PBDS Study Guide

Performance Based Development System Assessment for Registered Nurses
American Traveler has developed this study guide to help RNs understand the PBDS Assessment process and to familiarize themselves with the PBDS format; which is unlike that of many other standardized nursing tests.
1. What is Performance Based Development System (PBDS) nurse testing?

PBDS assessment weighs in on nurses’ ability to think critically in various clinical scenarios. The Performance Based Development System is utilized by healthcare employers to determine whether a nurse can competently recognize threats to patient safety/stability and apply working knowledge appropriately.

**Background of PBDS Nurse Testing**

The PBDS nursing test was developed in 1985 by Performance Management Services Inc (PMSI) based in Tustin, CA. Since, more than 500 healthcare employers nationwide have successfully implemented the nurse competency test.
Areas of nurse competency focus include:

- **Critical Thinking** – problem recognition, risk management, priority setting
- **Technical Skills** – safe, effective, efficient skill set
- **Interpersonal Communication** – team building, conflict resolution, customer satisfaction

Nurses are evaluated on:

- **Clinical Judgment**
- **Problem Solving**
- **Customer Relations**
- **Team Work**
2. **How is the PBDS nurse test presented?**

Though you may find a few pencil/paper PBDS tests still scattered about the country, the majority of PBDS nurse competency tests are conducted on desktop computers (videos too!), so it’s good to brush up on your computer skills before taking the test.

**After viewing video vignettes:**
- Nurse is asked several questions
- Questions prompt nurse to define problem
- Nurse responds to problem with intervention
- Nurse sets treatment priorities

**Priorities to consider when responding to PBDS nurse test scenarios include:**
1. What must you do?
2. What should you do?
3. What could you do?

**Additional considerations that may impact your response:**
- Is the need for action immediate?
- Does the situation require you to delegate to others?
- Does the situation require you to collaborate with others? (Doctor, nurse supervisor, manager, Rapid Response and/or Code Blue team)
- Are you qualified to intervene independently without a doctor’s consent?
4. **What is the Interpersonal Skills Assessment?**

This portion of the PBDS nurse competency test evaluates customer service skills, including how you interact with physicians, family members, supervisors and coworkers. For instance, are you easily offended? Can you calmly and effectively communicate diagnosis and directions to a patient’s healthcare team? Do you think rationally during time of crisis?
5. **Eight Competency Nurse Test Tips to Aid an Acceptable Outcome!**

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. It “is what it appears to be” and the protocol for treatment is generally known.

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 everyday** – All those automatic reactions over the years we call “know it like the back of your hand” need to be explained in the PBDS nurse test. Though you may ‘know’ what you’re doing, you need to convey it in writing – one of the most difficult aspects of the test for older nurses and RN jobs seekers unaccustomed to nurse testing.

6. **Be careful what materials you review** – Not all information is good information – especially on the Internet. Ask your recruiter or travel nurse RN staffing agency (American Traveler 800–884–8788) to direct you to reliable online resources regarding PBDS nurse testing.

7. **Get plenty of rest the day before the test** – Don’t drink too much coffee the day of nurse competency testing and relax while you’re taking the PBDS nurse test. You know what you’re doing. Now put yourself in the shoes of a teacher.

8. **Remember the basics and your ABC’s** (airway, breathing, circulation) when assessing your patients and the situation you are presented with.
6. **When and where is PBDS administered?**

The assessment is usually administered on the first or second day of an assignment in a proctored setting chosen by the healthcare employer.

7. **How long does the PBDS competency nurse test take?**

The nursing test takes 4–6 hours. Traveling nurses sometimes are issued an abbreviated version (2–4 hours).

