



Our essential test-taking guide to success

Similar to the National Registry cognitive exam, Fisdap exams are uniquely designed to assess your knowledge and critical thinking ability. **Our goal is for you to take our exam and come away with a good sense of which subjects you've mastered and what you still need to learn.** We hope these guidelines will help you understand the content of the Fisdap exams so that you can best prepare for them.

By now, you are probably familiar with classroom quizzes and tests that ask you to recall specific information you've read in the textbook or heard in class. This test will also require you to be familiar with all the key terms, glossary words, and conditions listed in the index of the textbook you're using—no matter which one.

Many questions on this test will seem much harder than classroom exams you've had in the past. In order to perform well on this type of exam, it will be helpful to understand the philosophy behind the composition of the three kinds of application and critical thinking questions:

- **You should**
- **You should suspect**
- **The most likely cause**

YOU SHOULD

Questions that end in “You should” are asking you to apply knowledge and take care of a patient as you would in the field. In other words, select the best treatment option available from the choices given.

If you have trouble picking the best answer because more than one option seems right, imagine that there is a **next, first, best** or **most importantly** at the end of this type of question. In other words, read the question as if it's

asking you to answer **What should you do next? What should you do most importantly? Or what should you do first?**

YOU SHOULD SUSPECT

Questions that end in “You should suspect” are asking you to think about the underlying problem or conditions that fit the situation or symptoms described in the stem of the question. **This should be your top differential diagnosis.**

If you have trouble selecting between two answers that seem correct, think of the condition that is the most life threatening or could kill the patient first—yet is still plausible based on the stem of the question.

Suspecting the most dangerous condition means that you will discover and treat problems that might really harm your patient before you move on to other more routine problems.

Remember that the most life-threatening problem may NOT always be that which is the most likely possibility. For example: A female patient who has abdominal pain is perhaps most likely having menstrual pains. But, in EMS, we must suspect that she may be having an ectopic pregnancy (a life threatening condition that, if missed, could lead to her death).

THE MOST LIKELY CAUSE

Questions that end in “The most likely cause” are asking you to think about the most probable cause or condition based on the symptoms. In this type of question you are NOT necessarily being asked about what might be the worst possible problem, but rather the most likely.

Try to think of it as more of an odds question—with the symptoms or signs given, 9 times out of 10, the odds say the patient will have the problem(s) listed.

You may not be used to seeing these types of critical thinking questions on exams, so here are some key test-taking tips to help you:

- 1.** Read the question (stem) completely and imagine what you should do to take care of the patient. Do this **BEFORE** you even look at the possible answers.
- 2.** Read the possible answers completely and consider the **BEST** answer (since there may be more than one plausible choice it may be helpful to think less about finding the *correct* answer, but rather the one that would be **MOST IMPORTANT, BEST, or FIRST**).
- 3.** Once you have read the entire question and all possible answers, pick the one you feel is best and **DO NOT CHANGE YOUR ANSWER**. Many times your first guess is the correct one.
- 4.** During the test, we encourage you to write down (on a blank piece of paper) words you do not know, concepts you did not understand. Even if you have to return the notes to your instructor following the exam, you will have a better chance of remembering the things you need to look up to improve before your next exam, or the next time you care for a patient.
- 5.** Remember that in EMS we are most focused on life threatening conditions that could kill a patient if they are not recognized and treated.
- 6.** The questions are randomized, so don't get discouraged if you hit some hard questions right away. If you let yourself start to doubt your knowledge you might compromise future answers. Simply answer the question and don't put much more thought into it before moving on to the next one.

7. Finally, even if it's not required for class, we recommend that you complete the workbook that comes with your textbook for additional practice at applying the knowledge you're learning.

Remember, studying the information in your textbook will help you build a great foundation for what the Fisdap exams will require you to do: APPLY that knowledge and think CRITICALLY to solve real life EMS problems.



FISDAP STUDY TOOLS
ACE YOUR EXAM.