

NPTE-PTA Test Content Outline, effective January 2013

This test is designed to measure whether or not an examinee has the requisite knowledge required of entry-level physical therapist assistants working under the supervision of a physical therapist. The focus is on the **clinical application** of knowledge, concepts, and principles necessary for the provision of **safe and effective patient care** consistent with the principles of best practice.

	# Items Target (Acceptable Range)	Cardiovascular/ Pulmonary & Lymphatic Systems 16.7% Target (Acceptable Range)	Musculo- skeletal System 26.0% Target (Acceptable Range)	Neuro- muscular & Nervous Systems 22.0% Target (Acceptable Range)	Other Systems (14.7%)				
					Integu- mentary System 4.7% Target (Acceptable Range)	Metabolic & Endocrine Systems 4.0% Target (Acceptable Range)	Gastro- intestinal System 1.3% Target (Acceptable Range)	Genito- urinary System 1.3% Target (Acceptable Range)	System Interactions 3.3% Target (Acceptable Range)
Physical Therapy Data Collection (20.7%)	31 (28-33)	7 (6-7)	13 (12-13)	9 (8-10)	2 (2-3)	0	0	0	0
Diseases/Conditions that Impact Effective Treatment (28.0%)	42 (39-48)	8 (7-8)	11 (10-11)	10 (10-11)	2 (2-3)	4 (4-5)	1 (1-2)	1 (1-2)	5 (4-6)
Interventions (30.7%)	46 (43-51)	10 (10-11)	15 (15-17)	14 (13-14)	3 (2-3)	2 (1-2)	1 (1-2)	1 (1-2)	0
		25 (23-26)	39 (37-41)	33 (31-35)	22 (19-30)				
Non-System Domains (20.7%)									
Equipment & Devices; Therapeutic Modalities (14.7%)									
Equipment & Devices	10 (9-11)								
Therapeutic Modalities	12 (11-13)								
Safety & Protection; Professional Responsibilities; Research (6.0%)									
Safety & Protection	4 (3-4)								
Professional Responsibilities	3 (2-3)								
Research & Evidence-Based Practice	2 (2-3)								
Total		150							

Note that this blueprint covers important entry-level knowledge areas that are reasonably tested using well-constructed multiple-choice items; some important areas are excluded because they cannot be adequately assessed in a multiple-choice format, are better assessed through other elements of the licensing process, are not specific to the scope of work of physical therapist assistants, or assess standards that might vary substantially across situations or practice locations. In addition, some important knowledge areas that are not linked to specific body systems and are not explicitly mentioned in the content outline (e.g., communications skills, teaching and learning techniques) are encompassed by multiple knowledge areas that are included in the content outline and are represented in test content to a greater extent than is apparent from this outline. Feedback on the candidates' performance will be provided for each knowledge area shown in boldface type. Percentages reflect the relative weights within knowledge areas.

NPTE-PTA Content Outline
(List View)

Domains of Practice (Organized by Content Areas)	# Items Target (Acceptable Range)
Physical Therapy Data Collection	31 (28-33)
Cardiovascular/Pulmonary & Lymphatic Systems	7 (6-7)
Musculoskeletal System	13 (12-13)
Neuromuscular & Nervous Systems	9 (8-10)
Integumentary System	2 (2-3)
Diseases/Conditions the Impact Effective Treatment	42 (39-48)
Cardiovascular/Pulmonary & Lymphatic Systems	8 (7-8)
Musculoskeletal System	11 (10-11)
Neuromuscular & Nervous Systems	10 (10-11)
Integumentary System	2 (2-3)
Metabolic & Endocrine Systems	4 (4-5)
Gastrointestinal System	1 (1-2)
Genitourinary System	1 (1-2)
System Interactions	5 (4-6)
Interventions	46 (43-51)
Cardiovascular/Pulmonary & Lymphatic Systems	10 (10-11)
Musculoskeletal System	15 (15-17)
Neuromuscular & Nervous Systems	14 (13-14)
Integumentary System	3 (2-3)

