

PRACTICE EXAM 16: COSMETOLOGY STATE BOARD SIMULATION (110 QUESTIONS)

This practice exam contains 110 multiple-choice questions covering infection control, scientific concepts, haircare, chemical services, skin care, nails, and professional practice. Select the single best answer for each question. Use it as review material; follow your jurisdiction's current candidate bulletin for the official test format and rules.

1. Which nail condition should not be serviced if infection is suspected?

- A. Inflamed or pus-filled tissue
- B. A smooth free edge
- C. A small white spot
- D. A normal lunula

2. What does pH measure?

- A. Hair density
- B. Cuticle thickness
- C. Nail growth rate
- D. Acidity or alkalinity

3. A pH below 7 is considered what?

- A. Alkaline
- B. Neutral
- C. Acidic
- D. Oxidized

4. What is the natural pH range of healthy hair and skin commonly described as?

- A. Strongly alkaline
- B. Completely neutral
- C. Highly oxidizing
- D. Slightly acidic

5. What is the primary protein in hair and nails?

- A. Keratin
- B. Collagen
- C. Elastin
- D. Melanin

6. What is the outermost layer of the hair strand?

- A. Cortex
- B. Cuticle
- C. Medulla
- D. Follicle

7. Which hair layer gives the strand most of its strength and elasticity?

- A. Cuticle
- B. Cortex
- C. Medulla
- D. Hair bulb

8. What is the hair bulb?

- A. The exposed end of the strand
- B. The outer scale layer
- C. The natural pigment layer
- D. The enlarged base where growth begins

9. What is the dermal papilla?

- A. A projection supplying nourishment to the bulb
- B. The protective outer hair layer
- C. The free edge of a nail
- D. A type of styling product

10. What is anagen?

- A. Transition phase of hair
- B. Resting phase of hair
- C. Active growth phase of hair
- D. Shedding phase of hair

11. What is telogen?

- A. Active growth phase
- B. Chemical softening phase
- C. Resting phase of hair growth
- D. Color-depositing phase

12. What is hair porosity?

- A. Number of hairs per square inch
- B. Natural direction of growth
- C. Diameter of each strand

D. Ability to absorb moisture and chemicals

13. What is hair density?

- A. Number of hairs per square inch
- B. Ability to absorb moisture
- C. Natural wave pattern
- D. Elasticity under tension

14. What is hair elasticity?

- A. Natural amount of pigment
- B. Ability to stretch and return without breaking
- C. Speed of scalp circulation
- D. Width of the hair shaft

15. What determines the natural direction hair grows?

- A. Shampoo temperature
- B. Choice of styling brush
- C. Follicle shape and placement
- D. Amount of conditioner used

16. What is a cowlick?

- A. A section of hair that lacks pigment
- B. A localized abrasion on the scalp surface
- C. A repeated split-end pattern in hair
- D. A tuft of hair growing in a different direction

17. What is the best tool for detangling wet hair?

- A. Wide-tooth comb
- B. Fine-tail comb
- C. Razor comb
- D. Teasing brush

18. Why should hair be detangled from ends upward?

- A. It reduces pulling and breakage
- B. It opens the cuticle faster
- C. It increases scalp oil production
- D. It creates more permanent volume

19. What is a consultation primarily used for?

- A. Replace a patch test
- B. Determine client needs and service suitability
- C. Avoid recording formulas
- D. Set the salon retail price

20. What is a patch test designed to identify?

- A. Hair density
- B. Natural curl pattern
- C. Possible allergic sensitivity
- D. Scalp massage preference

21. What is strand testing used to evaluate?

- A. How fast nails will grow
- B. How hair may respond to a chemical service
- C. Whether skin is dehydrated
- D. How much retail product to sell

22. What is a preliminary test?

- A. A finishing step after blow-drying
- B. A retail discussion with the client
- C. A method of disinfecting tools
- D. A test performed before the main service

23. What does the term oxidation mean in haircoloring?

- A. Removal of all pigment
- B. Chemical development involving oxygen
- C. Temporary coating of the cuticle
- D. Mechanical cutting of the hair

