

Study for Pathophysiology NCLEX-Style Exams

How to approach NCLEX-Style Questions – A Tutor’s Perspective

NCLEX-Style questions ask you to recognize the correct nursing response among a set of options that include three or four incorrect answers or select all that apply. NCLEX-style questions are not testing if you have memorized the textbooks, rather if you can think like a safe nurse. Here are some techniques you can use as a NRSG student to ace NCLEX-style questions on your quizzes and exams!

Studying Techniques for Multiple Choice

One way you can improve your NCLEX-style test-taking skills includes strategically reading your textbook. Try to follow learning objectives and look at the text to understand not memorize. Think of each section or objective as a question to yourself:

- How might this topic be phrased as a NCLEX-style multiple choice question?

Paying attention to the textbook to understand the clinical concepts will allow you to develop clinical reasoning skills which are what NCLEX-style questions are testing.

Why NCLEX-Style Questions Feel Different

NCLEX-style questions are based on application. According to Bloom’s Taxonomy, they primarily test higher level thinking rather than simple recall. This includes application, analysis, and evaluation.

In Pathophysiology, this means:

- Understanding mechanisms (*consider the “why”*)
- Recognizing clinical patterns
- Prioritizing patient safety

Instead of asking you about what a certain condition is, you might be asked what the priority action is for a patient presenting with that condition, as this tests your reasoning skills rather than just memorization.

Approaching Each Question

1. Read the question carefully to understand what is being asked of you.
2. Look for clues to identify the pathophysiology topic. (*What is happening in the body?*)
3. Prioritize: ABCs (*Airway, Breathing, Circulation*), Physiological Needs, and Judgement-Free Responses.
4. Narrow your options by eliminating answers that seem unrelated, out of scope, or opposing. (*Eliminate absolute answers that say always or never, unless clearly correct.*)
5. Consider each statement under Select All That Apply as True or False.

Think Like a Nurse!

NCLEX-style questions are just like another nursing skill which must be improved with practice. Take your time reading the questions, identifying the priorities, and considering the best outcomes for the patient. Review questions that you get wrong and make notes for next time. If you have difficulty understanding the reasoning behind an answer, reach out to your instructor or book an appointment with a peer tutor!