



# **AONN+ Foundation for Learning**

## Guide to Certification Preparation OPN-CG

# CERTIFICATION AND AONN+ FFL

Certification is an important step in your career and provides value to you, your patients, and your hospital system. Obtaining OPN-CG certification allows you to use AONN+ FFL-designated credentials on your badge and signature to demonstrate your navigation expertise. Certification is not education, nor is it a certificate program. Certification is much more robust and requires experience and preparation.

AONN+ FFL's certification exams are accredited through ANSI National Accreditation Board (ANAB) 17024. ANAB is internationally recognized and imposes rigorous standards of practice and psychometrics that AONN+ FFL must maintain to uphold accreditation. These standards elevate our certification exams and ensure they represent the pinnacle of navigation practice.

## PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

This guide is intended as a preparation guide to help you determine the best way for you to plan and study for certification exam. **Use of this guide in no way guarantees examination success.** The guide is divided into six (6) sections, covering the following topics:

- 
- **The Domains**
  - **The Exam Blueprint**
  - **Recommended Study Materials**
  - **Developing Your Study Plan**
  - **Multiple Choice Questions**
  - **Exam Day**
- 



## SECTION I: USE YOUR RESOURCES—THE DOMAINS

The 8 knowledge domains for oncology patient navigation define the core competencies required for successful practice. Additionally, they define the basic outline for the certification examination. These domains were created by a collection of oncology navigation stakeholders, utilizing their expertise, experience, and a thorough literature review. They are reviewed regularly as outlined by accreditation guidelines.

Your first step in preparing for certification exam should be familiarizing yourself with these domains, as they are the foundations of your practice as an oncology patient navigator. If there are any domains that seem unfamiliar, begin your review of the recommended study materials with that domain. If you don't understand any terminology, look it up. Every detail of the exam begins with these domains, so make sure you know and understand them before moving forward.

### ★ Domain 1: Patient Care

- Facilitate patient-centered care that is compassionate, appropriate, and effective for the treatment of cancer and the promotion of health
- Assist patients in accessing cancer care and navigating healthcare systems. Assess barriers to care and engage patients and families in creating potential solutions to financial, practical, and social challenges
- Identify appropriate and credible resources responsive to patient needs (practical, social, physical, emotional, spiritual), taking into consideration reading level, health literacy, culture, language, and amount of information desired. For physical concerns, emotional needs, or clinical information, refer to licensed clinicians
- Educate patients and caregivers on the multidisciplinary nature of cancer treatment, the roles of team members, and what to expect from the healthcare system. Provide patients and caregivers evidence-based information, and refer to clinical staff to answer questions about clinical information, treatment choices, and potential outcomes
- Empower patients to communicate their preferences and priorities for treatment to their healthcare team; facilitate shared decision-making in the patient's healthcare
- Empower patients to participate in their wellness by providing self-management and health promotion resources and referrals
- Follow up with patients to support adherence to an agreed-upon treatment plan through continued nonclinical barrier assessment and referrals to supportive resources in collaboration with the clinical team

## ★ Domain 2: Knowledge for Practice

- Demonstrate basic understanding of cancer, healthcare systems, and how patients access care and services across the cancer continuum to support and assist patients. NOTE: This domain refers to foundational knowledge applied across other domains
- Demonstrate basic knowledge of medical and cancer terminology
- Demonstrate familiarity with and know-how to access and reference evidence-based information regarding cancer screening, diagnosis, treatment, and survivorship
- Demonstrate basic knowledge of cancer, cancer treatment, and supportive care options, including risks and benefits of clinical trials and integrative therapies
- Demonstrate basic knowledge of health system operations
- Identify potential physical, psychological, social, and spiritual impacts of cancer and its treatment
- Demonstrate general understanding of healthcare payment structure, financing, and where to refer patients for answers regarding insurance coverage and financial assistance