24. What is a developer commonly used with permanent haircolor?

- A. Sodium hydroxide
- B. Isopropyl alcohol
- C. Hydrogen peroxide
- D. Sodium chloride

25. What is the primary purpose of a filler before color application?

- A. Replace missing warm pigment
- B. Remove all natural pigment
- C. Increase scalp exfoliation

D. Make hair permanently straighter

26. What does a toner primarily do?

- A. Lift hair several levels
- B. Thicken each hair strand
- C. Remove all surface oil
- D. Refine or neutralize an unwanted tone

27. What is a color wheel used for in haircoloring?

- A. Measure hair density
- B. Determine haircut elevation
- C. Select nail enhancement tips
- D. Identify neutralizing color relationships

28. Which color neutralizes yellow?

- A. Orange
- B. Violet
- C. Red
- D. Green

29. Which color neutralizes orange?

- A. Blue
- B. Yellow
- C. Violet
- D. Red

30. What is a single-process color service?

- A. Two haircuts performed together
- B. A color service without developer
- C. One formula applied in one operation
- D. A service using only temporary color

31. What is virgin hair?

- A. Hair with a natural wave pattern
- B. Hair not previously chemically processed
- C. Hair that lacks a medulla
- D. Hair that has been shampooed

32. What is a retouch application?

- A. Color applied to new growth
- B. Color applied only to ends
- C. Color removed from the scalp
- D. Color mixed without developer

33. What is balayage?

- A. A permanent wave wrapping pattern
- B. A thermal curling procedure
- C. A freehand hair-lightening technique
- D. A nail art application method

34. What is the main purpose of a clarifying shampoo?

- A. Deposit warm pigment
- B. Permanently straighten hair
- C. Disinfect scalp tissue
- D. Remove buildup from hair

35. What is a haircut guideline?

- A. A product used to control shine
- B. A subsection used to establish length
- C. A tool for applying color
- D. A method of scalp massage

36. What is a stationary guideline?

- A. A guideline that remains in one place
- B. A guideline that moves with each section
- C. A guide used only for bangs
- D. A guide created with a razor

37. What is a traveling guideline?

- A. A guide fixed at the nape
- B. A guide used only for color
- C. A guide drawn on a mannequin
- D. A guideline that moves as cutting progresses

38. What does elevation mean in haircutting?

- A. Amount of hair removed by thinning
- B. Speed of clipper movement
- C. Angle at which hair is held from the head

D. Temperature of a blow dryer

39. What haircut result is typically created with 0-degree elevation?

- A. One-length or blunt shape
- B. Uniformly layered shape
- C. Long layered shape
- D. Graduated shape only

40. What is overdirection used for?

- A. Change the pH of hair
- B. Sterilize metal tools
- C. Test for skin sensitivity
- D. Create length increase or decrease within a shape

41. What is point cutting used to create?

- A. A perfectly blunt perimeter
- B. Softened, textured line ends
- C. A chemical color deposit
- D. A nail enhancement overlay

42. What is thinning shears primarily used for?

- A. Create a blunt perimeter
- B. Apply lightener precisely
- C. Remove bulk and create texture
- D. Shape the natural nail

43. What is a razor commonly used to create?

- A. Soft, tapered texture
- B. A chemical relaxer pattern
- C. A permanent color formula
- D. A nail polish finish

44. What is thermal styling?

- A. Setting hair only with water
- B. Styling hair with heated tools
- C. Cutting hair with a razor
- D. Applying color with foil

45. What should be applied before using a thermal iron?

- A. Disinfectant concentrate
- B. Cuticle remover
- C. Developer lotion
- D. Heat protectant product

46. Why is a test curl performed during a permanent wave?

- A. Determine natural hair color
- B. Measure nail plate thickness
- C. Check curl formation and processing
- D. Replace the neutralizer step

47. What is the purpose of neutralizer in a permanent wave?

- A. Open the cuticle before wrapping
- B. Remove all natural pigment
- C. Increase hair alkalinity permanently
- D. Reform bonds into the new shape