Domains of Practice (Organized by Content Areas)	# Items Target (Acceptable Range)
Interventions (continued)	
Metabolic & Endocrine Systems	2 (1-2)
Gastrointestinal System	1 (1-2)
Genitourinary System	1 (1-2)
Equipment & Devices; Therapeutic Modalities	22 (20-24)
Equipment & Devices	10 (9-11)
Therapeutic Modalities	12 (11-13)
Safety & Protection; Professional Responsibilities; Research	9 (7-10)
Safety & Protection	4 (3-4)
Professional Responsibilities	3 (2-3)
Research & Evidence-Based Practice	2 (2-3)

Domains of Practice (Organized by Systems)	# Items Target (Acceptable Range)
Cardiovascular/Pulmonary & Lymphatic Systems	25 (23-26)
Musculoskeletal System	39 (37-41)
Neuromuscular & Nervous Systems	33 (31-35)
Other Systems (Integumentary, Metabolic & Endocrine Systems, Gastrointestinal System, Genitourinary System, System Interactions)	22 (19-30)

**PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANT
LICENSURE/CERTIFICATION EXAMINATION
DETAILED EXAMINATION BLUEPRINT DESCRIPTIONS**

CARDIOVASCULAR/PULMONARY & LYMPHATIC SYSTEMS

Physical Therapy Data Collection. This category refers to knowledge of the types and applications of cardiovascular/pulmonary and lymphatic systems tests/measures, including outcome measures, according to current best evidence. The category includes the reaction of the cardiovascular/pulmonary and lymphatic systems to tests/measures and the mechanics of body movement as related to the cardiovascular/pulmonary and lymphatic systems. Information covered in these areas supports appropriate and effective patient/client management for rehabilitation, health promotion, and performance across the lifespan.

- Cardiovascular/pulmonary systems tests/measures, including outcome measures, and their applications according to current best evidence
- Anatomy and physiology of the cardiovascular/pulmonary systems as related to tests/measures
- Movement analysis as related to the cardiovascular/pulmonary systems (e.g., rib cage excursion)

Diseases/Conditions that Impact Effective Treatment. This category refers to the essential scientific principles and knowledge of diseases/conditions that serve as the foundation for understanding the involvement of the cardiovascular/pulmonary and lymphatic systems in the treatment of patients/clients for rehabilitation, health promotion, and performance across the lifespan.

- Cardiovascular/pulmonary systems diseases/conditions and their pathophysiology to carry out the established plan of care
- Lymphatic system diseases/conditions and their pathophysiology to carry out the established plan of care
- Nonpharmacological medical management of the cardiovascular/pulmonary systems (e.g., diagnostic imaging, laboratory test values, other medical tests, surgical procedures)
- Pharmacological management of the cardiovascular/pulmonary systems
- Nonpharmacological medical management of the lymphatic system (e.g., diagnostic imaging, laboratory test values, other medical tests, surgical procedures)

Interventions. This category refers to cardiovascular/pulmonary and lymphatic systems interventions (including types, applications, responses, and potential complications), according to current best evidence, as well as the impact on the cardiovascular/pulmonary and lymphatic systems of interventions performed on other systems in order to support patient/client management for rehabilitation, health promotion, and performance across the lifespan.

- Cardiovascular/pulmonary systems physical therapy interventions and their applications for rehabilitation, health promotion, and performance according to current best evidence
- Anatomy and physiology of the cardiovascular/pulmonary systems as related to physical therapy interventions, daily activities, and environmental factors
- Secondary effects or complications from physical therapy and medical interventions on the cardiovascular/pulmonary systems

- Secondary effects or complications on the cardiovascular/pulmonary systems from physical therapy and medical interventions used on other systems
- Lymphatic system physical therapy interventions and their applications for rehabilitation, health promotion, and performance according to current best evidence
- Anatomy and physiology of the lymphatic system as related to physical therapy interventions, daily activities, and environmental factors
- Secondary effects or complications from physical therapy and medical interventions on the lymphatic system
- Secondary effects or complications on the lymphatic system from physical therapy and medical interventions used on other systems

MUSCULOSKELETAL SYSTEM

Physical Therapy Data Collection. This category refers to knowledge of the types and applications of musculoskeletal system tests/measures, including outcome measures, according to current best evidence. The category includes the reaction of the musculoskeletal system to tests/measures and the mechanics of body movement as related to the musculoskeletal system. Information covered in these areas supports appropriate and effective patient/client management for rehabilitation, health promotion, and performance across the lifespan.

