

PRACTICE EXAM 18: 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. What should be done with a product that has an unreadable label?

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

2. Why is ventilation important during chemical services?

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

3. 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

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

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

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

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

6. 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

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

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

8. What type of tissue connects muscle to bone?

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

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

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

10. What is the largest organ of the body?

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

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

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

12. What is sebum?

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

D. Pigment from melanin cells

13. What causes skin color?

- A. Sebum secretion
- B. Melanin production
- C. Collagen contraction
- D. Keratin removal

14. What is the technical term for excessive perspiration?

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

15. 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

16. Which skin type generally produces excess oil?

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

17. What is a comedone?

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

18. Which condition is characterized by a closed comedone?

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

19. 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

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

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

21. What is the eponychium commonly called?

- A. Free edge of the nail
- B. White half-moon area
- C. Underside of the nail
- D. Living skin at the nail base

22. What is onychophagy?

- A. Nail separation
- B. Nail biting
- C. Nail inflammation
- D. Nail hardening

23. What is a hangnail?

- A. A stain within the nail plate
- B. A bruise under the free edge
- C. A ridge across the nail plate
- D. A split in the living skin beside the nail

24. 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

25. What does pH measure?

- A. Hair density
- B. Acidity or alkalinity
- C. Cuticle thickness

D. Nail growth rate

26. A pH below 7 is considered what?

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

27. 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

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

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

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

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

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

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

31. What is the hair bulb?

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

32. What is the dermal papilla?

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

33. What is anagen?

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

34. What is telogen?

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

35. What is hair porosity?

- A. Number of hairs per square inch
- B. Ability to absorb moisture and chemicals
- C. Natural direction of growth
- D. Diameter of each strand

36. What is hair density?

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

37. What is hair elasticity?

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

38. What determines the natural direction hair grows?

- A. Follicle shape and placement
- B. Shampoo temperature
- C. Choice of styling brush

D. Amount of conditioner used

39. 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

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

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

41. Why should hair be detangled from ends upward?

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

42. What is a consultation primarily used for?

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

43. What is a patch test designed to identify?

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

44. What is strand testing used to evaluate?

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

45. 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

46. What does the term oxidation mean in haircoloring?

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

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

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

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

- A. Remove all natural pigment
- B. Increase scalp exfoliation
- C. Replace missing warm pigment
- D. Make hair permanently straighter

49. 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

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

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

51. Which color neutralizes yellow?

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

D. Green

52. Which color neutralizes orange?

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

53. 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

54. What is virgin hair?

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

55. 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

56. 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

57. 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

58. 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

59. 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

60. What is a traveling guideline?

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

61. What does elevation mean in haircutting?

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

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

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

63. What is overdirection used for?

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

64. 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

65. What is thinning shears primarily used for?

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

66. What is a razor commonly used to create?

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

67. What is thermal styling?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

71. What does a relaxer do to hair?

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

72. 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

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

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

74. 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

75. What is a roller set designed to establish?

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

76. 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

77. What is a facial cleanser intended to do?

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

D. Disinfect all equipment

78. What does exfoliation remove?

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

79. What is the purpose of a facial mask?

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

80. 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

81. What is waxing primarily used for?

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

82. Why should wax temperature be tested before application?

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

83. What direction is wax generally applied?

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

84. 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

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

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

86. 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

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

- A. Concealer
- B. Blush
- C. Setting powder
- D. Brow pencil

88. 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. Discard or avoid double-dipping it
- D. Share it with the next client

89. 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

90. What is an acrylic nail enhancement created from?

- A. Shampoo and conditioner
- B. Developer and haircolor
- C. Wax and resin

D. Liquid monomer and powder polymer

91. 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

92. What is an overlay?

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

93. What is the free edge?

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

94. 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

95. 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

96. What is the purpose of a client record?

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

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

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

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

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

99. Why should a cosmetologist follow manufacturer directions?

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

100. Which agency enforces workplace safety rules in salons?

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

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

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

102. 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

103. Which process destroys most pathogenic organisms on implements?

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

D. Disinfection

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

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

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

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

106. 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

107. What does cross-contamination mean?

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

108. Which item is considered nonporous?

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

109. 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

110. What is a contraindication?

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

Practice Exam 18: Answer Key and Explanations

1. 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.

2. 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,

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4. 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.

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10. 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.

11. 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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14. 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.

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

18. 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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21. 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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23. 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.

24. 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.

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27. 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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49. 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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