

Test-Taking Techniques

- Before answering a question, break it down into its components. First read the stem. What is it actually asking?
- Do not select an option too quickly, without careful thought. An option may contain accurate information, but it may not answer the question asked in the stem. Each option deserves attention.



Negative Polarity

- Look for *key words* such as not, except, never, contraindicated, unacceptable, avoid, unrelated, violate, and least.
- Sometimes underlined (not), italics (*except*), boldface (**never**), or capitals (VIOLATE).
- ID exceptions, detect error
- If all options are correct, reread.

Example Negative Polarity

- A patient is on a low sodium diet. Before discharge the patient should be taught to avoid:
 - Stewed fruit
 - Luncheon meats
 - Whole grain cereal
 - Green leafy vegetables

Priority Words

- Look for *key words* such as first, initially, best, priority, and most.
- When ranking options (ie. Importance from 1-4), eliminate the option that you believe is most wrong among all the options. Continue until one answer remains.
- You're putting value on each option.

Example Priority Words

- The nurse is assigned to care for a patient who is incontinent of urine and stool. To best protect the skin, the nurse should apply:
 - A petroleum-type jelly
 - Incontinence pad
 - Talcum powder
 - Corn starch

Stem Clues

- A word or phrase in the stem may provide a hint for choosing the correct answer.
- Occasionally, a word or phrase in the stem is identical to a word or phrase in the correct answer and is called a *clang association*. Ring a bell?

Clang Association Example

- To meet a patient's basic physiological need according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs the nurse should:
 - Pull the curtain when the patient is on a bedpan
 - Maintain the patient in functional alignment
 - Respond to the call light immediately
 - Raise both side rails on the bed



Patient-Centered Options

- The focus of the nurse's concern should be the patient.
- Explore patient feelings, identify patient preferences, empower the patient, afford the patient choices, or in some other way put emphasis on the patient.

Identify Specific Determiners in the options

- Specific determiners convey a thought or concept that has no exceptions.
- Words such as just, always, never, all, every, none, and only are specific determiners.
- Statements that use all-inclusive terms frequently represented broad generalizations that are usually false.
- However, some absolutes, such as “all patients should be treated with respect”, are correct.

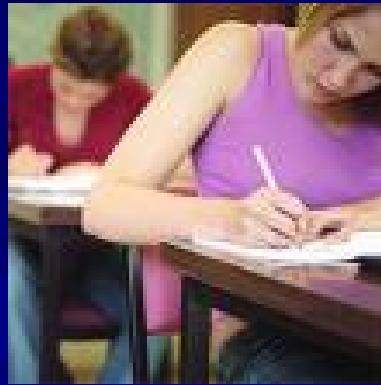
Identify Opposites

- Sometimes an item will contain two options that are opposite to each other.
- One of them will be the correct answer, or they both can be eliminated from consideration.

Options that Deny Patient Feelings, Concerns, and Needs

- Sometimes nurses must focus on the negative rather than the positive, acknowledge that everything may not have the desired outcome, and recognize patient feelings as a priority.
- Options that imply everything will be all right, deny pt. Feelings, change the subject, encourage the pt. to be cheerful, or abdicate nursing responsibility to other members of the health team are usually distracters and can be eliminated from consideration.

Put All Techniques to Use



General Techniques

- Follow your regular routine the night before a test.
- Arrive on time.
- Bring appropriate tools.
- Understand all directions before starting the test.
- Manage your time to your advantage.
- Focus on the simple before the complex.
- Make educated guesses.
- Maintain positive mental attitude.
- Check your answers and answer sheet.