- Musculoskeletal system tests/measures, including outcome measures, and their applications according to current best evidence
- Anatomy and physiology of the musculoskeletal system as related to tests/measures
- Movement analysis as related to the musculoskeletal system
- Joint biomechanics and their applications

Diseases/Conditions that Impact Effective Treatment. This category refers to the essential scientific principles and knowledge of diseases/conditions that serve as the foundation for understanding the involvement of the musculoskeletal system in the treatment of patients/clients for rehabilitation, health promotion, and performance across the lifespan.

- Muscular and skeletal diseases/conditions and their pathophysiology to carry out the established plan of care
- Connective tissue diseases/conditions and their pathophysiology to carry out the established plan of care
- Nonpharmacological medical management of the musculoskeletal system (e.g., diagnostic imaging, laboratory test values, other medical tests, surgical procedures)
- Pharmacological management of the musculoskeletal system

Interventions. This category refers to musculoskeletal system interventions (including types, applications, responses, and potential complications), according to current best evidence, as well as the impact on the musculoskeletal system of interventions performed on other systems in order to support patient/client management for rehabilitation, health promotion, and performance across the lifespan.

- Musculoskeletal system physical therapy interventions and their applications for rehabilitation, health promotion, and performance according to current best evidence
- Anatomy and physiology of the musculoskeletal system as related to physical therapy interventions, daily activities, and environmental factors
- Secondary effects or complications from physical therapy and medical interventions on the musculoskeletal system
- Secondary effects or complications on the musculoskeletal system from physical therapy and medical interventions used on other systems

NEUROMUSCULAR & NERVOUS SYSTEMS

Physical Therapy Data Collection. This category refers to knowledge of the types and applications of neuromuscular/nervous systems tests/measures, including outcome measures, according to current best evidence. The category includes the reaction of the neuromuscular/nervous systems to tests/measures and the mechanics of body movement as related to the neuromuscular/nervous systems. Information covered in these areas supports appropriate and effective patient/client management for rehabilitation, health promotion, and performance across the lifespan.

- Neuromuscular/nervous systems tests/measures, including outcome measures, and their applications according to current best evidence
- Anatomy and physiology of the neuromuscular/nervous systems as related to tests/measures
- Movement analysis as related to the neuromuscular/nervous systems

Diseases/Conditions that Impact Effective Treatment. This category refers to the essential scientific principles and knowledge of diseases/conditions that serve as the foundation for understanding the involvement of the neuromuscular/nervous systems in the treatment of patients/clients for rehabilitation, health promotion, and performance across the lifespan.

- Neuromuscular/nervous systems (CNS, PNS, ANS) diseases/conditions and their pathophysiology to carry out the established plan of care
- Nonpharmacological medical management of the neuromuscular/nervous systems (e.g., diagnostic imaging, laboratory test values, other medical tests, surgical procedures)
- Pharmacological management of the neuromuscular/nervous systems

Interventions. This category refers to neuromuscular/nervous systems interventions (including types, applications, responses, and potential complications), according to current best evidence, as well as the impact on the neuromuscular/nervous systems of interventions performed on other systems in order to support patient/client management for rehabilitation, health promotion, and performance across the lifespan.

- Neuromuscular/nervous systems physical therapy interventions and their applications for rehabilitation, health promotion, and performance according to current best evidence
- Anatomy and physiology of the neuromuscular/nervous systems as related to physical therapy interventions, daily activities, and environmental factors
- Secondary effects or complications from physical therapy and medical interventions on the neuromuscular/nervous systems
- Secondary effects or complications on the neuromuscular/nervous systems from physical therapy and medical interventions used on other systems
- Motor control as related to neuromuscular/nervous systems physical therapy interventions
- Motor learning as related to neuromuscular/nervous systems physical therapy interventions

INTEGUMENTARY SYSTEM

Physical Therapy Data Collection. This category refers to knowledge of the types and applications of integumentary system tests/measures, including outcome measures, according to current best evidence. The category includes the reaction of the integumentary system to tests/measures and the mechanics of body movement as related to the integumentary system. Information covered in these areas supports appropriate and effective patient/client management for rehabilitation, health promotion, and performance across the lifespan.

