

Performance-Based Development System Testing

The Performance-Based Development System (PBDS) evaluates a nurse's ability to think critically in various clinical situations. More and more of our clients are using the PBDS Test as a way to evaluate clinician competency and to standardize their orientation process. The PBDS test might seem a little intimidating, but don't stress! We've put together this study guide to help you prepare.





How is the PBDS Graded & Administered?

The PBDS is a timed test and is given in either hard copy, paper and pencil format or via a computer-based format. Both of these format options involve a video component. The standard Traveler PBDS test is generally shorter in length than the original PBDS designed for perm staff. The Traveler PBDS is generally 2-3 hours long, as opposed to the original PBDS which can run up to 7 hours.

The PBDS test can be graded in a couple alternate ways. The PBDS test can be graded by in-house hospital education staff or hospitals may elect to have an outside company, PBSI, remotely evaluate the tests that have been done by computer. A numerical pass/fail score will not be given. Instead, there is a "scale score rating" which serves as the basis for measuring an acceptable level of achievement. The majority of facilities do not allow Travelers who score outside of the scale the chance to retake the test. Further, scoring outside of the acceptable achievement level on the PBDS may result in the immediate cancellation of an assignment.

The PBDS test evaluates your ability to use your clinical knowledge in a real world situation.

The bulk of the test will entail you watching short videos that simulate real-world clinical situations. After viewing these patient care scenes, you will then write down each step that you would take to handle these scenarios. You must record a thorough plan of action — including even the steps you might think are obvious ones needed to manage the situation. You will also be expected to write down what you think the diagnosis or primary problem is.

The test is comprised exclusively of essay questions; there are no multiple choice questions included. You will need to identify scenarios that threaten patient safety and evaluate the most effective and appropriate actions to take. For each scenario, you will be asked 4-5 questions that solicit your medical diagnosis, the first steps you would take to intervene in the situation, and a detailed explanation of the steps you would take to provide patient care in each unique situation.

It is a critical thinking competency test assessing three areas:



There are four clinical specialties of PBDS, and assessments that are tailored for all units based on these specialties :

1 Medical - Surgical

3 Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU)

2 Critical care

4 Obstetric

For example, a Telemetry RN would get a Medical-Surgical assessment.

PBDS Exam Tips:

The test is looking for a medical diagnosis.

Do not use a nursing diagnosis for the problem focus; they are looking for at least a recognition that a change in the patient's status has occurred. You must state what you will report to the physician as well as name the clinical change and what you believe to be the cause of the change.

Remember the basics.

Assess the situation as if it were your own patient facing complications. Remember the ABCs (airway, breathing, circulation) when assessing the patient's condition and the scenario(s) you are presented with. **For Example: Call for Respiratory Therapy or Charge RN**

State the obvious.

Don't read too far into the scenario, but at the same time be sure to state all relevant information. Don't leave the obvious out, and be sure to include all standard commonly known procedures and interventions. **For Example: If you have a patient receiving Digoxin and you notice signs of potential toxicity (weight loss, dysrhythmias, visual halos around images), then state that you will DC the drug and order a digoxin level.**

Watch the videos.

The clues can be very brief, so be sure to watch intently. Be mindful not to miss important parts of the video as you're taking notes. **For Example: Note equipment available, IV fluid, Ambu bag, monitor.**

Anticipate that something's always wrong.

Every situation has at least one "change of status event." The patient is never "just fine."



Based on information from nurses that have taken the exam and online sources, you may expect some of the following scenarios and diagnoses to be on the exam:

Example Diagnoses

Be familiar with the following medical diagnosis. What nursing action would be warranted and why?

- CVA
- Renal failure
- Intracranial bleed or increased intracranial pressure
- Chest pain/Acute Myocardial
- Pulmonary Embolism
- Pneumothorax
- Digoxin toxicity
- Ileus
- Thrombocytopenia
- Bladder Retention/Pylonephritis
- Ketoacidosis and Hyperglycemia

Example Scenarios

- A family member cardiac arrests in a semi-private room
- You are scheduled for an annual evaluation today
- The doctor says you have to accompany your patient to a procedure that may last up to 90 minutes
- You have a code at the beginning of a shift and family members are still in the room
- You have a nursing student working with you
- There will be a staff meeting in an hour

Good luck! Hopefully you feel a bit more comfortable and prepared for the test. Try to get plenty of sleep the night before the exam, and remember to be as detailed as possible in your answers.