## ★ Domain 3: Practice-Based Learning and Improvement

- Demonstrate interpersonal and communication skills that result in the effective exchange of information and collaboration with patients, their families, and health professionals
- Assess patient capacity to self-advocate; help patients optimize time with their doctors and treatment team (eg, prioritize questions, clarify information with treatment team)
- Communicate effectively with patients, families, and the public to build trusting relationships across a broad range of socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds
- Employ active listening and remain solutions-oriented in interactions with patients, families, and members of the healthcare team
- Encourage active communication between patients/families and healthcare providers to optimize patient outcomes
- Communicate effectively with navigator colleagues, health professionals, and health-related agencies to promote patient navigation services and leverage community resources to assist patients
- Demonstrate empathy, integrity, honesty, and compassion in difficult conversations

- Know and support National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) in Health and Health Care to advance health equity, improve quality, and reduce health disparities
- Apply insight and understanding about emotions and human responses to emotions to create and maintain positive interpersonal interactions

---

## ★ Domain 4: Interpersonal and Communication Skills

---

- Demonstrate interpersonal and communication skills that result in the effective exchange of information and collaboration with patients, their families, and health professionals
- Assess patient capacity to self-advocate; help patients optimize time with their doctors and treatment team (eg, prioritize questions, clarify information with treatment team)
- Communicate effectively with patients, families, and the public to build trusting relationships across a broad range of socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds
- Employ active listening and remain solutions-oriented in interactions with patients, families, and members of the healthcare team
- Encourage active communication between patients/families and healthcare providers to optimize patient outcomes
- Communicate effectively with navigator colleagues, health professionals, and health-related agencies to promote patient navigation services and leverage community resources to assist patients
- Demonstrate empathy, integrity, honesty, and compassion in difficult conversations
- Know and support National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) in Health and Health Care to advance health equity, improve quality, and reduce health disparities
- Apply insight and understanding about emotions and human responses to emotions to create and maintain positive interpersonal interactions

---

## ★ Domain 5: Professionalism

---

- Demonstrate a commitment to carrying out professional responsibilities and an adherence to ethical principles

- Apply knowledge of the difference in roles between clinically licensed and nonlicensed professionals and act within professional boundaries
- Build trust by being accessible, accurate, supportive, and acting within scope of practice
- Use organization, time management, problem-solving, and critical thinking to assist patients efficiently and effectively
- Demonstrate responsiveness to patient needs within scope of practice and professional boundaries
- Know and support patient rights
- Demonstrate sensitivity and responsiveness to a diverse patient population, including but not limited to, diversity in gender, age, culture, race, religion, abilities, and sexual orientation
- Demonstrate a commitment to ethical principles pertaining to confidentiality, informed consent, business practices, and compliance with relevant laws, policies, and regulations (eg, HIPAA, agency abuse reporting rules, Duty to Warn, safety contracting)
- Perform administrative duties accurately and efficiently

---

## ★ **Domain 6: Systems-Based Practice**

---

- Demonstrate an awareness of and responsiveness to the larger context and system of healthcare, as well as the ability to call effectively on other resources in the system to provide optimal healthcare
- Support a smooth transition of patients across screening, diagnosis, active treatment, survivorship, and/or end-of-life care, working with the patient's clinical care team
- Advocate for quality patient care and optimal patient care systems
- Organize and prioritize resources to optimize access to care across the cancer continuum for the most vulnerable patients

---

## ★ **Domain 7: Interprofessional Collaboration**

---

- Demonstrate ability to engage in an interprofessional team in a manner that optimizes safe and effective patient- and population-centered care
- Work with other health professionals to establish and maintain a climate of mutual respect, dignity, diversity, ethical integrity, and trust

- Use knowledge of one's role and the roles of other health professionals to appropriately assess and address the needs of patients and populations served to optimize health and wellness
- Participate in interprofessional teams to provide patient- and population-centered care that is safe, timely, efficient, effective, and equitable

## ★ Domain 8: Personal and Professional Development

- Demonstrate qualities required to sustain lifelong personal and professional growth
- Set learning and improvement goals. Identify and perform learning activities that address one's gaps in knowledge, skills, attitudes, and abilities
- Demonstrate healthy coping mechanisms to respond to stress; employ self-care strategies
- Manage possible and actual conflicts between personal and professional responsibilities
- Recognize that ambiguity is part of patient care and respond by utilizing appropriate resources in dealing with uncertainty

## SECTION II: USE YOUR RESOURCES—THE EXAM BLUEPRINT

The second resource you should review is the Exam Blueprint, which is always accessible on the AONN+ FFL website <https://aonnffl.org/>.

