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.