48. What does a relaxer do to hair?

- A. Deposits direct dye molecules
- B. Chemically rearranges curl pattern
- C. Cleanses scalp buildup
- D. Temporarily adds surface shine

49. What is a base cream used for during relaxer services?

- A. Increase processing speed
- B. Neutralize unwanted orange tone
- C. Protect scalp and hairline skin
- D. Sanitize combs after service

50. What is the purpose of a blow dryer concentrator nozzle?

- A. Direct airflow to a specific area
- B. Create a chemical wave pattern
- C. Measure hair color level
- D. Soften cuticle tissue

51. What is backcombing used to create?

- A. A uniform blunt cut
- B. A lower hair pH
- C. A sanitized nail surface

D. Volume and support at the base

52. What is a roller set designed to establish?

- A. Haircolor oxidation
- B. Curl pattern and volume
- C. Nail plate adhesion
- D. Skin exfoliation depth

53. What does product viscosity describe?

- A. Color intensity of pigment
- B. Amount of heat from a dryer
- C. Thickness and flow of a product
- D. Size of a hair subsection

54. What is a facial cleanser intended to do?

- A. Permanently tighten pores
- B. Bleach facial hair
- C. Remove surface soil and makeup
- D. Disinfect all equipment

55. What does exfoliation remove?

- A. Excess dead surface cells
- B. Living dermis cells
- C. All skin pigment
- D. Natural facial muscles

56. What is the purpose of a facial mask?

- A. Replace all cleansing steps
- B. Change bone structure
- C. Permanently remove pores
- D. Provide a targeted skin treatment

57. What is a primary reason to use sunscreen?

- A. Increase sebum production
- B. Limit ultraviolet exposure
- C. Open hair cuticle layers
- D. Sterilize the skin surface

58. What is waxing primarily used for?

- A. Temporary hair removal from the root
- B. Permanent pigment removal
- C. Chemical hair straightening
- D. Nail enhancement curing

59. Why should wax temperature be tested before application?

- A. Make hair grow faster
- B. Prevent client burns
- C. Increase pigment deposit
- D. Create a harder nail plate

60. What direction is wax generally applied?

- A. Against hair growth only
- B. In a circular motion
- C. In the direction of hair growth
- D. From center to scalp

61. What direction is wax generally removed?

- A. Against the direction of hair growth
- B. In the direction of hair growth
- C. Straight upward from skin
- D. Toward the center of the face

62. What is a basic makeup primer intended to do?

- A. Remove all facial hair
- B. Replace a cleanser
- C. Disinfect cosmetic brushes
- D. Improve makeup application and wear

63. What is foundation primarily used to create?

- A. A permanent tan
- B. A more even-looking complexion
- C. A chemical exfoliation
- D. A haircolor base

64. What makeup product is generally used to add color to cheeks?

- A. Concealer
- B. Setting powder
- C. Blush

D. Brow pencil

65. What should be done with a mascara wand after use?

- A. Return it to the tube for storage
- B. Disinfect it with water only
- C. Share it with the next client
- D. Discard or avoid double-dipping it

66. What is the purpose of a nail dehydrator?

- A. Remove surface oils before enhancement
- B. Soften the nail plate
- C. Hydrate the cuticle
- D. Add color to polish

67. What is an acrylic nail enhancement created from?

- A. Liquid monomer and powder polymer
- B. Shampoo and conditioner
- C. Developer and haircolor
- D. Wax and resin

68. What is a nail primer used to improve?

- A. Length of the free edge
- B. Adhesion of enhancement product
- C. Natural nail pigment
- D. Cuticle softness only

69. What is an overlay?

- A. A polish applied under the nail
- B. A cuticle-removal method
- C. Enhancement applied over the natural nail
- D. A procedure for hair extensions

70. What is the free edge?

- A. Living skin around nail base
- B. Area beneath the matrix
- C. White spot inside the plate
- D. Portion extending beyond the fingertip