The Exam Blueprint is exactly what it sounds like—it is an outline of examination topics based upon the 8 domains we reviewed. It defines what actions/knowledge must be demonstrated via the exam as well as what percentage of the exam focuses on each specific domain.

You should utilize the Blueprint to guide your exam preparation, as it provides a clear overview of all elements you will be required to demonstrate on the exam. You should also begin to recognize how the domains guide the creation of the exam Blueprint and, thus, the exam questions. While the domains define the competencies of oncology patient navigation (**what** navigators do), the Exam Blueprint begins to define actions that demonstrate competency (**how** navigators do, **what** navigators **know**). At all times, exam question development is based on current literature review and standardized best practices.

## Patient Care (20% of Questions)

Assist patients in accessing cancer care and navigating healthcare systems

Identify appropriate and credible resources (practical, social, physical, emotional, spiritual)

Educate patients and caregivers on the multidisciplinary nature of cancer treatment (roles and healthcare system)

Empower patients to communicate their preferences and priorities for treatment to their healthcare team

Empower patients (self-management and health promotion resources and referrals)

Support patient adherence to agreed-upon treatment plan (continued nonclinical barrier assessment, referrals to supportive resources, collaboration with the clinical team)

## Knowledge for Practice (24% of Questions)

Basic knowledge of medical and cancer terminology

Access and reference evidence-based information (cancer screening, diagnosis, treatment and survivorship)

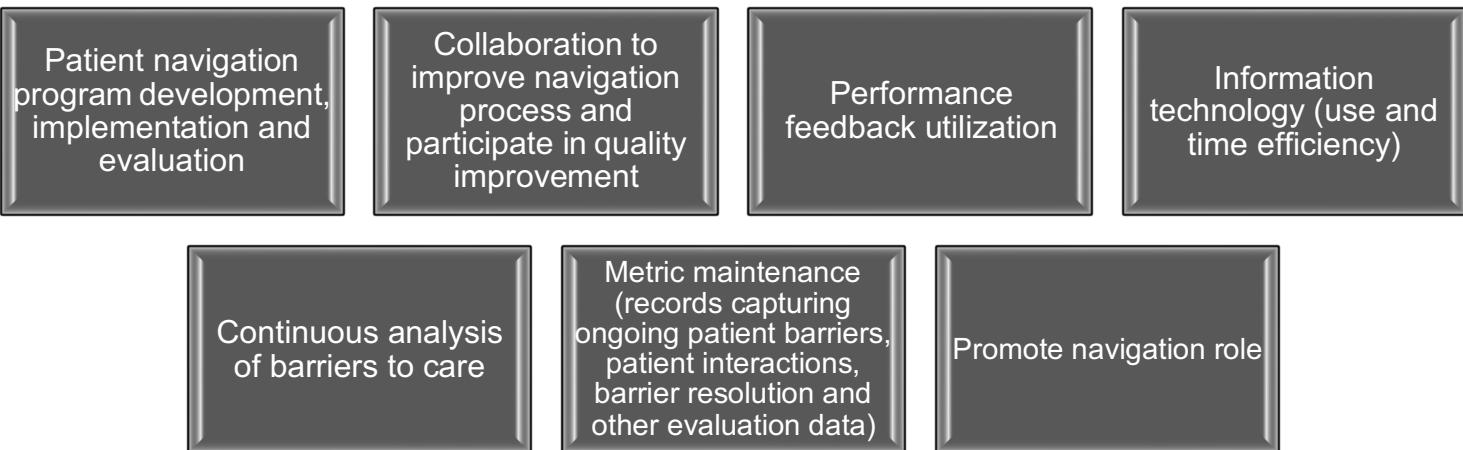
Basic knowledge of cancer, cancer treatment and supportive care options (clinical trials and integrative therapies)

