

Process for analyzing test questions:

I. What is this question really asking me?

- a. Recognize key words
 - i. Priority words—most likely, first,
 - ii. Negatives
 - iii. Directing words
 1. *Further teaching is necessary*—answer will contain incorrect info
 2. *Client understands the teaching*—answer will be correct info
- b. Recognize who the client is
 - i. Who is the nurse relating to in this question?
- c. Recognize what information is relevant and what is irrelevant
- d. Rephrase the question if necessary for clarity and focus
 - i. “Which of the following statements indicates the need for further education?” → “Which of the following statements is false?”
- e. If you cannot reword the question, look at the options for clues

II. What is it trying to determine that I know?

- a. What area of knowledge is it trying to determine that I know: priorities, definitions, universal precautions, therapeutic communication, drug information, etc.
 - i. Eliminate answers which do not relate to that area of knowledge

III. What level of learning is needed to answer correctly?

- a. Knowledge Level
 - i. Recalling stored information from memory
 1. Definitions—What is the definition of paraphrasing?
 2. Steps in a procedure
 3. Normal Lab values and vital signs
 - ii. The “What?” level of learning
 - iii. Your task is to define what the question is asking and recall the information
 - iv. EX: What is another name for a decubitus ulcer?
- b. Comprehension Level
 - i. The ability to translate information into your own words and to manipulate the information within its own context without application to new or different situations
 - ii. Goes beyond memorizing the “what” (knowledge level) to understanding the “why” and “how”—How does the use of paraphrasing facilitate therapeutic communication?
 1. Knowledge level: Knowing the s/s of infection
 2. Comprehension level: Knowing how the pathophysiology of infection leads to the s/s
 - iii. Involves an understanding of the information
 - iv. EX: Turning a patient every 2 hours prevents pressure ulcers because:
- c. Application Level
 - i. The ability to use known and understood information in new situations
 1. Use information in a form other than that in which it was learned
 2. Generalizing and integrating the knowledge to new situations
 - ii. Require the use of rational, logical judgments
 - iii. EX: The nurse identifies that a patient on prolonged bed rest may be developing a pressure ulcer when the skin over the bony prominence appears:
- d. Analysis Level
 - i. Often ask you to set priorities

- ii. Three step process
 - 1. Examine each option as a separate entity.
 - a. Eliminate any option which does not relate to the question being asked
 - i. Options may be true but unrelated
 - b. Eliminate any options which contain inaccurate information
 - 2. Investigate the differences among the remaining options—i.e., compare and contrast the information
 - 3. Analyze the structure and organization of the compared and contrasted information to arrive at a conclusion or answer
 - a. Subtle differences in information may be the clue
- iii. Three common problems in analysis level questions that cause errors:
 - 1. Incomplete analysis
 - a. Missing important elements in the content that must be considered for analysis
 - 2. Over-analysis
 - a. Breaking the situation into more elements than is necessary or adding information that is not provided or is irrelevant
 - b. “Reading into the question”
 - c. Can result in missing the important relationships or not seeing the forest for the trees.
 - 3. Quality error
 - a. Analysis level questions often provide options that have different degrees of accuracy or completeness; the distinction is not between right and wrong but, rather, is a matter of the best response or the one that offers the highest quality.
- iv. EX: Which patient has the greatest risk for developing a pressure ulcer?

IV. What do I think is the correct answer?

- a. On a knowledge or comprehension level question, try to determine the correct answer before looking at the option.
 - i. Eliminates the power of the distractors (the incorrect answers) to lead you away from the correct answer
 - ii. Giving an incorrect answer a careful read gives it the power to distract you
- b. For application and analysis questions, consider each answer choice in a thoughtful way
 - i. Read one option at a time
 - ii. Ask yourself, “Does this option answer the (reworded) question?” If yes, keep it for consideration, if not, eliminate it.
 - iii. Of your retained answers, which one best answers the question being asked? Mark it and move on.
- c. Key strategies to use
 - i. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs
 - ii. Patient safety
 - iii. Principles and concepts of nursing
 - iv. Nursing Process

V. Other considerations for NCLEX or other licensure/certification exams

- a. Just because an option is present in the question does not mean that it is a viable option for the situation described in the item.
- b. Sometimes they really are that easy.
- c. Know the difference between NCLEX and the “real world.”
 - i. Base your answers on what you learned in lecture and in your text
- d. Know when, where, to whom, and how to delegate duties.

- e. Know normal values of labs and vital signs. Recognize expected outcomes.
- f. Do not worry if the response you choose repeats – the questions are random based on your responses.
- g. Eliminate responses that can be completed by unlicensed personnel in a priority question.

Characteristics of Successful and Unsuccessful Test Takers:

Successful test takers

- have a good understanding of curriculum-based content;
- have the ability to tackle each question with a lot of confidence because they assume that they can figure out the right answer;
- don't give up if they are unsure of the answer—they are not afraid to think about the question, and the possible choices, in order to select the correct answer;
- possess the know-how to correctly identify the question; and
- stay focused on the question.

Unsuccessful test takers

- assume that they either know or don't know the answer to the questions;
- memorize facts to answer questions by recall or recognition;
- read the question, read the answers, read the question again, and pick an answer;
- choose answer choices based on a hunch or a feeling instead of thinking carefully;
- answer questions based on personal experience rather than nursing theory;
- give up too soon, because they aren't willing to think hard about questions and answers; and
- don't stay focused on the question.