



National Hair Design Theory Examination CIB
National-Interstate Council of State Boards of Cosmetology (NIC)

Effective Date: September 01, 2025 Revision Date: March 01, 2026

Contents

CANDIDATE INFORMATION BULLETIN (CIB)	3
IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS	4
General	4
Standardized Administration	4
Prohibited Items	4
HAIR DESIGN THEORY EXAMINATION CONTENT OUTLINE	6
Domain Details	6
NATIONAL HAIR DESIGN THEORY EXAMINATION SAMPLE QUESTIONS	10
NATIONAL-INTERSTATE COUNCIL OF STATE BOARDS OF COSMETOLOGY (NIC) REFERENCES	12
Standard	12
Supplemental	12



CANDIDATE INFORMATION BULLETIN (CIB)

EXAMINATION CONTENT AND IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS

Please visit your official examination provider website OR www.nictesting.org for the most current bulletin prior to testing.

The National Hair Design Theory Examination is a licensure examination for Hair Design, developed by the National-Interstate Council of State Boards of Cosmetology (NIC).

This bulletin contains IMPORTANT INFORMATION regarding National Hair Design Theory Examination content and references.

The time allowed for this examination is 90 minutes.

PLEASE REVIEW ALL INFORMATION CAREFULLY.

For each NIC National Theory Examination, there are multiple parts to every Candidate Information Bulletin (CIB):

- **Important Instructions and Examination Content Domain Sections** – This provides information and guidelines related to administration of the Theory examination and information about the scope of content covered in the examination.
- **References** – This provides a list of references used to develop and support the content covered in NIC examinations. References will be the same for Theory, Practical, Written Practical, and Additional Sections for each exam.

IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS

BE CERTAIN TO REVIEW ALL PARTS OF THIS NIC EXAMINATION CIB CAREFULLY!

IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS

General

- Do not leave the examination area without permission. Permission must be obtained to leave the examination area for any reason, including restroom usage or at the completion of the examination. *Picture ID is required for re-entry into the examination.*
- All examinations are administered in a testing environment.

Standardized Administration

Due to standardization of the NIC National Examinations, proctors and examiners are required to adhere to the following standards:

- With the exception of verbal instructions, proctors and examination administration personnel are NOT allowed to speak with candidates.
- If a candidate experiences an emergency situation, they may notify the proctor by raising their hand.

Prohibited Items

- The following provides examples of materials and actions that are prohibited in the examination room during the examination administration:
 - Possession of cellular phones, watches (of any kind), pagers, tablets, computers, projectors, cameras, or any other electronic or recording devices, printed materials, or handwritten notes.

IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS

– Purses, bags, coats, hats, and any other personal items not directly needed to complete the examination, are not allowed.

- Communicating to other candidates or any examiner.
- Exhibiting disruptive behavior. The above referenced items or actions are not an exhaustive list.

Failure to comply with any of these conditions or exhibiting ANY behavior that suggests an effort to cheat will result in immediate dismissal from the examination and the candidates' actions reported to the proper authorities.

HAIR DESIGN THEORY EXAMINATION CONTENT OUTLINE

Domain Details

The following outlines the scope of content covered by the NIC National Hair Design Theory Examination. The percentages represent the percentage of items from each domain. The examination contains 110 items, of which 100 items are weighted and contribute to the candidate's final score.

- I. Scientific Concepts (45%)
 - A. Infection control and safety practices
 1. Identify cause/transmission of diseases and infections
 2. Identify the purpose and differentiate among the categories of infection control
 - a. Sanitation
 - b. Disinfection
 - c. Sterilization
 3. Recognize how cross-contamination occurs and how it can be prevented (e.g., single use and multi-use items)
 4. Apply blood exposure procedures
 5. Identify requirements of government agencies
 - a. OSHA
 - b. EPA
 - B. Human anatomy and physiology
 1. Identify function and structure of the:
 - a. Hair and scalp
 - b. Skin
 - c. Nails