Basic knowledge of health system operations

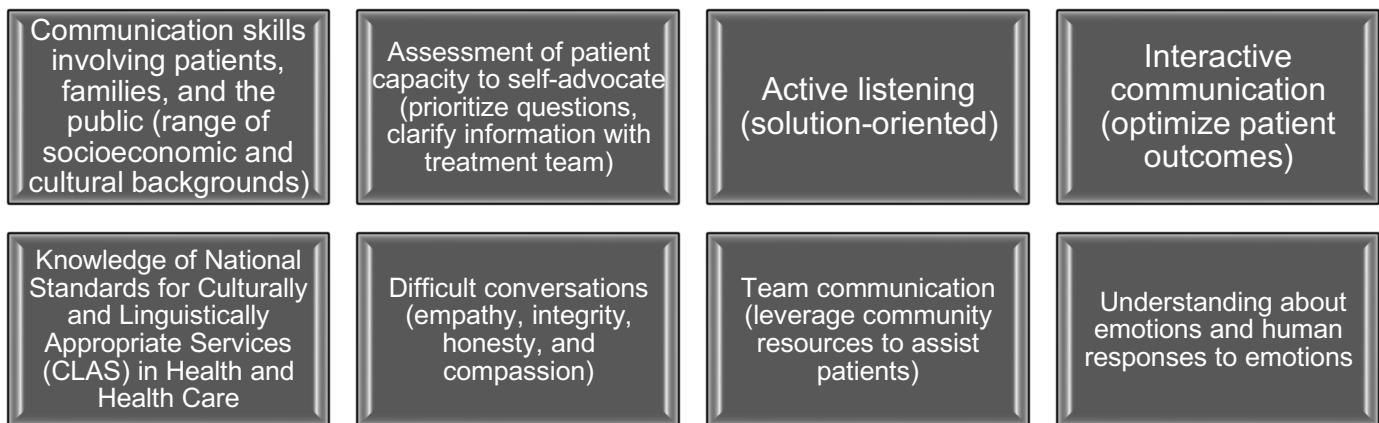
Physical, psychological, social and spiritual impacts of cancer and its treatment

General understanding of healthcare payment structure and financing

## Practice-Based Learning and Improvement (10% of Questions)



## Interpersonal and Communication Skills (14% of Questions)



## Professionalism (14% of Questions)

Knowledge application role differences (clinically licensed and non-licensed professionals)

Scope of practice (accessible, accurate, supportive)

Efficient and effective use of organization, time management, problem-solving, and critical thinking

Responsiveness to patient needs (within scope of practice and professional boundaries)

Knowledge of patient rights

Sensitivity and responsiveness to a diverse patient population (gender, age, culture, race, religion, abilities, and sexual orientation)

## Systems-Based Practice (3% of Questions)

Transition of patients (screening, diagnosis, active treatment, survivorship, and/or end-of-life care)

Patient advocate (quality patient care and optimal patient care systems)

Organization and prioritization of resources

## Interprofessional Collaboration (8% of Questions)

Positive working climate - mutual respect, dignity, diversity, ethical integrity, and trust

Role knowledge (personal and team)

Interprofessional team participation (safe, timely, efficient, effective, and equitable)

## Personal and Professional Development (7% of Questions)

Identify gaps in knowledge (skills, attitudes, and abilities)

Healthy coping mechanisms to respond to stress (self-care strategies)

Personal and professional responsibilities: conflict management

Ambiguity recognition

## SECTION III: USE YOUR RESOURCES— RECOMMENDED STUDY MATERIALS

Recommended study materials can also be found on the AONN+ FFL website:

<https://aonnffl.org/certifications/nurse-navigator-certification>

These materials outline evidence-based practices across all 8 oncology patient navigation domains and should be used to define your course of study. Due to the intensity of study required and the number of evidence-based resources, you should ideally have no less than 2 months of preparation time prior to sitting for certification. Most candidates will find a 3 to 6-month timeframe more accommodating when balancing other responsibilities with certification preparation.

Additional resources you may find helpful include the *Patient Navigator Training Collaborative*'s free courses platform: <https://patientnavigatortraining.org/elearning/course-listing/>. You may find them foundationally useful for reviewing the basics of navigation practice.

If you are a member of AONN+, you may wish to utilize CE activities and education available on the AONN+ website <https://aonnonline.org/education>, as you may find these helpful study resources as well.

