



Your PBDS Study Guide

From American Traveler

What is PBDS testing?

The Performance-Based Development System (PBDS) assessment measures a nurse's ability to think critically and communicate effectively in various clinical scenarios.

The exam is usually a 4- to 6-hour computerized test that consists of two question types.

The first portion of the exam gives you a series of situations and asks you to respond with what you "must" do (within 15 minutes), "should" do (within one hour), and "could" do (within your shift). The other sections consist of various short clips, called video vignettes, that you watch and then respond to. There is no multiple choice.

Why is it required?

Some hospitals and healthcare employers use PBDS assessments to determine whether a nurse can competently recognize threats to

patient safety and stability and apply working knowledge appropriately.

Is it specialty-specific?

Nurse PBDS testing is divided into four clinical areas, medical-surgical, critical care, NICU, and obstetrics. This means, for example, that an ER nurse would be evaluated using the critical care assessments.

How do I pass it?

To successfully complete the PBDS assessment, the nurse must IDENTIFY threats to patient safety and stability, DETERMINE the proper intervention, and then JUSTIFY that decision.

Nurses are expected to include all treatment steps, along with clinical validation for each. For example, your diagnosis may require that you check the patient's vitals, give oxygen, call a doctor, anticipate that a specific lab will be ordered, and educate the patient. You need to order these interventions by priority and explain why you're doing them.

Here are some tips to keep in mind:

1. **Expect only abnormal events.** In every scenario, the nurse must respond to at least one incident of patient deterioration. Keep in mind the patient is never "just fine."
2. **Watch videos closely.** Visual cues may be brief.
3. **State the obvious!** Avoid reading too far into the clinical situation. Take what you see at face value and respond accordingly.
4. **Don't assume.** Don't leave the obvious out! Include ALL standard, commonly known procedures and interventions.
5. **Review in your head what you take for granted every day.** Be prepared to explain and document those automatic reactions that you may usually take for granted.
6. **Remember the basics.** Don't forget your ABCs (airway, breathing, circulation) when assessing your patients and the presented situations.

Key Questions to Ask:

- Is the need for action immediate?
- Does the situation require to you delegate to others?
- Does it require you to collaborate with others, such as doctors, nurse managers, or code blue teams?
- Are you qualified to intervene independently?

Exam Content

Here are some ideas of diagnoses and scenarios that may appear on your PBDS assessment. Keep in mind that these are examples of the TYPES of diagnoses and scenarios you might see, not the exact ones.

Example Diagnoses:

Acute Myocardial Infarction
Acute Renal Failure
Cerebrovascular accident (CVA)
Diabetic Ketoacidosis and
Hyperosmolar Hyperglycemic State
Digoxin toxicity
Ileus
Increased intracranial pressure
Intracranial bleed
Pulmonary embolism
Pneumothorax
Pyelonephritis
Thrombocytopenia

Other facts, figures, and things to know

- Roughly 500 facility employers require PBDS testing.
- Some facilities administer PBDS tests as pass/fail, some offer a single retest, and still others use the exam as an assessment to identify potential holes in nurse reasoning and competency. Your recruiter can give you details regarding the expectations for a specific assignment.
- You typically receive your PBDS results from American Traveler within 24 to 48 hours after taking the exam.

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.

Remember – you’ve aced many tests in your RN career. YOU’VE GOT THIS!