- Integumentary system tests/measures, including outcome measures, and their applications according to current best evidence
- Anatomy and physiology of the integumentary system as related to tests/measures
- Movement analysis as related to the integumentary system (e.g., friction, shear, pressure, and scar mobility)

Diseases/Conditions that Impact Effective Treatment. This category refers to the essential scientific principles and knowledge of diseases/conditions that serve as the foundation for understanding the involvement of the integumentary system in the treatment of patients/clients for rehabilitation, health promotion, and performance across the lifespan.

- Integumentary system diseases/conditions and their pathophysiology to carry out the established plan of care
- Nonpharmacological medical management of the integumentary system (e.g., diagnostic imaging, laboratory test values, other medical tests, surgical procedures)
- Pharmacological management of the integumentary system

Interventions. This category refers to integumentary system interventions (including types, applications, responses, and potential complications), according to current best evidence, as well as the impact on the integumentary system of interventions performed on other systems in order to support patient/client management for rehabilitation, health promotion, and performance across the lifespan.

- Integumentary system physical therapy interventions and their applications for rehabilitation, health promotion, and performance according to current best evidence
- Anatomy and physiology of the integumentary system as related to physical therapy interventions, daily activities, and environmental factors
- Secondary effects or complications from physical therapy and medical interventions on the integumentary system
- Secondary effects or complications on the integumentary system from physical therapy and medical interventions used on other systems

METABOLIC & ENDOCRINE SYSTEMS

Diseases/Conditions that Impact Effective Treatment. This category refers to the essential scientific principles and knowledge of diseases/conditions that serve as the foundation for understanding the involvement of the metabolic and endocrine systems in the treatment of patients/clients for rehabilitation, health promotion, and performance across the lifespan.

- Metabolic and endocrine systems diseases/conditions and their pathophysiology to carry out the established plan of care
- Nonpharmacological medical management of the metabolic and endocrine systems (e.g., diagnostic imaging, laboratory test values, other medical tests, surgical procedures)
- Pharmacological management of the metabolic and endocrine systems

Interventions. This category refers to metabolic and endocrine systems interventions (including types, applications, responses, and potential complications), according to current best evidence, as well as the impact on the metabolic and endocrine systems of interventions performed on other systems in order to support patient/client management for rehabilitation, health promotion, and performance across the lifespan.

- Metabolic and endocrine systems physical therapy interventions and their applications for rehabilitation, health promotion, and performance according to current best evidence
- Anatomy and physiology of the metabolic and endocrine systems as related to physical therapy interventions, daily activities, and environmental factors
- Secondary effects or complications from physical therapy and medical interventions on the metabolic and endocrine systems
- Secondary effects or complications on the metabolic and endocrine systems from physical therapy and medical interventions used on other systems

GASTROINTESTINAL SYSTEM

Diseases/Conditions that Impact Effective Treatment. This category refers to the essential scientific principles and knowledge of diseases/conditions that serve as the foundation for understanding the involvement of the gastrointestinal system in the treatment of patients/clients for rehabilitation, health promotion, and performance across the lifespan.

- Gastrointestinal system diseases/conditions and their pathophysiology to carry out the established plan of care
- Nonpharmacological medical management of the gastrointestinal system (e.g., diagnostic imaging, laboratory test values, other medical tests, surgical procedures)
- Pharmacological management of the gastrointestinal system

Interventions. This category refers to gastrointestinal system interventions (including types, applications, responses, and potential complications), according to current best evidence, as well as the impact on the gastrointestinal system of interventions performed on other systems in order to support patient/client management for rehabilitation, health promotion, and performance across the lifespan.

- Gastrointestinal system physical therapy interventions and their applications for rehabilitation and health promotion according to current best evidence (e.g., positioning for reflux prevention, bowel programs)
- Anatomy and physiology of the gastrointestinal system as related to physical therapy interventions, daily activities, and environmental factors
- Secondary effects or complications from physical therapy and medical interventions on the gastrointestinal system
- Secondary effects or complications on the gastrointestinal system from physical therapy and medical interventions used on other systems

GENITOURINARY SYSTEM

Diseases/Conditions that Impact Effective Treatment. This category refers to the essential scientific principles and knowledge of diseases/conditions that serve as the foundation for understanding the involvement of the genitourinary system in the treatment of patients/clients for rehabilitation, health promotion, and performance across the lifespan.

