EMT Exam Guide

Format, test plan, eligibility, study plan and test-day tips for the National Registry EMT exam

Medic Basics
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THE EXAM AT A GLANCE

Current exam, live since April 7, 2025

FEATURE	DETAIL
Format	Computer adaptive (CAT), 2 hours
Items	70–120; the exam has 10 unscored pilot items you cannot spot
Item types	Multiple choice, multiple response, options table, build list, drag-and-drop
Scoring	All or nothing; multiple response asks for 2 of 5 or 3 of 6
Ends	95% sure of pass/fail (from item 70), or 120 items, or 2 hours
Passing standard	Board-set; if you fail you see a 100–1500 score (950 passes)
Cost	$104 per attempt
ATT	Valid 90 days; if it expires, reapply and pay again
Where	Pearson VUE test center or OnVUE online
Results	National Registry account only, usually 2–3 business days
Retakes	15-day wait; 6 attempts; remedial education after 3 fails

WHAT IS ON IT

Task domains from the 2023 BLS Practice Analysis

DOMAIN	SHARE
Scene Size-up and Safety	15–19%
Primary Assessment	39–43%
Secondary Assessment	5–9%
Patient Treatment and Transport	20–24%
Operations	10–14%

Pediatric items appear throughout, with no set share. The app files every question under one of these domains, so mocks, Stats and readiness follow these shares; Build Your Own Quiz can also narrow by body-system topic.

EXAM TIP Primary Assessment is about 4 in 10 items: mental status, ABCs, life threats, baseline vitals, and when to call for rapid transport or help.

WHO CAN TAKE IT

- State-approved EMT course meeting National EMS Education Standards, finished within 2 years, verified by your program director
- Pass the cognitive exam and a State EMS Office–approved BLS skills competency, in either order; each stays valid 24 months
- Other routes: State Licensed (current state EMT license plus a refresher or 20 CE credits within 2 years) and Re-entry (lapsed National Registry certification or state license)
- Your state or program may also require a minimum age or a CPR card
- Testing accommodations: request them early (nremt.org/Pages/ADA)
- Certification is not a license; your state EMS office licenses you

Skills exam: there is no single national EMT skills exam. Each state sets the process; some build it into the course, and program directors verify it where allowed.

HOW TO STUDY

1. Week 1: Set your exam date in Settings, take a short Build Your Own Quiz per domain, and try the National Registry's free sample items.
2. Weeks 2–3: Primary assessment first, with the EMS Patient Assessment One-Pager; then airway, CPR and AED, and trauma. Daily Review every day.
3. Weeks 4–5: Medical/OB/GYN, then operations (scene safety, triage, documentation), with the Mass Casualty Triage and Incident Command and Prehospital Sepsis (EMT role: recognition) One-Pagers.
4. Week 6: First Mock Exam, then Weakest Subject and Missed Questions.
5. Week 7: Second Mock Exam; clear Trouble Questions; reread rationales on what to assess first and when to transport.
6. Week 8: Daily Review spreads past misses over your last days. Rest the day before.

EXAM TIP The 2025 AHA CPR and ECC Guidelines came out October 22, 2025. The National Registry is pulling conflicting items and expects 2025-based items within 12–15 months of October 27, 2025. Study 2025 guidance.

TEST-DAY TIPS

- Bring an unexpired government photo ID matching the name on your ATT
- Test center: arrive 30 minutes early; arriving late can cost you the appointment
- OnVUE: check in 30 minutes early, pass the system test on the same device and network, clear desk, no phone
- Untimed tutorial, then 5 minutes to accept the non-disclosure agreement or you cannot start
- Most successful candidates spend 30–60 seconds per item; on-screen calculator provided
- Items get harder as you answer correctly; length alone predicts nothing
- Change or cancel at least 1 business day (24 hours) ahead: $30, plus a Pearson fee by phone. A no-show loses the $104; reapply

EXAM TIP Items follow national standards and EMT scope, not local protocols. Pick the national-standard answer.

SAFETY Never post, share or reconstruct exam items, even with an instructor. The National Registry can invalidate results or revoke certification.

OFFICIAL RESOURCES

The National Registry recommends no particular prep materials; use your textbook, current AHA guidelines and the National EMS Education Standards.

- EMT Candidate Handbook: nremt.org/Handbooks/EMT
- Exam specifications and FAQs: nremt.org/Pages/Examinations/EMR-and-EMT-Certification-Examinations
- Free sample items: EMT-SampleItems.startpractice.com
- 2025 AHA Guidelines: cpr.heart.org
- National EMS Scope of Practice Model 2019 (NHTSA, 2021 update)

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Sources (26) are listed with links at medicbasics.com/sheets/guide-nremt-emt.html. For education and exam preparation only. Not medical advice; follow current guidelines and your institution's protocols. Medic Basics is an independent study aid not affiliated with any certifying body.