National Nail Technology Theory Examination
CIB

National-Interstate Council of State Boards of Cosmetology (NIC)

Effective Date: January 1, 2027

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CANDIDATE INFORMATION BULLETIN (CIB)

EXAMINATION CONTENT AND IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS

Please visit your official examination provider website OR www.nictesting.org for the most current bulletin prior to testing.

The National Nail Technology Theory Examination is a licensure examination for Nail Technology, developed by the National-Interstate Council of State Boards of Cosmetology (NIC).

This bulletin contains IMPORTANT INFORMATION regarding National Nail Technology Theory Examination content and references.

The time allowed for this examination is 90 minutes.

PLEASE REVIEW ALL INFORMATION CAREFULLY.

For each NIC National Theory Examination, there are multiple parts to every Candidate Information Bulletin (CIB):

- **Important Instructions and Examination Content Domain Sections** – This provides information and guidelines related to administration of the Theory examination and information about the scope of content covered in the examination.
- **References** – This provides a list of references used to develop and support the content covered in NIC examinations. References will be the same for Theory, Practical, Written Practical, and Additional Sections for each exam.

BE CERTAIN TO REVIEW ALL PARTS OF THIS NIC EXAMINATION CIB CAREFULLY!

IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS

General

- Do not leave the examination area without permission. Permission must be obtained to leave the examination area for any reason, including restroom usage or at the completion of the examination. *Picture ID is required for re-entry into the examination.*
- All examinations are administered in a testing environment.

Standardized Administration

Due to standardization of the NIC National Examinations, proctors and examiners are required to adhere to the following standards:

- With the exception of verbal instructions, proctors and examination administration personnel are NOT allowed to speak with candidates.
- If a candidate experiences an emergency situation, they may notify the proctor by raising their hand.

Prohibited Items

- The following provides examples of materials and actions that are prohibited in the examination room during the examination administration:
  - Possession of cellular phones, watches (of any kind), pagers, tablets, computers, projectors, cameras, or any other electronic or recording devices, printed materials, or handwritten notes.

  - Purses, bags, coats, hats, and any other personal items not directly needed to complete the examination, are not allowed.

- Communicating to other candidates or any examiner.
- Exhibiting disruptive behavior. The above referenced items or actions are not an exhaustive list.

Failure to comply with any of these conditions or exhibiting ANY behavior that suggests an effort to cheat will result in immediate dismissal from the examination and the candidates' actions reported to the proper authorities.

NAIL TECHNOLOGY THEORY EXAMINATION CONTENT OUTLINE

Domain Details

The following outlines the scope of content covered by the NIC National Nail Technology Theory Examination. The percentages represent the percentage of items from each domain. The examination contains 110 items, of which 100 items are weighted and contribute to the candidate's final score.

I. Scientific Concepts - Infection Control and Safety Practices (15%)
   A. Identify how disease and infection are caused and transmitted
   B. Recognize and utilize infection control principles
      1. Levels of infection control
      2. Process of infection control (e.g., dispensing products, disposal of materials, use of single- or multi-use implements)
   C. Apply blood exposure procedures
   D. Identify adverse reactions to products or services
   E. Recognize safe handling and storage of chemicals
   F. Utilize Safety Data Sheets (SDS)
   G. Identify ways to prevent work injuries (e.g., ventilation, ergonomics)

II. Scientific Concepts - Anatomy and Physiology (15%)
   A. Identify functions, parts, and structure of the:
      1. nails
      2. skin
   B. Identify functions and structure (e.g., bones, muscles, and joints) of the:
      1. arms and hands
      2. legs and feet

C. Recognize signs, symptoms, and cause of disorders, diseases, and conditions of the:
   1. nails
   2. skin

III. Scientific Concepts - Chemistry of Nail Products (10%)

A. Explain purpose and effects of product ingredients

B. Recognize interaction between chemicals

C. Recognize physical changes

D. Recognize chemical reactions

E. Identify common ingredients that may cause harm

IV. Nail Technology Procedures- Pre-service process (5%)

A. Client consultation
   1. Identify elements of a client consultation and documentation
   2. Analyze condition of client's nails and skin
   3. Recognize conditions that would prohibit service (contraindications)
   4. Determine services or products

