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The State Board Written Exam Guide

How US cosmetology written exams work, where to find your state's rules, and how to study properly.

How State Board Exams Work

Every US state licenses cosmetologists through its own board, and almost all require a **written (theory) exam** alongside the practical. The written exam is delivered through your state's testing provider and covers theory across the licence: hair science and services, sanitation and infection control, safety, and — because a cosmetology licence spans hair, skin and nails — the skin and nail portions too. Hair is consistently the largest section.

The single most important document is your state's official **candidate information bulletin** — it states the current number of questions, time limit, pass mark, fees, and how to book. Formats change; the bulletin is always right.

Find Your State

The boards for the states this program covers:

- **Texas** — Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR)
- **California** — Board of Barbering and Cosmetology
- **Florida** — Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR), Board of Cosmetology
- **North Carolina** — NC Board of Cosmetic Art Examiners
- **Ohio** — State Cosmetology and Barber Board

Search your board's name plus "candidate information bulletin" for the current exam specifics and registration steps.

The Study Plan That Actually Works

Re-reading a textbook feels like studying but tests nothing. Question practice does the opposite: every question you get wrong tells you exactly what to fix. The method:

- **Week 1 — Diagnose.** Do questions across every topic without studying first. Your wrong answers are your syllabus. Most people discover their gaps are narrower than their anxiety suggested.
- **Week 2–3 — Drill the why.** Work topic by topic, weakest first. Don't memorize which answer was right; make sure you can explain to another human WHY it's right. If you can't say why, you don't have it yet — that's the skill exam wording can't shake.
- **Final week — Simulate.** Timed, full-length runs. Train the clock, the fatigue, and the discipline of flagging hard questions and moving on. Review every miss the same day.
- **The night before — Nothing new.** Light review of your own error list, then sleep. Cramming new material trades away the recall you already own.

Practice the Way the Exam Thinks

The free 10 questions you tried are drawn from a bank of 601 exam-style questions across 21 topics — each with the full reasoning behind the answer, plus a timed exam mode for the simulation weeks. It exists because nobody should fail a written exam over wording. Find it where you found the free sample.

UNBRANDED Education · Miranda Furtado — licensed hairstylist, salon owner, educator · This guide summarizes official sources; always confirm current requirements, fees and formats with your state board before booking.