

Prehospital Trauma Life Support (PHTLS) 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

- 1. When should a cervical spine immobilization device be considered in trauma patients?**
 - A. Only for patients with visible deformities**
 - B. In any trauma patient with potential spinal injury signs**
 - C. For all patients regardless of injury**
 - D. Only if the patient is conscious**
- 2. When assessing a trauma patient, what does distension of the abdomen suggest?**
 - A. Possible internal bleeding or organ injury**
 - B. An indication of gastrointestinal issues**
 - C. Normal abdominal response to injury**
 - D. Fatigue or stress in the patient**
- 3. How does the use of focused assessment with sonography for trauma (FAST) enhance prehospital care?**
 - A. It aids in rapid identification of internal bleeding in critical cases**
 - B. It allows for quick assessment of external injuries**
 - C. It helps determine the need for intubation**
 - D. It provides a method to monitor vital signs continuously**
- 4. What is the potential blood loss into the tissue from a fractured femur in an adult patient?**
 - A. 150 to 500 mL**
 - B. 500 to 1000 mL**
 - C. 1000 to 2000 mL**
 - D. 2500 to 5000 mL**
- 5. What technique is effective in controlling external bleeding in trauma patients?**
 - A. Applying a cold pack to the injury site**
 - B. Elevating the injured area above the heart**
 - C. Direct pressure on the wound**
 - D. Using large amounts of water to rinse the area**

- 6. An adult male sustained a deep laceration to his distal thigh. Bright red blood is spurting from the wound. What is the most appropriate next step?**
- A. Apply a topical hemostatic agent and transport**
 - B. Apply a tourniquet and tighten it until bleeding stops**
 - C. Elevate the leg and apply pressure to the femoral artery**
 - D. Maintain direct pressure and transport immediately**
- 7. What signs should caregivers observe during the evaluation of a trauma patient's abdomen?**
- A. Color changes and unusual sounds.**
 - B. Signs of rigidity, tenderness, distension, and referred pain.**
 - C. Size and shape of the abdomen only.**
 - D. Movement of the abdomen during breathing.**
- 8. Why is a history of medications important in trauma assessment?**
- A. It is irrelevant to treatment**
 - B. It can influence the patient's response to treatment and potential complications**
 - C. It can help predict the time of the injury**
 - D. It allows for better communication with the patient**
- 9. Essential airway skills include manual clearing of the airway, manual maneuvers, suctioning, and which of the following?**
- A. Dual lumen airway**
 - B. Endotracheal intubation**
 - C. Laryngeal mask airway**
 - D. Oropharyngeal airway**
- 10. Why is it important to maintain an open airway in an unconscious trauma patient?**
- A. To prevent aspiration**
 - B. To ensure adequate ventilation and oxygenation**
 - C. To monitor airway patency**
 - D. To reduce the risk of infection**

Answers

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

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Explanations

1. When should a cervical spine immobilization device be considered in trauma patients?

A. Only for patients with visible deformities

B. In any trauma patient with potential spinal injury signs

C. For all patients regardless of injury

D. Only if the patient is conscious

A cervical spine immobilization device should be considered in any trauma patient with signs of potential spinal injury due to the high risk of spinal cord injury in trauma cases. This includes not only visible deformities but also subtle indications such as mechanism of injury, neurological deficits, or altered mental status. In trauma scenarios, mechanisms such as falls from a height, high-speed vehicle collisions, or impact-related injuries can lead to spinal injuries that might not be immediately evident. By using a cervical spine immobilization device, prehospital personnel can help prevent further injury while providing stabilization during transport. Using such a device in patients who may present with high-risk mechanisms or symptoms related to the spine is crucial, as early immobilization can reduce the chance of exacerbating any existing spinal injuries. Thus, the decision to use a cervical spine device should be based on the potential for injury rather than solely on visible injuries, the patient's consciousness level, or blanket application to all patients, which could lead to unnecessary interventions and complications.

2. When assessing a trauma patient, what does distension of the abdomen suggest?

A. Possible internal bleeding or organ injury

B. An indication of gastrointestinal issues

C. Normal abdominal response to injury

D. Fatigue or stress in the patient

Distension of the abdomen in a trauma patient is an important clinical finding that may indicate possible internal bleeding or organ injury. When the abdominal cavity experiences bleeding or swelling due to trauma, the accumulation of fluid (either blood or other fluids) can lead to an increase in the size of the abdomen, creating a distended appearance. This condition could suggest serious underlying injuries such as ruptured organs or significant internal bleeding, which are critical to identify as they may require immediate medical intervention. Recognizing abdominal distension as a potential sign of internal issues allows healthcare providers to prioritize further assessment and intervention, as it may influence the approach to managing the patient's overall trauma care. Indicators like this are crucial in determining the patient's stability and the need for potential surgical intervention to control bleeding or address organ injuries.

