

## Performance-Based Development System Test Study Guide

The Performance-Based Development System (PBDS) evaluates a nurse's ability to think critically in various clinical situations. Many of our clients use the PBDS test to evaluate clinician competency and standardize their orientation process. The PBDS test might feel a little intimidating, but don't stress! We've always got your back and even created this study guide to help you prepare.

**PBDS is a skills competency test that assesses three main areas: Technical skills, critical thinking skills, and interpersonal relationship skills.**

There are **four clinical, specialty-based versions** of the PBDS test. Assessments are tailored for each unit based on these four specialties:

- Critical care
- Medical surgical
- Neonatal intensive care unit (NICU)
- Obstetric

For example, a telemetry RN would get a medical surgical assessment.

### How is the PBDS Test Administered and Graded?

The PBDS is a timed test given either on paper *or* via computer. Both formats include a video component. The standard traveler PBDS test is generally shorter, at 2-3 hours, than the original version designed for perm staff, which can run up to 7 hours. The PBDS test is comprised solely of essay questions. In your answers, you'll identify scenarios that threaten patient safety and evaluate the most effective and appropriate actions to take.

Most of the test entails watching short videos that simulate real-world clinical situations. After viewing these patient care scenarios, you'll be asked 4-5 questions that solicit your medical diagnosis/the primary problem, the first steps you'd take to intervene in the situation, and a detailed explanation of all the steps you'd take to provide patient care in each unique situation. Be sure to create a thorough plan of action – including the steps you might think are obvious!

The PBDS test can be graded in a couple different ways. Paper tests are usually graded by in-house hospital education staff, and tests done by computer are often remotely evaluated by an external partner like PBSI. A numerical pass/fail score will *not* be given. Instead, there's a "scale score rating" which serves as the basis for measuring an acceptable level of achievement. Most facilities do *not* allow travelers who score outside of the scale to retake the test. Further, scoring outside of the acceptable achievement level on the PBDS may result in the immediate cancellation of an assignment.

### PBDS Exam Tips

**The test is looking for a medical diagnosis**

Do not use a nursing diagnosis for the problem focus. They're looking for at least a recognition that a change in the patient's status has occurred. You must state the clinical change, what you believe is the cause of the change, and what you'll report to the physician.

### **Remember the basics**

Assess the situation as if it were your own patient facing complications. Remember the ABCs (airway, breathing, circulation) when assessing each patient's condition and the scenarios presented.

### **State the obvious**

Be sure to state *all* relevant information – never leave the obvious out. Include all standard commonly known procedures and interventions.

### **Watch the videos closely**

The clues can be very brief, so be sure to watch intently. Be careful not to miss important parts of the video as you're taking notes.

### **Anticipate that something is always wrong**

Every situation will have at least one “change of status event.” The patient is never just fine.

### **Example Scenarios**

Based on information from nurses who've taken the PBDS exam and online sources, you may expect to see some of the following types of scenarios:

- You're scheduled for an annual evaluation today.
- The doctor says you have to accompany your patient to a procedure that may last up to 90 minutes.
- You have a code at the beginning of a shift and family members are still in the room.
- You have a nursing student working with you.
- A family member cardiac arrests in a semi-private room.
- There will be a staff meeting in an hour.

### **Example Diagnoses**

You should also be familiar with the following types of diagnoses and able to state what nursing action each one would warrant and why:

- CVA
- Renal failure
- Intracranial bleed or increased intracranial pressure
- Chest pain/acute myocardial infarction
- Pulmonary embolism
- Pneumothorax
- Digoxin toxicity
- Ileus

- Thrombocytopenia
- Bladder retention/pyelonephritis
- Ketoacidosis and hyperglycemia
- Pain control

### **Good Luck!**

Hopefully you feel more comfortable and prepared for the PBDS now if you're required to test at your next travel nurse assignment. Try to get plenty of sleep the night before the exam, and remember to be as detailed as possible in your answers. We believe in you, and we're rooting for you!