Paramedic Certification Exam Guide

Preparation for the National Registry Paramedic Certification Examination: format, test plan, eligibility and an 8-week plan

Medic Basics
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THE EXAM AT A GLANCE

FEATURE	PARAMEDIC EXAM
Length	110–150 items, computer adaptive (CAT)
Unscored	20 pilot items, not identified
Time	3.5 hours, plus NDA (5 min) and tutorial (10 min)
Item types	Multiple choice, multiple response, build list, drag-and-drop, options box, graphical (ECG), scenario
Scoring	All or nothing; no partial credit
Ends	95% confidence (from item 110), 150 items or time limit
Passing standard	950 on a 100–1500 scale; score shown only if you fail
Cost	$175 per attempt
Where	Pearson VUE test center; no remote option
Results	National Registry account, usually within 3 business days

Psychomotor: no separate paramedic skills exam since the July 1, 2024 redesign. Your CAAHEP-accredited program validates psychomotor skills against the CoAEMSP Student Minimum Competency Matrix; communication, leadership and clinical judgment are scored in the Clinical Judgment domain.

WHAT IS ON IT

Domain shares from the Paramedic Examination Specifications (July 2024).

Pediatric items are integrated across the exam.

DOMAIN	SHARE OF EXAM
Airway, Respiration & Ventilation	8–12%
Cardiology & Resuscitation	10–14%
Trauma	6–10%
Medical/Obstetrics/Gynecology	24–28%
EMS Operations	8–12%
Clinical Judgment	34–38%

Clinical Judgment covers communication, leadership and six steps: recognize cues, analyze cues, define hypothesis, generate solutions, take action, evaluation. Scenario items follow one call through three phases: En Route, Scene and Post Scene. The app's Scenarios are scored the same way: each item is right or wrong.

> **EXAM TIP** Clinical Judgment is over a third of the exam: practice reassessing at each scenario phase and choosing the next action, not just naming the condition.

WHO CAN TAKE IT

- Current National Registry certification or state license at the EMT level or higher
- CAAHEP-accredited paramedic program (or CoAEMSP Letter of Review) completed within 2 years; all testing must fall in that window
- Program director verifies completion and the CoAEMSP Student Minimum Competency requirement
- Authorization to Test (ATT) valid 90 days; a passing result counts for 24 months
- Six attempts, with a 15-day wait between them. After 3 failures, remedial education (30 NCCP National Component credits or a state- or CAPCE-approved refresher; it does not extend the 2-year window); after 6, a new paramedic program
- State Licensed and Re-entry pathways cover state-licensed or lapsed paramedics; Re-entry also requires skills verification before the first certification expires

Certification is not licensure: your state EMS office grants the license to practice.

HOW TO STUDY

1. Week 1: Read the specifications, set your exam date in the app, take a baseline Mock Exam.
2. Week 2: Medical/OB/GYN, largest of the five cognitive domains (24–28%). Start Daily Review; keep it daily.
3. Week 3: Cardiology and Airway, with the ACLS Algorithms in Brief, Rhythm Gallery and Capnography One-Pagers.
4. Week 4: Trauma and EMS Operations, plus Scenarios.
5. Week 5: Second Mock Exam, then Weakest Subject sessions.
6. Week 6: Scenarios and Missed Questions, plus the Shock Types at a Glance, Prehospital Sepsis and Electrolyte Imbalances One-Pagers.
7. Weeks 7–8: Final Mock Exam in one 3.5-hour sitting; read every rationale, clear Trouble Questions. Then only Daily Review, Weakest Subject and One-Pagers; no new material in the last two days.

> **EXAM TIP** Pediatric items sit in every clinical domain: work pediatric vitals, doses and equipment sizes into each week.

> **EXAM TIP** Study the 2025 AHA Guidelines. In October 2025 the National Registry said it would remove conflicting items and expected new aligned items within 12–15 months.

TEST-DAY TIPS

- Arrive at least 30 minutes early with the unexpired government ID your ATT describes; its name must match your ATT and National Registry account.
- Belongings are stored outside the testing room; an on-screen calculator is provided.
- Most successful candidates spend 30–60 seconds per item.
- Multiple-response items have 2 or 3 correct options out of 5 or 6; partly right scores zero.
- Hard items are normal on an adaptive exam; stopping at 110 items happens with clear passes and clear fails alike.

OFFICIAL RESOURCES

- Paramedic Candidate Handbook (nremt.org/Handbooks/Paramedic) and Certification Examinations handbook
- Paramedic Examination Specifications, July 2024 (linked as "Paramedic Certification Examination Test Plan"), Clinical Judgment Domain Sample Packet and sample items: all on the AEMT and Paramedic Certification Examinations page
- 2025 AHA Guidelines for CPR and Emergency Cardiovascular Care
- National EMS Education Standards (NHTSA, 2021) and National EMS Scope of Practice Model 2019 (2021 change notices)

The National Registry recommends no particular prep materials: use your textbook, the current AHA Guidelines and the Education Standards.

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