3. How does the use of focused assessment with sonography for trauma (FAST) enhance prehospital care?

A. It aids in rapid identification of internal bleeding in critical cases

B. It allows for quick assessment of external injuries

C. It helps determine the need for intubation

D. It provides a method to monitor vital signs continuously

The use of focused assessment with sonography for trauma (FAST) significantly enhances prehospital care by allowing for rapid identification of internal bleeding in critical cases. This is crucial as intra-abdominal hemorrhage can lead to significant morbidity and mortality if not identified and managed promptly. FAST utilizes ultrasound technology to visualize fluid in the abdominal cavity, particularly in cases of trauma, where time is essential, and conventional imaging methods may delay treatment. In the prehospital setting, quicker identification of internal bleeding enables emergency medical personnel to make informed decisions about the patient's management and transport to the appropriate facility. Early detection of bleeding can initiate protocols for trauma care, such as resuscitation or notifying the receiving hospital about the patient's condition, ultimately improving patient outcomes and survival rates following traumatic injuries. While other options discuss valuable aspects of trauma assessment, they do not specifically address the unique capabilities of FAST. For example, assessing external injuries is vital, but it does not provide the same critical internal insights that FAST offers. Similarly, determining the need for intubation or monitoring vital signs continuously are important components of patient care but are not directly related to the benefits provided by sonography in trauma assessment. Therefore, the key enhancement in prehospital trauma care provided by FAST is its ability to

4. What is the potential blood loss into the tissue from a fractured femur in an adult patient?

A. 150 to 500 mL

B. 500 to 1000 mL

C. 1000 to 2000 mL

D. 2500 to 5000 mL

The correct answer is based on the understanding of the anatomy and physiology of bone injuries, particularly for a femoral fracture in adults. A fractured femur can lead to significant internal bleeding due to the large blood vessels that run near and within the thigh, including the femoral artery and various branches. In adults, when there is a fracture of the femur, the potential volume of blood that can accumulate in the surrounding tissue can range from 1000 to 2000 mL. This volume includes both the blood loss into the tissue and the potential for hemothorax or other complications, as the fracture can disrupt vascular structures. Understanding the volume of potential blood loss is important for emergency medical personnel as it helps in evaluating the severity of the injury and prioritizing treatment, including fluid resuscitation and surgical intervention if necessary. This volume is considerable and can lead to hypovolemic shock if not managed promptly.

5. What technique is effective in controlling external bleeding in trauma patients?

- A. Applying a cold pack to the injury site**
- B. Elevating the injured area above the heart**
- C. Direct pressure on the wound**
- D. Using large amounts of water to rinse the area**

Direct pressure on the wound is recognized as the most effective technique for controlling external bleeding in trauma patients. This method works by applying consistent force over the injury site, which helps to compress the blood vessels and encourages clot formation. This is especially crucial in traumatic situations where rapid blood loss can lead to shock and other complications. Direct pressure not only helps minimize blood flow from an open wound, but it also stabilizes the area, making it less likely for the bleeding to resume. In a prehospital setting, where immediate transport to medical facilities may be necessary, controlling bleeding promptly using direct pressure is essential to improve patient outcomes. Other techniques, while beneficial in certain contexts, do not address bleeding as effectively. For example, elevating the injured area can assist in reducing blood flow but is often not practical in severe bleeding situations where immediate pressure is required. Similarly, using cold packs primarily serves to reduce swelling and inflammation, which does not directly stop bleeding. Rinsing the area with water is not indicated for active bleeding as it may dilute blood clots and introduce contaminants, potentially worsening the situation.

6. An adult male sustained a deep laceration to his distal thigh. Bright red blood is spurting from the wound. What is the most appropriate next step?

- A. Apply a topical hemostatic agent and transport**
- B. Apply a tourniquet and tighten it until bleeding stops**
- C. Elevate the leg and apply pressure to the femoral artery**
- D. Maintain direct pressure and transport immediately**

In cases of arterial bleeding, which is indicated by bright red, spurting blood, applying a tourniquet is the most effective and appropriate initial intervention. This type of bleeding suggests that the artery has been compromised, requiring immediate action to control the hemorrhage. Using a tourniquet allows for the rapid occlusion of blood flow to the area, preventing further blood loss and reducing the risk of hypovolemic shock. The tourniquet should be placed above the site of bleeding and tightened until the bleeding stops, which provides a strong, direct method to manage the significant vascular injury. While maintaining direct pressure and using hemostatic agents can be beneficial in other scenarios, they may not be sufficient when faced with a life-threatening arterial bleed. Elevating the leg and applying pressure to the femoral artery can provide some support, but this option is less effective and takes more time compared to a tourniquet, making it less suitable for managing such a critical situation.