71. Why should nail enhancements be maintained regularly?

- A. Make nails grow permanently faster
- B. Eliminate the need for sanitation
- C. Change the natural nail matrix
- D. Manage growth and prevent lifting

72. What is lifting in nail enhancements?

- A. An increase in nail plate thickness
- B. A technique for applying polish
- C. Separation between product and natural nail
- D. A way to file the free edge

73. What is the purpose of a client record?

- A. Replace an informed consultation
- B. Document services, formulas, and observations
- C. Store used implements
- D. List only retail prices

74. Why should a cosmetologist stay within scope of practice?

- A. Protect clients and comply with regulation
- B. Avoid learning new techniques
- C. Increase product processing time
- D. Replace required licensing

75. What is the best response to a suspected contagious condition?

- A. Perform a stronger massage
- B. Cover it with makeup and continue
- C. Postpone service and refer appropriately
- D. Use a stronger disinfectant on skin

76. Why should a cosmetologist follow manufacturer directions?

- A. They eliminate the need for training
- B. They specify safe and effective product use
- C. They make patch tests unnecessary
- D. They guarantee every client result

77. Which agency enforces workplace safety rules in salons?

- A. FDA
- B. EPA
- C. FTC

D. OSHA

78. What is the safest first response to a small cut during a service?

- A. Stop the service and follow blood-exposure procedures
- B. Cover it with a dry towel and continue
- C. Rinse tools only after the appointment
- D. Apply product to seal the area

79. What does cleaning remove from a nonporous implement?

- A. All bacterial spores
- B. Visible dirt and debris
- C. Only odor molecules
- D. Only cosmetic stains

80. Which process destroys most pathogenic organisms on implements?

- A. Sanitation
- B. Sterilization
- C. Disinfection
- D. Dehydration

81. What type of item must be discarded after use if contaminated?

- A. Metal shears
- B. Glass jar
- C. Hard-rubber comb
- D. Porous single-use item

82. Which product should be used on hands when soap and water are unavailable?

- A. An appropriate hand antiseptic
- B. A finishing spray
- C. A clarifying shampoo
- D. A cuticle solvent

83. Why are Safety Data Sheets kept in the salon?

- A. To provide hazard and handling information
- B. To list client appointment times
- C. To record inventory prices
- D. To show service procedures

84. What does cross-contamination mean?

- A. Mixing two compatible hair colors
- B. Transfer of harmful material between people or objects
- C. Using a new cape for each guest
- D. Following a product label

85. Which item is considered nonporous?

- A. A wood stick
- B. A cotton towel
- C. A metal tweezer
- D. A paper neck strip

86. Before disinfecting an implement, what should be done first?

- A. Place it in a sealed drawer
- B. Dry it with a towel
- C. Spray it with perfume
- D. Clean it thoroughly

87. What is a contraindication?

- A. A condition requiring a service change or postponement
- B. A preferred retail recommendation
- C. A method of increasing volume
- D. A type of hair extension

88. When should a salon employee wash their hands?

- A. Only after chemical services
- B. Once at the end of the day
- C. Only when gloves are worn
- D. Before and after every client service

89. What is the purpose of an EPA-registered disinfectant?

- A. To clean porous towels
- B. To condition the scalp
- C. To disinfect eligible hard, nonporous surfaces
- D. To sanitize makeup brushes only

90. How should clean, disinfected implements be stored?

- A. Loose on the workstation
- B. In a clean, covered container
- C. In the same container as soiled tools

D. Wrapped in a used towel

91. What should be done with a product that has an unreadable label?

- A. Do not use it until it is properly identified
- B. Use it only on long hair
- C. Mix it with water first
- D. Store it near the shampoo bowl

92. Why is ventilation important during chemical services?

- A. It makes color process faster
- B. It eliminates the need for gloves
- C. It helps reduce inhalation exposure
- D. It replaces patch testing

93. Which practice helps prevent slips in a salon?

- A. Store towels on the floor
- B. Wipe spills promptly
- C. Leave cords across walkways
- D. Use loose mats near bowls