8. **How is the PBDS assessment structured?**

- Nurse views video vignettes of clinical situations
- Nurse determines main problem
- Nurse ranks priority and urgency
- Nurse states interventions
- Nurse supports interventions

Nurses are expected to include all treatment steps, along with clinical support for each in his/her narrative. No multiple choice answers are provided. Answers must be submitted in essay/statement format. Nurses must clearly document all steps in treating patient to the best of their knowledge. Leaving out critical steps could result in an “unacceptable” assessment and the termination of a travel nurse contract.
9. **In what clinical areas are nurses assessed?**

Nurses are assessed by PBDS in four clinical areas.
1. Medical–Surgical
2. Critical Care
3. Neonatal ICU (NICU)
4. OB

*To illustrate:* ED nurses are tested using Critical Care assessment tests. Some facilities require PBDS assessments in multiple nurse specialties.

10. **Are all travel nurses required to take PBDS for RN jobs?**

The roughly 500 healthcare employers that utilize PBDS nurse competency testing typically require all travel nurses to be tested.

11. **What are overall expectations?**

Expectations are high that nurses can correctly identify clinical problems and respond with appropriate intervention in a timely manner.

12. **Is PBDS hospital specific?**

PBDS nurse test content is often crafted around the individual needs of healthcare employers. Staff mix, patient mix and other facility–specific characteristics play a role in PBDS assessments.
**13. Is there a passing grade?**

A rating of “acceptable” must be achieved on the PBDS nurse test prior to treating patients. This “acceptable” rating is not based on a numeric score, but on a critical assessment of a nurse’s applied working knowledge.

**14. If I fail the first time do I get a second chance?**

Few facilities offer a second opportunity to pass PBDS nurse testing. Likely a travel nurse contract will be terminated if the nurse doesn’t pass the test the first time around. Remember, hospitals and healthcare employers hire travel nurses expecting a higher caliber practitioner to fill RN jobs. Some facilities, however, utilize PBDS nurse testing as a guide to determine what further education staff nurses may need. In this case, a staff nurse may be retested if she/he fails.

**15. How long do nursing test results take?**

Turnaround time for nurse competency test results vary. Most healthcare employers have them within 24–48 hours when utilizing a PBDS contractor.

* Facilities that use internal raters may take longer depending on the ratio of nurse test raters to the number of nurses being tested.
16. **Who do I contact for PBDS competency test results?**

Typically your travel nurse RN staffing agency (American Traveler 800-884-8788) contacts you upon receiving results from the healthcare employer.

17. **How often do I have to take a PBDS assessment?**

This depends on a number of factors:

- Whether a nurse received a rating of “acceptable” on a recent PBDS competency test assessment similar to the one issued by the new healthcare employer
- Whether a previous PBDS nursing competency assessment was issued by a national rater (such as a PMSI national rater)*
- Whether PBDS assessments are rated internally at a new RN jobs assignment
- Changing specialties may require additional PBDS assessments
- PBDS policies may vary among healthcare employers and PBDS administrators
✓ Your housing arrangements may be different before taking the PBDS test from what they are after PBDS.

✓ This intervention is needed and designed specifically to minimize the strain on travel nurses as they initially focus on successfully completing the PBDS assessment.

✓ Ask your Consultant for more details about your specific travel nurse housing arrangements.
What to expect in the future

Evidence-based protocols, improved patient safety standards and fewer hospital readmissions are the future for healthcare employers. Consequently, gainfully employed registered nurses and travel nurses seeking RN jobs employment are compelled to keep skills current, enroll in CE units and continue to develop competent nursing skills alongside the profession.

Leading travel nurse RN staffing firm American Traveler expects PBDS nurse competency testing to grow in popularity in coming years as a means to measure and evaluate registered nurses’ ability to fill RN jobs. To learn more about the PBDS travel nurse test, or hospitals that do or don’t require it, call American Traveler at 800–884–8788 or apply online on our website at www.americantraveler.com and a representative will contact you.
We are here to help you along the way!

Now that you have read the American Traveler Staffing PBDS Study Guide, we encourage you to call our Consultants at 800-884-8788.

Our Consultants and RN Clinical Coordinators are available to answer any question(s) you might have.

Email any of your PBDS Assessment questions to pbdshelp@americantraveler.com