

How to Prepare for Your Certification Exam

Having a thoughtful study plan can boost your confidence and help you feel ready for your exam. AACN Certification Corporation surveys newly certified nurses, and most report they began preparing about three months before the exam, using the methods below.



➔ Test Plan

The test plan in your exam handbook includes specific content areas, with each assigned a percentage reflecting how that area is weighted on the exam. The test plan also includes a list of competencies or testable nursing actions that will be assessed. Consider starting with a practice exam, noting your scores in each content area, and balancing your study time accordingly. If you are retaking a certification exam, refer to your previous score report to identify key areas of focus.

➔ Practice Questions & Exams

Practice questions are certificant's most preferred study method. AACN offers subscription-based practice exams, with questions written in the style and format of exam items, with rationales for correct answers. Strengthen your test-taking skills with timed practice exams.

➔ Review Courses

Formal exam preparation courses, whether online or in person, provide an in-depth review of relevant content areas and often include test-taking strategies. Some review courses also offer continuing education (CE) hours.

➔ Books

When considering books for study, look for authors who are still in clinical practice and have earned the credential you're working toward. Focus on books published in the last five years. The bibliography in your exam handbook lists references used to create/validate items on the exam.

➔ Group Study

Teaming up with colleagues can make learning fun and help boost confidence. Consider collaborating with nurses who have earned the credential you're seeking and/or starting a study group in your workplace or local AACN chapter.

Browse a wide selection of exam preparation resources, including books, online review courses and practice exam options:
www.aacn.org/cert-review-products

Check for review courses in your area: www.aacn.org/cert-review-events

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Certification Organization for the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses

AACN Certification Corporation does not approve, endorse or require for eligibility the use of any specific exam preparation products.

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