identify potential injuries**
- B. Determine the need for surgery**
- C. Stabilize the patient's condition**
- D. Gather patient history**

The primary survey in trauma assessment is crucial as it focuses on the immediate evaluation of the patient to identify life-threatening conditions and initiate life-saving interventions. The main goal of the primary survey is to stabilize the patient's condition by following the ABCDE approach: Airway, Breathing, Circulation, Disability, and Exposure/Environment. In this phase, the healthcare provider systematically assesses the patient's airway to ensure it is clear, evaluates breathing for adequate ventilation and oxygenation, and checks circulation to control any major bleeding and ensure adequate blood flow. This initial assessment prioritizes the identification and management of life-threatening issues to ensure the patient does not deteriorate further. While identifying potential injuries and determining the need for surgery are important components of a trauma assessment, they fall under subsequent evaluations or considerations after the immediate stabilization of the patient's condition has been addressed. Gathering patient history is indeed useful for comprehensive care but is not part of the primary survey's immediate goals, which centers on life-saving actions. Thus, the primary survey's focus on stabilizing the patient's condition sets it apart as the correct answer.

4. What is the management protocol for a patient with abdominal evisceration?

- A. Flush the organs with saline**
- B. Cover exposed organs with a sterile dressing**
- C. Sew the organs back into the abdomen**
- D. Leave the organs exposed for inspection**

The management protocol for a patient with abdominal evisceration focuses on protecting the exposed organs to prevent contamination, minimize damage, and promote healing. Covering the exposed organs with a sterile dressing is the best practice because it offers a barrier against infection and keeps the tissues moist, which is crucial until the patient can receive definitive surgical care. This promotes a more favorable environment for healing and reduces the risk of complications. Other options, such as flushing the organs with saline or sewing them back into the abdomen, are not advisable because they can introduce contaminants and increase the risk of infection or further tissue damage. Leaving the organs exposed for inspection is also not appropriate, as it does not provide any protective barrier, increases the risk of drying out the organs, and exposes them to environmental contaminants. Therefore, covering the exposed organs with a sterile dressing is the safest and most effective management strategy in this scenario.

5. Which mechanism is most commonly associated with spinal cord injuries in adults in the United States?

- A. Falls
- B. Sports injuries
- C. Vehicle crashes**
- D. Workplace accidents

The mechanism most commonly associated with spinal cord injuries in adults in the United States is vehicle crashes. This association is primarily due to the high force and impact that occur during motor vehicle accidents, which can lead to significant trauma to the spine and spinal cord. In vehicle crashes, factors such as high speeds, the use of seatbelts, and the presence of airbags play a crucial role in the severity and type of injury sustained. The nature of the collisions often results in direct trauma to the vertebrae, as well as acceleration-deceleration forces that can cause injury even without direct impact. The prevalence of these incidents, along with their potential to result in life-altering injuries, highlights their importance in discussions about spinal cord injury mechanisms in adults. Other mechanisms like falls, sports injuries, and workplace accidents also contribute to spinal cord injuries but do not account for the same volume or severity of incidents seen in vehicle crashes, especially considering the overall statistics regarding the causes of spinal cord injuries in the population.

6. Which patient should be treated first according to PHTLS prioritization guidelines?

- A. A patient with a severe burn
- B. A patient with a stable airway
- C. A patient with an unstable airway**
- D. A patient with a broken limb

In trauma care, prioritization of treatment is essential to improve patient outcomes. An unstable airway is a critical situation that can lead to rapid deterioration and even death if not addressed immediately. The airway is the first and most vital component of the respiratory system; without a secure airway, a patient cannot adequately ventilate, which can result in hypoxia and organ failure. When a patient presents with an unstable airway, it typically indicates that they are either unable to maintain their airway independently or are at high risk of imminent obstruction. This includes patients who are unresponsive, have significant facial or neck injury, or exhibit any signs of airway compromise. Addressing this issue takes precedence over other injuries because correcting airway problems can often be done quickly and can drastically improve the patient's chances of survival. In contrast, conditions such as severe burns, a stable airway, or a broken limb do require treatment but are not immediately life-threatening situations like an unstable airway. A stable airway allows for the potential to treat other conditions safely, prioritizing interventions that secure the airway first ensures that subsequent care can be provided without the risk of the patient decompensating. This principle of prioritizing airway management mirrors the guidelines established in PHTLS, emphasizing the importance of maintaining vital physiological functions before