HAIR DESIGN THEORY EXAMINATION CONTENT OUTLINE

2. Recognize signs and symptoms of conditions, disorders, and diseases related to:
 - a. Hair and scalp
 - b. Skin
 - c. Nails
 3. Identify muscles and joints and their functions related to:
 - a. Head and face
 - b. Arms and hands
 - c. Legs and feet
 4. Identify functions of:
 - a. Nervous system
 - b. Circulatory system
- C. Basic chemistry used in Cosmetology
1. Recognize purpose and effects of ingredients
 2. Recognize interactions between chemicals
 3. Recognize chemical reactions (e.g., overexposure, chemical burn)
 4. Recognize the values of the pH scale
- II. Hair Care and Services (55%)
- A. Client consultation, analysis, and documentation
1. Evaluate condition of client's hair and scalp
 2. Recognize conditions that would prohibit service (i.e., contraindications)
 3. Utilize preliminary tests (e.g., predisposition and strand tests)
 4. Recommend services or products based on client needs
 5. Establish/Maintain client records (e.g., service history, client card, medical history)
- B. Hair care and services- Tools used in hair care services

HAIR DESIGN THEORY EXAMINATION CONTENT OUTLINE

1. Identify purpose, function, and infection control procedures of items
 - a. Equipment (e.g., chair, workstation)
 - b. Implements (e.g., razors, shears, combs/brushes)
 - c. Supplies and materials (e.g., towels, drapes, neck strips)
 - d. Electrical tools (e.g., irons, blow dryers, clippers)
 2. Demonstrate safe practices
 - a. Tools/Implements
 - b. Ergonomics
- C. Hair care principles and procedures
1. Demonstrate shampooing and conditioning
 2. Demonstrate scalp treatments and scalp massage
 3. Demonstrate draping (e.g., chemical, shampoo, cutting, styling)
 4. Recognize differences in hair care principles and procedures based on various hair types and textures
- D. Hair design principles and procedures
1. Demonstrate hair cutting and shaping
 2. Demonstrate hair styling
 - a. Wet styling
 - b. Thermal styling
 - c. Natural hair styling (e.g., braiding)
 3. Apply, maintain, and remove hair enhancements
 - a. Wigs and hairpieces
 - b. Hair additions (e.g., taping, bonding, fusion, linking)
 4. Apply principles of balance and hair design (e.g., facial shape, physical structure)

HAIR DESIGN THEORY EXAMINATION CONTENT OUTLINE

5. Recognize differences in hair design principles and procedures based on various hair types and textures
- E. Chemical services principles and procedures
1. Perform hair color services (e.g., virgin, retouch, lightening, foiling, balayage, color formulation, color correction)
 2. Perform chemical hair relaxer/restructurizer and curl reduction (e.g., hydroxide, thio, keratin) service
 3. Perform chemical waving/texturizing (e.g., alkaline, acid, non-thio) services
 4. Understand the chemical products used for the various hair texture types

*NATIONAL HAIR DESIGN THEORY EXAMINATION SAMPLE
QUESTIONS*

**NATIONAL HAIR DESIGN THEORY EXAMINATION
SAMPLE QUESTIONS**

The following sample questions are similar to those on the NIC National Hair Design Theory Examination. Each question is followed by four answer options. Only one option is correct. Correct answers (keys) are listed along with the sample questions.