7. What signs should caregivers observe during the evaluation of a trauma patient's abdomen?

- A. Color changes and unusual sounds.
- B. Signs of rigidity, tenderness, distension, and referred pain.**
- C. Size and shape of the abdomen only.
- D. Movement of the abdomen during breathing.

The most appropriate signs caregivers should observe during the evaluation of a trauma patient's abdomen include rigidity, tenderness, distension, and referred pain. These findings are critical indicators of potential abdominal injury. Rigidity may suggest peritonitis or internal bleeding, as the body often tenses the abdominal muscles in response to internal injury or irritation. Tenderness can indicate localized injury or inflammation, which can help identify which organs may be affected. Distension, or swelling of the abdomen, can signify internal bleeding, obstruction, or organ injury, while referred pain provides clues about damage to internal organs that may not be directly palpable. The other options, while they may contain elements of an abdominal assessment, do not encompass the key clinical signs that are crucial for determining the severity of a trauma patient's condition. Observing color changes or unusual sounds alone does not provide sufficient information about the potential injuries. Evaluating just the size and shape of the abdomen fails to capture the functional aspects of abdominal trauma. Lastly, while movement during breathing is a factor, it is not specific enough to suggest abnormality related to trauma without considering other signs.

8. Why is a history of medications important in trauma assessment?

- A. It is irrelevant to treatment
- B. It can influence the patient's response to treatment and potential complications**
- C. It can help predict the time of the injury
- D. It allows for better communication with the patient

Understanding a patient's history of medications is crucial in trauma assessment because it can significantly influence the patient's response to treatments and highlight potential complications. Certain medications, such as anticoagulants or antiplatelet agents, can affect clotting and increase the risk of bleeding in trauma scenarios. Knowledge of these medications allows healthcare providers to anticipate complications, adjust interventions accordingly, and monitor the patient more effectively. For instance, if a patient is on blood thinners, emergency personnel might prioritize stabilizing any bleeding and implement specific protocols to counteract the effects of these medications. This awareness can guide the choice of analgesics, sedatives, or other medications to avoid adverse reactions or interactions. Thus, a comprehensive medication history can enhance the quality of care provided and improve outcomes for the patient during trauma management.

9. Essential airway skills include manual clearing of the airway, manual maneuvers, suctioning, and which of the following?

- A. Dual lumen airway**
- B. Endotracheal intubation**
- C. Laryngeal mask airway**
- D. Oropharyngeal airway**

The inclusion of the oropharyngeal airway as one of the essential airway skills is key due to its role in maintaining airway patency in unresponsive patients without a gag reflex. This device is designed to keep the tongue from obstructing the throat and facilitating airflow. It is simple to insert and does not require advanced training, making it accessible for first responders and those trained in basic life support. Furthermore, using an oropharyngeal airway can be lifesaving in prehospital settings, as it allows for improved ventilation and oxygenation in patients who have lost consciousness. Proper application of this skill, along with suctioning and manual airway maneuvers, ensures that the airway is clear and functional, effectively reducing the risk of hypoxia. The other options, while they may be involved in airway management, typically require more advanced training or are utilized in different contexts of care. Thus, the oropharyngeal airway is essential for those in prehospital trauma scenarios due to its effectiveness and ease of use.

10. Why is it important to maintain an open airway in an unconscious trauma patient?

- A. To prevent aspiration**
- B. To ensure adequate ventilation and oxygenation**
- C. To monitor airway patency**
- D. To reduce the risk of infection**

Maintaining an open airway in an unconscious trauma patient is vital to ensure adequate ventilation and oxygenation. When a patient is unconscious, they often lose the protective reflexes that prevent the airway from becoming obstructed. This can lead to inadequate airflow, resulting in reduced oxygen supply to the brain and other vital organs, potentially causing severe complications or death. Ensuring that the airway is open allows for effective passage of air, enabling the lungs to function properly. This process is crucial because oxygen is essential for cellular metabolism, and a lack of oxygen can lead to irreversible damage to organs and tissues. Additionally, maintaining an open airway facilitates any necessary interventions, such as the use of supplemental oxygen or mechanical ventilation, if required. While preventing aspiration and monitoring airway patency are important considerations, they do not address the immediate need for adequate ventilation and oxygenation as comprehensively as ensuring an open airway does. Reducing the risk of infection is also a secondary concern compared to the immediate implications of compromised oxygenation in trauma scenarios.

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://prehospitaltraumalifesupport.examzify.com>

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