94. What is the correct purpose of a neck strip?

- A. Hold wet hair in place
- B. Replace a towel during shampooing
- C. Protect the workstation
- D. Create a barrier between cape and skin

95. What should be used to remove spilled broken glass?

- A. Bare hands with a towel
- B. A brush and dustpan or other safe tool
- C. A damp cotton pad
- D. A disinfected comb

96. What is the best action when a client reports burning during a chemical service?

- A. Add more product to dilute it
- B. Continue until the timer ends
- C. Cover the area with a cape
- D. Stop immediately and assess the condition

97. Which body system provides the framework of the body?

- A. Skeletal system
- B. Endocrine system
- C. Digestive system
- D. Integumentary system

98. What type of tissue connects muscle to bone?

- A. Ligament
- B. Nerve
- C. Tendon
- D. Cartilage

99. Which muscle is primarily responsible for closing the eyelid?

- A. Masseter
- B. Temporalis
- C. Frontalis
- D. Orbicularis oculi

100. What is the largest organ of the body?

- A. Heart
- B. Skin
- C. Liver
- D. Lung

101. Which layer of the skin contains blood vessels and nerves?

- A. Epidermis
- B. Stratum corneum
- C. Dermis
- D. Cuticle

102. What is sebum?

- A. Oil secreted by sebaceous glands
- B. Sweat from sudoriferous glands
- C. Keratin from hair cortex
- D. Pigment from melanin cells

103. What causes skin color?

- A. Sebum secretion
- B. Collagen contraction
- C. Keratin removal

D. Melanin production

104. What is the technical term for excessive perspiration?

- A. Anhidrosis
- B. Hyperhidrosis
- C. Hirsutism
- D. Seborrhea

105. What is a common purpose of massage in a facial service?

- A. Remove all melanin pigment
- B. Permanently tighten pores
- C. Promote relaxation and circulation
- D. Replace exfoliation products

106. Which skin type generally produces excess oil?

- A. Dry skin
- B. Normal skin
- C. Sensitive skin
- D. Oily skin

107. What is a comedone?

- A. A plugged hair follicle
- B. An inflamed sweat gland
- C. A broken capillary
- D. A skin pigment cell

108. Which condition is characterized by a closed comedone?

- A. Blackhead
- B. Whitehead
- C. Papule
- D. Wheal

109. What is the main function of the nail matrix?

- A. Produce new nail cells
- B. Anchor the free edge
- C. Supply surface oil
- D. Protect the hair bulb

110. What is the visible portion of the natural nail called?

- A. Nail matrix
- B. Nail bed
- C. Nail plate
- D. Hyponychium

Practice Exam 16: Answer Key and Explanations

1. A — The keyed option directly states the correct professional concept for this question. The other choices identify unrelated terms, incomplete actions, or procedures that would not meet accepted cosmetology safety and service standards. On an exam, focus on the stated client-care objective, eliminate choices that do not address it, and choose the response that supports safe, professional practice.

2. D — The keyed option directly states the correct professional concept for this question. The other choices identify unrelated terms, incomplete actions, or procedures that would not meet accepted cosmetology safety and service standards. On an exam, focus on the stated client-care objective,

eliminate choices that do not address it, and choose the response that supports safe, professional practice.

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30. C — The keyed option directly states the correct professional concept for this question. The other choices identify unrelated terms, incomplete actions, or procedures that would not meet accepted cosmetology safety and service standards. On an exam, focus on the stated client-care objective, eliminate choices that do not address it, and choose the response that supports safe, professional practice.

31. B — The keyed option directly states the correct professional concept for this question. The other choices identify unrelated terms, incomplete actions, or procedures that would not meet accepted cosmetology safety and service standards. On an exam, focus on the stated client-care objective, eliminate choices that do not address it, and choose the response that supports safe, professional practice.

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34. D — The keyed option directly states the correct professional concept for this question. The other choices identify unrelated terms, incomplete actions, or procedures that would not meet accepted cosmetology safety and service standards. On an exam, focus on the stated client-care objective, eliminate choices that do not address it, and choose the response that supports safe, professional practice.

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