1. Which of the following will reinforce and reconstruct the hair shaft?
 - A. Scalp treatment
 - B. Balancing shampoo
 - C. Hair brushing
 - D. Protein conditioner
2. When damaged, which of the following will cause the hair growth to be inhibited?
 - A. Papilla
 - B. Shaft
 - C. Cuticle
 - D. Arrector pili
3. A condition caused by an infestation of head lice is
 - A. tinea barbae.
 - B. scabies.
 - C. pediculous capitalis.
 - D. tinea capitis.
4. Debris is removed from tools and implements using which of the following procedures?
 - A. Cleaning
 - B. Disinfection
 - C. Sterilization
 - D. Decontamination
5. What product can be used to equalize the porosity of the hair?
 - A. Shampoo
 - B. Fillers
 - C. Lightener
 - D. Developer

*NATIONAL HAIR DESIGN THEORY EXAMINATION SAMPLE
QUESTIONS*

Table 1: Answer Key

Item	Key
1	D
2	A
3	C
4	A
5	B

**NATIONAL-INTERSTATE COUNCIL OF STATE
BOARDS OF COSMETOLOGY (NIC) REFERENCES**

This list provides the references used to develop and support the content covered in the NIC National Hair Design examinations. References will be the same across exam types for each exam. Candidates are responsible for using these most updated versions of references, as these editions were used to reference test material.

Reference Date: March 01, 2026

Standard

Milady Standard Cosmetology and Foundations

Copyrighted 2023

14th Edition

9780357871492

Milady www.Milady.com

Info@Milady.com;

Pivot Point Fundamentals: Cosmetology, (101C – 113C)

Copyrighted ©2023 Pivot Point International, Inc.

2nd Edition, 1st Printing, December 2023

978-1-957642-57-4 (Coursebook set)

Pivot Point International, Inc. www.pivot-point.com/shop/

info@pivot-point.com; 847-866-0500, Ext. 7368

Supplemental

Pivot Point Fundamentals: Cosmetology, (101 – 113)

Copyrighted ©2016 Pivot Point International, Inc.

NATIONAL-INTERSTATE COUNCIL OF STATE BOARDS OF
COSMETOLOGY (NIC) REFERENCES

1st Edition, 1st Printing, November 2016

978-1-940593-56-2

Pivot Point International, Inc. www.pivot-point.com/shop/

info@pivot-point.com; 847-866-0500, Ext. 7368

Milady Standard Cosmetology

Copyrighted 2016

13th Edition

9781285769417

Milady www.Milady.com

Info@Milady.com;

Salon Fundamentals Cosmetology

Copyrighted 2014

3rd Edition

Pivot Point International, Inc. www.pivot-point.com

info@pivot-point.com; 847-866-0500, Ext. 7368

Copyright 2025 National-Interstate Council of State Boards of Cosmetology,
Inc.



National Hair Design Written Practical Examination CIB

National-Interstate Council of State Boards of Cosmetology (NIC)

Effective Date: September 01, 2025 Revision Date: March 01,
2026

Contents

CANDIDATE INFORMATION BULLETIN (CIB)	3
IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS	4
General	4
Standardized Administration	4
Prohibited Items	5
HAIR DESIGN WRITTEN PRACTICAL EXAMINATION CONTENT OUTLINE	6
Domain Details	6
NATIONAL HAIR DESIGN WRITTEN PRACTICAL EXAMINATION SAMPLE QUESTIONS	11
NATIONAL-INTERSTATE COUNCIL OF STATE BOARDS OF COS- METOLOGY (NIC) REFERENCES	14
Standard	14
Supplemental	15



CANDIDATE INFORMATION BULLETIN (CIB)

EXAMINATION CONTENT AND IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS

Please visit your official examination provider website OR www.nictesting.org for the most current bulletin prior to testing.

The National Hair Design Written Practical Examination is a licensure examination for Hair Design, developed by the National-Interstate Council of State Boards of Cosmetology (NIC).

This bulletin contains IMPORTANT INFORMATION regarding National Hair Design Written Practical Examination content and administration for core services and additional sections and references.

The time allowed for this examination is 90 minutes.

PLEASE REVIEW ALL INFORMATION CAREFULLY.

For each NIC National Written Practical Examination, there are multiple parts to every Candidate Information Bulletin (CIB):

- **Important Instructions and Examination Content Domain Sections** – This provides information and guidelines related to administration of the Written Practical examination and information about the scope of content covered in the Written Practical examination.

IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS

- **References** – This provides a list of references used to develop and support the content covered in NIC examinations. References will be the same for Theory, Practical, Written Practical, and Additional Sections for each exam.

***BE CERTAIN TO REVIEW ALL PARTS OF THIS NIC EXAMINATION
CIB CAREFULLY!***

IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS

General

- Do not leave the examination area without permission. Permission must be obtained to leave the examination area for any reason, including restroom usage or at the completion of the examination. *Picture ID is required for re-entry into the examination.*
- All examinations are administered in a testing environment.

Standardized Administration

Due to standardization of the NIC National Examinations, proctors and examiners are required to adhere to the following standards:

- With the exception of verbal instructions, proctors and examination administration personnel are NOT allowed to speak with candidates.
- If a candidate experiences an emergency situation, they may notify the proctor by raising their hand.

IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS

Prohibited Items

- The following provides examples of materials and actions that are prohibited in the examination room during the examination administration:
 - Possession of cellular phones, watches (of any kind), pagers, tablets, computers, projectors, cameras, or any other electronic or recording devices, printed materials, or handwritten notes.
 - Purses, bags, coats, hats, and any other personal items not directly needed to complete the examination, are not allowed.
- Communicating to other candidates or any examiner.
- Exhibiting disruptive behavior. The above referenced items or actions are not an exhaustive list.

Failure to comply with any of these conditions or exhibiting ANY behavior that suggests an effort to cheat will result in immediate dismissal from the examination and the candidates' actions reported to the proper authorities.

HAIR DESIGN WRITTEN PRACTICAL EXAMINATION CONTENT OUTLINE

Domain Details

The following outlines the scope of content covered by the NIC National Hair Design Written Practical Examination. The percentages represent the percentage of items from each domain. The examination contains 70 items, of which 60 items are weighted and contribute to the candidate's final score. The Core Domain Sections are based on the national job analysis.

I. WORK AREA AND CLIENT PREPARATION, AND SET UP OF SUPPLIES (7%)

A. Elements include:

1. Disinfects all work areas completely with product labeled with manufacturer's label in English as EPA-registered disinfectant that is bactericidal, fungicidal, and virucidal
2. Sanitizes hands with product with manufacturer's label in English
3. Sets up supplies for Client 1
4. Places items to be disinfected, soiled linens, and trash in correct containers throughout section [If kit remains open, score in next section.]

II. THERMAL CURLING (12%)

A. Elements include:

1. Thermal Curling supplies and implements are visibly clean
2. Tests temperature of iron
3. Subsections hair for thermal curling

*HAIR DESIGN WRITTEN PRACTICAL EXAMINATION CONTENT
OUTLINE*

4. Demonstrates safe use of iron
5. Final appearance of four curls
6. Maintains thermal draping throughout section
7. Places items to be disinfected, soiled linens, and trash in correct containers throughout section

III. HAIRCUTTING (13%)

A. Elements include:

1. Haircutting supplies and implements are visibly clean
2. Subsections hair for Haircutting
3. Demonstrates safe use of razor
4. Demonstrates safe use of shears
5. Final appearance of haircut
6. Removes hair from work area
7. Maintains drape throughout section
8. Places items to be disinfected, soiled linens, and trash in correct containers throughout section

IV. WORK AREA AND NEW CLIENT PREPARATION, AND SET UP OF SUPPLIES (7%)

A. Elements include:

1. Disinfects all work areas completely with product labeled with manufacturer's label in English as EPA-registered disinfectant that is bactericidal, fungicidal, and virucidal
2. Sanitizes hands with product with manufacturer's label in English
3. Sets up supplies for Client 2 labeled in English
4. Places items to be disinfected, soiled linens, and trash in correct containers throughout section

