NCLEX-PN Exam Guide

2026 test plan, adaptive format, eligibility and an 8-week study plan

THE EXAM AT A GLANCE

FEATURE	DETAIL
Length	85 to 150 items
At 85 items	52 content + 18 case study + 15 unscored pretest items
Time	5 hours, including intro and breaks
Format	Adaptive (CAT); stops once 95% sure after at least 85 items, at 150 items or at time-out
Item types	Single answer, select all that apply, calculation, exhibit; NGN: extended multiple response, extended drag-and-drop, drop-down (cloze), highlight, matrix, bow-tie
Passing standard	−0.18 logits through March 31, 2029; no fixed percent correct
Cost	$200 USD; $350 if registered from Feb 1, 2027; +$150 at international centers
Where	Pearson test centers, US and international; not online in 2026
Results	Official from your board within 6 weeks; unofficial Quick Results ($7.95) in 2 business days if your board participates

EXAM TIP Length does not reveal pass or fail. Items aim for about a 50% chance of a correct answer, so passing still feels hard.

WHAT IS ON IT

2026 NCLEX-PN Test Plan, April 1, 2026 to March 31, 2029. Each exam may vary ±3% per area.

CLIENT NEEDS AREA	RANGE	TARGET
Coordinated Care	18–24%	21%
Safety and Infection Prevention and Control	10–16%	13%
Health Promotion and Maintenance	6–12%	9%
Psychosocial Integrity	9–15%	12%
Basic Care and Comfort	7–13%	10%
Pharmacological Therapies	10–16%	13%
Reduction of Risk Potential	9–15%	12%
Physiological Adaptation	7–13%	10%

Clinical judgment is also measured directly: 3 six-item case studies (counted apart from the 8 areas) plus about 10% stand-alone items.

EXAM TIP PN activities use verbs such as reinforce, collect data, monitor and assist, so keyed answers stay within LPN/VN scope.

WHO CAN TAKE IT

- Apply to your board of nursing, which sets eligibility. Request any accommodations there before registering.
- Register and pay with Pearson using your program code and the exact name on your ID. No eligibility within 365 days forfeits the fee.
- Pearson emails your Authorization to Test (ATT). Test within its dates (average 90 days, no extensions); first-time takers are offered a date within 30 days.
- Change or cancel 24 hours ahead (Saturday to Monday slots by the Friday before) or lose the fee and ATT.
- Retakes: at least 45 days apart, up to 8 a year; boards may be stricter.
- Fail? The Candidate Performance Report rates each area and clinical judgment as below, near or above passing. Study the below areas first.

HOW TO STUDY: 8 WEEKS

1. Week 1: Set your date, read the test plan, take a baseline Mock Exam and start Daily Review.
2. Weeks 2–3: Heaviest areas first: Coordinated Care (LPN/VN Role One-Pager), Safety and Infection Prevention and Control, and Pharmacological Therapies with dosage calculations. Read every rationale.
3. Weeks 4–5: The other five areas. Use the Lab Values to Know and Electrolyte Imbalances One-Pagers; practice comparing labs to normal and knowing when to notify the provider.
4. Week 6: Second Mock Exam under real conditions. Work the Case Studies, then the PN case studies in NCSBN's Sample Pack.
5. Week 7: Weakest Subject, Missed Questions and Trouble Questions. Check Readiness on the Stats screen.
6. Week 8: Final Mock Exam early, then Daily Review and One-Pager skims. Rest the day before.

In this app, PN practice uses NCLEX-RN questions whose keyed action fits LPN/VN scope, filed under the 8 PN areas. The adaptive Mock Exam follows the PN weights and deals 3 case studies, as the NCLEX-PN does.

TEST-DAY TIPS

- Arrive 30 minutes early; over 30 minutes late can forfeit the appointment and fee.
- Bring one physical, unexpired, government-issued ID with photo, signature and name in Roman characters. International centers, including Puerto Rico, take only passports.
- Expect a palm vein scan, photo, signature and security scans (also after breaks). Devices go in a sealed bag.
- No skipping or going back. Pace yourself: timing out before 85 items is a fail.
- A calculator and note board are provided. Optional breaks at 2 and 3.5 hours count toward the 5 hours.

SAFETY First and last names on your ID must exactly match your Pearson registration. After a name change, bring the original marriage license, divorce decree or court name-change order. Otherwise you are turned away and pay again; fees are never refunded.

EXAM TIP Lab values show normal ranges, most drugs use generic names, and words like first and priority are bolded. Calculation items say whole number or 1–2 decimals; round only at the end.

OFFICIAL RESOURCES

- 2026 NCLEX-PN Test Plan and 2026 Candidate Bulletin (PDFs)
- Candidate Tutorial, Sample Pack and Exam Preview (nclex.com)
- Your board of nursing (ncsbn.org)

Links are under Sources below. NCSBN does not recommend or endorse any review course or study materials.

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