7. What complication is associated with a severe pelvic fracture?

- A. Infection risk**
- B. Distributive shock due to massive blood loss**
- C. Inability to walk**
- D. Positioning difficulties**

A severe pelvic fracture can lead to several complications, but distributive shock due to massive blood loss is particularly significant. The pelvis is a large bony structure that contains major blood vessels, such as the internal iliac arteries and veins. When a fracture occurs, it can disrupt these vessels, leading to excessive bleeding. In cases of severe pelvic fractures, the hemorrhage can be both internal and external, resulting in significant blood loss that may cause shock. The volume of blood that can be lost from a pelvic fracture is substantial, and this can lead to a decrease in perfusion and oxygenation of vital organs, which is classified as distributive shock. Recognizing this complication is crucial in trauma care, as it necessitates swift interventions to control the hemorrhage and stabilize the patient's condition. Effective management of pelvic fractures often includes stabilizing the pelvis with specific splints or devices to reduce further bleeding and facilitate safer transport to a definitive care facility.

8. What is the preferred fluid for resuscitation in trauma patients with suspected hemorrhagic shock?

- A. Crystalloids or normal saline**
- B. Colloids only**
- C. Intravenous steroids**
- D. Isotonic solutions only**

In trauma patients experiencing suspected hemorrhagic shock, the preferred fluid for resuscitation is crystalloids, such as normal saline. Crystalloids are advantageous because they are widely available, cost-effective, and help to restore intravascular volume. The primary goal during the resuscitation process is to maintain adequate perfusion and oxygenation to vital organs. Normal saline, a type of crystalloid solution, is isotonic and effectively increases the overall blood volume, which is crucial in a hemorrhagic scenario where blood loss may severely compromise circulation. Unlike colloids, which can be associated with potential complications such as kidney injury or coagulopathy, crystalloids generally have a safer profile and are commonly used in initial fluid resuscitation protocols. Given that trauma situations often require immediate action and crystalloids can be administered quickly and safely, they remain the standard choice in these emergencies. In addition, isotonic solutions are included within the category of crystalloids, reinforcing that these solutions align with the needs of trauma resuscitation.

9. What is the purpose of conducting a rapid trauma assessment?

- A. To identify non-life-threatening injuries**
- B. To quickly identify life-threatening injuries requiring immediate intervention**
- C. To gather patient demographic information**
- D. To perform a detailed neurological examination**

The primary purpose of conducting a rapid trauma assessment is to quickly identify life-threatening injuries that require immediate intervention. This is crucial in a prehospital setting where time is a significant factor in patient outcomes. During this assessment, first responders focus on vital signs and major body systems to detect conditions that could worsen if not addressed promptly, such as massive bleeding, tension pneumothorax, or airway obstructions. The rapid trauma assessment allows medical personnel to prioritize care and interventions based on the severity of injuries. Recognizing which injuries are life-threatening enables responders to stabilize the patient effectively while preparing for transport to a medical facility. This assessment is designed for efficiency, ensuring that critical issues are identified and managed before more detailed evaluations or treatments are initiated. In contrast, while identifying non-life-threatening injuries, gathering demographic information, and performing detailed neurological examinations are important aspects of overall patient care, they do not take precedence when immediate threats to life are present. In emergencies, the focus must remain on the most urgent clinical issues to enhance the chances of survival and recovery for the patient.

10. What is the primary goal in the management of traumatic brain injuries?

- A. To stabilize vital signs**
- B. To ensure proper nutrition**
- C. To reduce swelling in the brain**
- D. To achieve rapid recovery of function**

The primary goal in the management of traumatic brain injuries is to stabilize vital signs. Stabilizing vital signs is crucial because traumatic brain injuries can lead to significant changes in the patient's physiological status, including alterations in heart rate, blood pressure, and oxygen saturation. These vital signs directly affect cerebral perfusion and oxygenation, which are essential for minimizing secondary brain injury. When vital signs are stable, healthcare providers can better assess the patient's neurological status and determine the appropriate course of treatment. This stabilization is foundational in preventing further complications and promoting optimal outcomes for the patient. While reducing swelling, ensuring nutrition, and achieving rapid recovery are important aspects of holistic care in the management of brain injuries, they are secondary to the immediate need to maintain stable vital functions.

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://phtlsposttest.examzify.com>

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