V. CHEMICAL WAVING (13%)

A. Elements include:

*HAIR DESIGN WRITTEN PRACTICAL EXAMINATION CONTENT
OUTLINE*

1. Chemical waving supplies are labeled in English and implements are visibly clean
2. Subsections hair for chemical waving
3. Wraps hair
4. Correct rod and band placement used throughout entire section
5. Demonstrates saturation on the first three rods
6. Demonstrates a test curl
7. Maintains chemical drape throughout section
8. Places items to be disinfected, soiled linens, and trash in correct containers throughout section

VI. PREDISPOSITION TEST AND STRAND TEST WITH SIMULATED PRODUCT (8%)

A. Elements include:

1. Predisposition test and strand test are labeled in English and implements are visibly clean
2. Demonstrates predisposition test behind the ear
3. Demonstrates strand test process
4. Maintains chemical drape throughout section
5. Places items to be disinfected, soiled linens, and trash in correct containers throughout section

VII. HIGHLIGHTING WITH FOIL, VIRGIN APPLICATION WITH COLORED SIMULATED PRODUCT (10%)

A. Elements include:

1. Highlighting supplies are labeled in English and implements are visibly clean
2. Subsections hair for highlighting with foils
3. Demonstrates foil placement
4. Final result of simulated product application [Examiner will check and re-close one foil.]

*HAIR DESIGN WRITTEN PRACTICAL EXAMINATION CONTENT
OUTLINE*

5. Maintains chemical drape throughout section
 6. Places items to be disinfected, soiled linens, and trash in correct containers throughout section
- VIII. HAIR COLOR RETOUCH WITH COLORED SIMULATED PRODUCT (10%)
- A. Elements include:
1. Hair color retouch supplies are labeled in English and implements are visibly clean
 2. Subsections hair for hair color retouch
 3. Applies simulated hair color product
 4. Final result of hair color retouch application
 5. Maintains chemical drape throughout section
 6. Places items to be disinfected, soiled linens, and trash in correct containers throughout section
- IX. VIRGIN HAIR RELAXER (NO BASE) APPLICATION WITH SIMULATED, COLORED PRODUCT (8%)
- A. Elements include:
1. Virgin hair relaxer supplies are labeled in English and implements are visibly clean
 2. Prepares for relaxer application
 3. Applies and smooths simulated relaxer product
 4. Maintains chemical drape throughout section
 5. Places items to be disinfected, soiled linens, and trash in correct containers throughout section
- X. BLOOD EXPOSURE PROCEDURE (12%)
- A. Elements include:
1. Blood exposure supplies are labeled in English
 2. Removes materials from first aid kit
 3. Supplies and materials are visibly clean

*HAIR DESIGN WRITTEN PRACTICAL EXAMINATION CONTENT
OUTLINE*

4. Cleans injured area with antiseptic
5. Covers with dressing that is absorbent and secured
6. Candidate wears glove or finger guard
7. Disposes of all contaminated supplies

**NATIONAL HAIR DESIGN WRITTEN PRACTICAL EX-
AMINATION SAMPLE QUESTIONS**

The following sample questions are similar to those on the NIC National Hair Design Written Practical Examination. Each question is followed by four answer options. Only one option is correct. Correct answers (keys) are listed along with the sample questions.

1. The **FIRST** step prior to disinfecting implements is to
 - A. rinse thoroughly with hot water
 - B. remove all hair and visible debris.
 - C. completely immerse in a sanitizing solution.
 - D. expose to UV light for 15 minutes.