B. Work area preparation
   1. Perform set-up of work station service area
   2. Perform client and practitioner sanitation

V. Nail Technology Procedures - Nail Service Tools (13%)

A. Identify purpose and function of:
   1. Nail equipment (e.g., electric file, pedicure basin)
   2. Nail implements (e.g., nail clippers, cuticle pusher)
   3. Nail supplies and materials (e.g., cotton, buffer)
   4. Nail products (e.g., polish, lotion)

B. Follow practices for safe use of tools, supplies, and equipment

VI. Nail Technology Procedures - Manicure and Pedicure Services (18%)

A. Perform procedures for basic manicure and/or pedicure service

1. Trim and shape nails
2. Soak
3. Cuticle maintenance
4. Cleanse nails
5. Buff nails
6. Demonstrate knowledge of basic massage procedures
   a. Knowledge of safe application of massage manipulation
   b. Recognize mechanics and effects of massage types
      i. Effleurage
      ii. Petrissage
      iii. Friction
      iv. Tapotement
7. Remove massage product
8. Polish nails
9. Completion of service

B. Perform procedures for add-on services

1. Paraffin
2. Exfoliate
3. Thermal (e.g., stone, towel)

VII. Nail Technology Procedures - Perform Application Maintenance and Removal Procedures for Nail Enhancement Services (20%)

A. Nail tip

B. Acrylics

C. Soft, hard, hybrid gels

D. Powder dip

VIII. Nail Technology Procedures - Perform Post-Service Procedures (4%)

A. After care and client education

B. Cleaning and disinfection

NATIONAL NAIL TECHNOLOGY THEORY EXAMINATION SAMPLE QUESTIONS

The following sample questions are similar to those on the NIC National Nail Technology Theory Examination. Each question is followed by four answer options. Only one option is correct. Correct answers (keys) are listed along with the sample questions.

1. Pumice stone is used in pedicuring as
   A. an abrasive.
   B. a bleach.
   C. a lubricant.
   D. an astringent.
2. What is the FIRST step in performing a manicure?
   A. Shape the nails
   B. Soften the cuticles
   C. Clean under free edge
   D. Remove old polish
3. Where should all manicuring cosmetic supplies be kept when not being used?
   A. On a clean shelf
   B. On the manicuring table
   C. In a clean manicuring kit
   D. In clean, closed containers
4. Nerves and blood vessels are found in the nail
   A. bed.
   B. wall.
   C. plate.
   D. grooves.
5. An antiseptic is used in manicuring to
   A. bleach the nails.
   B. treat minor cuts.
   C. smooth corrugated nails.
   D. give the nails a high sheen.

6. After each use, manicuring implements should be
   A. wiped with a towel.
   B. wiped with a tissue.
   C. cleansed and disinfected.
   D. placed in dry storage.
7. For which one of the following are oil manicures recommended?
   A. Leuconychia
   B. Split nails
   C. Brittle nails
   D. Prevention of infection
8. What is the actively growing part of the nail?
   A. Lunula
   B. Matrix
   C. Mantle
   D. Free edge
9. What should be applied to a split in the nail before wrapping it?
   A. Top coat
   B. Base coat
   C. Adhesive glue
   D. Nail hardener

Table 1: Answer Key

Item	Key
1	A
2	D
3	D
4	A
5	B
6	C
7	C
8	B
9	C

NATIONAL-INTERSTATE COUNCIL OF STATE BOARDS OF COSMETOLOGY (NIC) REFERENCES

This list provides the references used to develop and support the content covered in the NIC National Nail Technology examinations. References will be the same across exam types for each exam. Candidates are responsible for using these most updated versions of references, as these editions were used to reference test material.

Reference Date: March 01, 2026

Standard

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