

10 Hot Tips for Passing the PALS Exam

Here is a guide to help you improve your chances of passing the certification exam for PALS – Pediatric Advanced Life Support. If you take the advice given here seriously, you will do very well on the exam. But you must allow yourself plenty of time to learn all of this material – especially if you are new to this.

1. Study and memorize the Zombie Notes Study Charts

The Zombie notes focus on information from the literature, test questions and the real life everyday situations - information you need to provide safe care during a pediatric emergency. As you read the study guide, try to memorize the medications and their doses. You must memorize and understand the algorithms; the arrhythmias and in which situations the medications and treatments may be required. Memorizing the algorithms and drug doses is the most difficult part. Repeating the information over and over, and even saying it aloud really helps with the memorization. Once the hard part is memorized, you can start using critical thinking in adjusting treatments based on patient symptoms. The Zombie notes helps you study the 'need to knows' and it is easy to take with you to study in your spare time.

2. Read and study the AHA-PALS Certification Manual

The American Heart Association (AHA) PALS Certification Manual may be distributed by the instructor. The AHA provider manual comes with a DVD and cards to assist the learner learn and apply their knowledge and skills. The textbook is filled with information of topics around assessing and treatment of critical situations, shock states, airway management, treatments and pharmacological modalities.

3. Understand basic EKGs

Any critically ill patient of any age may have their heart rate and rhythm affected. Trauma, medications, dehydration, and heredity all play a part in a patient's arrhythmia. It is the practitioner's role to recognize potential cardiac changes and treat appropriately. Knowing the difference in synchronized and unsynchronized cardioversion (shock) is important. YOU MUST be able to recognize the lethal arrhythmias in the pediatric patient: bradycardia – 4 heart-blocks; ventricular fibrillation; ventricular tachycardia; pulseless electrical activity (PEA); asystole. Other important rhythms to know are: sinus tachycardia; supraventricular tachycardia (SVT).

4. Watch YouTube videos on EKG and other PALS/ ACLS topics

The YouTube videos can teach you and remind you of the topics you are studying and clarify any questions you may have had. You can always contact Michele if you have any questions.

5. Take practice tests over and over until you get them all correct

Practice tests can reinforce what you know and help you find the areas you need to focus your studies.

6. Take a BLS course and be sure you can perform high-quality-CPR at the class

The prerequisite to any Certification Course is the ability to perform BLS skills. The instructor may ask you for your current valid certification card. During the PALS course you will have to perform in practice and testing sessions. Some of the BLS skills will include: Chest compressions for neonates, infants, small children and large children (including the two-thumb technique); ventilations using a bag-mask-valve (Ambu bag); the AED and appropriate age-group pads.

7. Review all the PALS medications and their doses (oxygen, epinephrine, amiodarone, adenosine, atropine, and procainamide, etc.)

These medications are used throughout the PALS program. Oxygen, fluids, epinephrine and amiodarone are used the most. Infusions that one needs to be familiar with are dopamine, levophed, magnesium, and dobutamine.

8. Read about different diagnosis (dehydration, epiglottitis, croup, septic and cardiogenic shock, trauma, etc.)

Knowing the common diagnosis and the common treatments will ready you for the practice scenarios and testing mega codes.

9. Be prepared to work in a team setting and be able to participate verbally with hands on participation

You may be assigned to a different role in the mega code. You may be practicing skills that your scope of practice does not allow in the work place. The skills allowed in the classroom, allows you to see how we can help each other in an emergency situation. Feel free to speak up when the instructor allows teamwork. Also be prepared to run a mega code as the team leader as well.

10. Participate in class, and ask and answer lots of questions

Speaking up and asking many questions helps you understand and will facilitate your classrooms ask more detailed questions as well.

 Watch Michele's YouTube videos that go with this study guide:

- PALS Orientation
- PALS Zombie Notes



See our other Zombie Notes Study Charts at DicksonKeanaghan.com

Questions? Email me at MicheleKunz@TheNurseEducator.com
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