2. Put the following steps of a draping for a haircut in order
 - A. lean client back, place towel over neck, secure cape, place towel over cape
 - B. place towel over neck, secure cape, place towel over cape lean client back
 - C. secure cape, place towel over cape, place towel over neck, lean client back
 - D. place towel over neck, secure cape, lean client back, place towel over cape

3. Where should used combs be placed?

*NATIONAL HAIR DESIGN WRITTEN PRACTICAL EXAMINATION
SAMPLE QUESTIONS*



4. Select the finger hole on the image below.

*NATIONAL HAIR DESIGN WRITTEN PRACTICAL EXAMINATION
SAMPLE QUESTIONS*

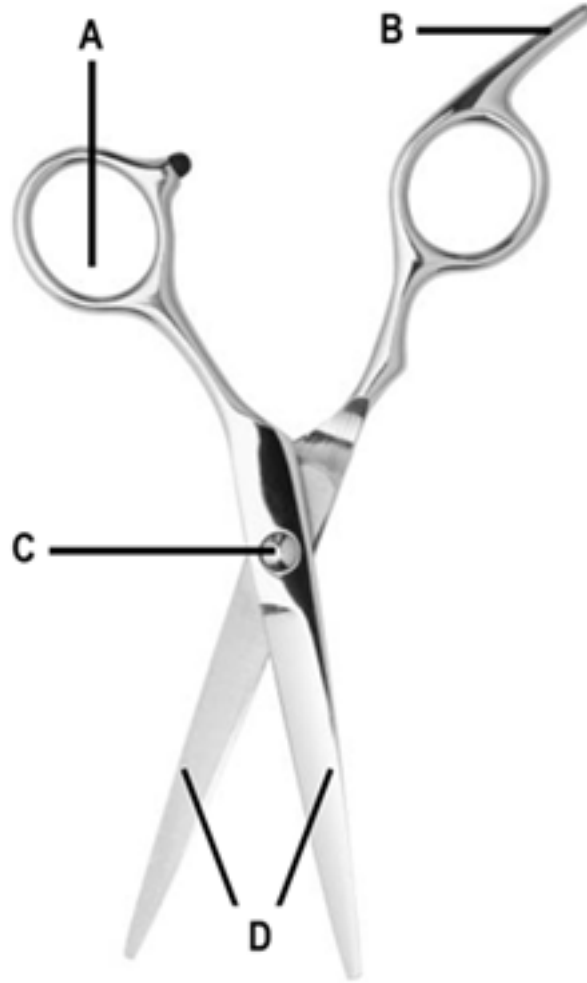


Table 1: Answer Key

Item	Key
1	B
2	A
3	C
4	B

NATIONAL-INTERSTATE COUNCIL OF STATE BOARDS OF COSMETOLOGY (NIC) REFERENCES

This list provides the references used to develop and support the content covered in the NIC National Hair Design examinations. References will be the same across exam types for each exam. Candidates are responsible for using these most updated versions of references, as these editions were used to reference test material.

Reference Date: March 01, 2026

Standard

Milady Standard Cosmetology and Foundations

Copyrighted 2023

14th Edition

9780357871492

Milady www.Milady.com

Info@Milady.com;

Pivot Point Fundamentals: Cosmetology, (101C – 113C)

Copyrighted ©2023 Pivot Point International, Inc.

2nd Edition, 1st Printing, December 2023

978-1-957642-57-4 (Coursebook set)

Pivot Point International, Inc. www.pivot-point.com/shop/

info@pivot-point.com; 847-866-0500, Ext. 7368

*NATIONAL-INTERSTATE COUNCIL OF STATE BOARDS OF
COSMETOLOGY (NIC) REFERENCES*

Supplemental

Pivot Point Fundamentals: Cosmetology, (101 – 113)

Copyrighted ©2016 Pivot Point International, Inc.

1st Edition, 1st Printing, November 2016

978-1-940593-56-2

Pivot Point International, Inc. www.pivot-point.com/shop/

info@pivot-point.com; 847-866-0500, Ext. 7368

Milady Standard Cosmetology

Copyrighted 2016

13th Edition

9781285769417

Milady www.Milady.com

Info@Milady.com;

Salon Fundamentals Cosmetology

Copyrighted 2014

3rd Edition

Pivot Point International, Inc. www.pivot-point.com

info@pivot-point.com; 847-866-0500, Ext. 7368

Copyright 2025 National-Interstate Council of State Boards of Cosmetology,
Inc.