- Genitourinary system diseases/conditions and their pathophysiology to carry out the established plan of care
- Nonpharmacological medical management of the genitourinary system (e.g., diagnostic imaging, laboratory test values, other medical tests, surgical procedures)
- Pharmacological management of the genitourinary system

Interventions. This category refers to genitourinary system interventions (including types, applications, responses, and potential complications), according to current best evidence, as well as the impact on the genitourinary system of interventions performed on other systems in order to support patient/client management for rehabilitation, health promotion, and performance across the lifespan.

- Genitourinary system physical therapy interventions and their applications for rehabilitation and health promotion according to current best evidence (e.g., bladder programs, biofeedback, pelvic floor retraining)
- Anatomy and physiology of the genitourinary system as related to physical therapy interventions, daily activities, and environmental factors
- Secondary effects or complications from physical therapy and medical interventions on the genitourinary system
- Secondary effects or complications on the genitourinary system from physical therapy and medical interventions used on other systems

SYSTEM INTERACTIONS

Diseases/Conditions that Impact Effective Treatment. This category refers to the essential scientific principles and knowledge of diseases/conditions that serve as the foundation for understanding system interactions in the treatment of patients/clients for rehabilitation, health promotion, and performance across the lifespan.

- Diseases/conditions where the primary impact is on more than one system to carry out the established plan of care
- Impact of comorbidities/coexisting conditions on patient/client management (e.g., diabetes and hypertension, obesity and arthritis, hip fracture and dementia)
- Psychological and psychiatric conditions that impact patient/client management (e.g., depression, schizophrenia)
- Nonpharmacological medical management of multiple systems (e.g., diagnostic imaging and other medical tests, surgical procedures)
- Pharmacological management of multiple systems, including polypharmacy

EQUIPMENT & DEVICES

This category refers to the different types of equipment and devices, use requirements, and/or contextual determinants, according to current best evidence, as well as any other influencing factors involved in the application of equipment and devices, in order to support patient/client treatment and management decisions for rehabilitation, health promotion, and performance across the lifespan.

- Assistive and adaptive devices
- Prosthetic devices
- Protective, supportive, and orthotic devices

THERAPEUTIC MODALITIES

This category refers to the different types of therapeutic modalities, use requirements, and/or contextual determinants, according to current best evidence, as well as any other influencing factors involved in the application of therapeutic modalities, in order to support patient/client treatment and management decisions for rehabilitation, health promotion, and performance across the lifespan.

- Thermal modalities
- Iontophoresis
- Electrotherapy modalities, excluding iontophoresis
- Phonophoresis
- Ultrasound modalities, excluding phonophoresis
- Mechanical modalities (e.g., mechanical motion devices, traction devices)
- Biofeedback
- Electromagnetic radiation (e.g., diathermy)
- Pneumatic compression modalities

SAFETY & PROTECTION

This category refers to the critical issues involved in patient/client safety and protection and the responsibilities of health-care providers to ensure that patient/client management and health-care decisions take place in a secure environment.

- Factors influencing safety and injury prevention
- Function, implications, and precautions related to intravenous lines, tubes, catheters, and monitoring devices
- Emergency preparedness (e.g., CPR, first aid, disaster response)
- Infection control procedures (e.g., standard/universal precautions, isolation techniques, sterile technique)
- Signs/symptoms of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse and neglect

PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

This category refers to the responsibilities of health-care providers to ensure that patient/client management and health-care decisions take place in a trustworthy environment.

- Standards of documentation
- Patient/client rights (e.g., ADA, IDEA, HIPAA)
- Human resource legal issues (e.g., OSHA, sexual harassment)
- Roles and responsibilities of physical therapist assistants in relation to physical therapists and other health-care professionals
- Roles and responsibilities of other health-care professionals and support staff

RESEARCH & EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE

This category refers to the knowledge of basic research methodology and data collection techniques necessary for interpretation of information sources and practice research to support patient/client management fundamental to evidence-based practice.

- Knowledge of basic research concepts
- Knowledge of data collection techniques (e.g., surveys, direct observation)