

Pharmacy Registration Assessment Questions 2

PRAOtical tips
for your exam

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DOS

Read the question IN FULL, including the answer options.

Mistakes are often made because candidates have missed a key word or qualification from the question or have assumed an answer includes wording that is not actually there. Due to time constraints it is tempting to read the questions quickly or just get the gist of them, but this can often lead to misunderstandings.

Be aware of negative phrases in questions.

Words like NOT and LEAST in questions will fundamentally change the answer you need to choose. Candidates frequently read over these words and therefore answer questions incorrectly. There is a misconception that the GPhC has stated that it will not ask negative questions, however this is incorrect. The negative words will be highlighted to make them more prominent, so make sure that you spot them.

Refer to the resources when they are given.

You may think you know the answer without referring to the extract provided, but extracts are always provided for a reason. They may detail different dosages or include important cautions that could affect your answer. Even if you think you know the answer it is safest to double check the extract.

Practice your timing answering questions.

Use your revision to not only test your knowledge, but also your ability to answer questions in the allotted time. Candidates have found it challenging to complete all the questions in recent pre-registration exams. If you do not complete all the answers in the allotted time you reduce your chances of passing. The more familiar you are with the style and format of questions, the quicker you will get at answering them. There are now two PRAQ books available which will give you plenty of exam-style questions to practice. There are also other revision tools available such as ONtrack and mock examinations. Choose the practice that works best for you.

Make sure you know common abbreviations and acronyms.

Make sure you are familiar with common Latin abbreviations that may occur in either questions or the reference sources you may be given. Also, make sure you understand the acronyms for the different units of measurement you may encounter. For example, you may need to know the Latin abbreviation to understand when to give treatment or what actions to take in advance of treatment.

Be aware of factors that may affect the volume used.

For example, when calculating the amount of preparations required you need to be aware that patients usually have two eyes and two legs. You often need to multiply by 2 if both eyes or both legs are being treated.

Be aware that there may be more than one technically correct answer.

For calculation questions there should only be one correct answer but for the other categories of question you need to choose the **BEST** answer. More than one option may be technically correct but one answer will be the best answer given the information in the question. For example the likelihood of one side effect may be significantly more likely than another, or one course of treatment may be more practical than another given the circumstances of the patient.

Make sure you give your answers in the correct format.

This is particularly important for calculation questions. You need to ensure you give your answers in the right units of measurement and also to the correct number of decimal places. Candidates often miss this when answering questions. Again, the more practice you have, the more familiar you will get with this.

Know the layout of reference sources and where you will find the information you need.

The extracts included as reference sources will usually have more information than you need to answer the question. Part of what you are being tested on is your ability to find the right information in a timely way. If you understand the structure of reference sources, you should be able to find what you need sooner, even if you have not seen that precise extract before. Make sure you study BNF monographs and SPCs so that you can find information such as dosages, side effects and cautions quickly.

Be aware of reductions in dosages over time.

If a dosage is reduced by a certain amount over time you need to make sure you include this in your calculations. This will affect the calculation of the total volume of drug required for treatment and may also affect the length of time a full course of treatment takes. In particular note that treatment stops when the dosage is reduced to 0.

Pay attention to the age and weight of a patient.

The age of a patient may affect the dosage or the best treatment. For example, children may only receive certain treatments when they reach a certain age. Alternatively, elderly patients may require different treatment regimes. Dosages may be affected by the weight of a patient if they are above or below certain weights. Candidates often miss these factors when answering questions.

Know your units of measurement and their conversion rates.

The GPhC has noted that candidates in the exams frequently get dosages wrong by factors of 10 or 100. This is usually because they have used an incorrect conversion rate between units. For example, when undertaking a volume or dilution calculation you may need to convert from mg to mcg – if you use the wrong conversion rate your answer will be incorrect.

1 000 mcg	1 000 000 ng
1 mg	1 000 mcg
1 g	1 000 mg
1 kg	1 000 g

Don'ts

Don't overthink your answer.

While you need to select the best answer by applying your knowledge to the question you should only base your answer on the information you have available. Candidates often get confused because they think they require additional information or worry about additional factors that are not mentioned in the question. You need to answer the question as it stands, not what you think the question should be.

Don't rely on hearsay.

Candidates often mention 'I have been told...' a certain fact that affected their answer. There are many common misconceptions. Make sure you check your sources when revising and if you cannot find a certain 'fact' in the standard reference sources then it may not be true. If someone does tell you something you think may be helpful then ask where you can find the information.

Don't rely solely on information from product labels.

The BNF, BNFC and SPCs will have fuller and more precise information than the labels of products you may be handling. Candidates can make mistakes if they rely on the labels on products as this wording is intended for a wider more general audience.

Don't assume words and numerals are interchangeable.

In certain situations you may be legally required to use either words or numerals or both. Make sure you are familiar with these requirements and your answers conform fully to them. Candidates often read what they think they should see rather than what is actually there.

Don't just rely on your own experience to date.

You may have commonly dispensed one product in your pharmacy experience, but this may not be the only appropriate option according to the reference sources. For example, you may commonly dispense one strength of a preparation, however, according to the reference sources another strength of preparation may be equally appropriate and may be the best answer to an exam question.