### **Foundational Resources**

- Blaseg KD, Daugherty P, Gamblin KA. *Oncology Nurse Navigation: Delivering Patient-Centered Care Across the Continuum*. Pittsburgh, PA: Oncology Nursing Society; 2014. ISBN-10:1935864351.
- Shockney LD. *Team-Based Oncology Care: The Pivotal Role of Oncology Navigation*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing AG; 2018. ISBN 978-3-319-69037-7.
- *Oncology Patient Navigator Training: The Fundamentals*.

Through a series of self-paced modules, the training walks participants through:

- ✓ An overview of patient navigation and core competencies
- ✓ The basics of healthcare
- ✓ The basics of patient navigation
- ✓ Enhancing communication
- ✓ Professionalism
- ✓ Enhancing practice
- ✓ The *Guide for Patient Navigators* provides a supplement to the Oncology Patient Navigator Training as you move through the course.

- Patient Navigation in Cancer Care 2.0: Guiding patients to quality outcomes. Navigating the Cancer Continuum in the Context of Value-Based Care.
- Freeman HP, Rodriguez RL. History and principles of patient navigation. *Cancer*. 2011;117(15 Suppl):3539-3542. doi:10.1002/cncr.26262.
- Pratt-Chapman M, Willis A, Masselink L. Core competencies for oncology patient navigators. *Journal of Oncology Navigation & Survivorship*. April 2015.
- Braun KL, Kagawa-Singer M, Holden AE, et al. Cancer patient navigator tasks across the cancer care continuum. *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*. 2012;23(1):398-413. <https://doi.org/10.1353/hpu.2012.0030>.
- Willis A, Reed E, Pratt-Chapman M, et al. Development of a framework for patient navigation: delineating roles across navigator types. *Journal of Oncology Navigation & Survivorship*. 2013;4(6):20-26.
- Wells KJ, Battaglia TA, Dudley DJ, et al. Patient navigation: state of the art or is it science? *Cancer*. 2008;113(8):1999-2010. doi:10.1002/cncr.23815.
- Patient Navigation Training Collaborative. Introduction to the Healthcare System. <https://patientnavigatortraining.org/elearning/courses/introduction-to-the-healthcare-system/>.

## Patient Care

- Health Affairs. Achieving Equity in Health. 2011. [www.healthaffairs.org/healthpolicybriefs/brief.php?brief\\_id=53](http://www.healthaffairs.org/healthpolicybriefs/brief.php?brief_id=53).
- National Cancer Institute. Cancer Health Disparities Definitions. 2015. <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/understanding/disparities>.
- Pratt-Chapman ML, Kapp H, Willis A, Bires J. Catalyzing patient-centered care: starting where you are and sharing what you know. *Oncol Issues*. 2014;30-39.
- Paskett ED, Harrop PH, Wells KJ. Patient navigation: an update on the state of the science. *CA Cancer J Clin*. 2011;61(4):237-249. doi:10.3322/caac.20111.

## Knowledge for Practice

- National Cancer Institute. Dictionary of Cancer Terms. [www.cancer.gov/dictionary](http://www.cancer.gov/dictionary).
- National Cancer Institute's What Is Cancer? [www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/understanding/what-is-cancer](http://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/understanding/what-is-cancer).
- National Cancer Institute. Cancer Staging. 2015. [www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/factsheet/detection/staging](http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/factsheet/detection/staging).

- National Cancer Institute Screening Tests. 2019. <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/screening/screening-tests>.
- Medical Terminology. ThePenguinProf. 2011. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3fiEszFPRE8&feature=youtu.be>.
- American Cancer Society. Cancer Prevention & Early Detection Facts & Figures 2019-2020.
- National Cancer Institute. Cancer Treatment. [www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/treatment](http://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/treatment).
- American Cancer Society. Cancer Facts & Figures 2020.
- National Cancer Institute. Clinical Trials. [www.cancer.gov/clinicaltrials](http://www.cancer.gov/clinicaltrials).
- National Cancer Institute. Side Effects of Cancer Treatment. <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/treatment/side-effects>.
- Mayo Clinic. Cancer Survivors: Late Effects of Cancer Treatment. 2014. [www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/cancer/in-depth/cancer-survivor/art-20045524](http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/cancer/in-depth/cancer-survivor/art-20045524).
- Cancer.Net. Physical, Emotional, and Social Effects of Cancer. <https://www.cancer.net/coping-with-cancer/physical-emotional-and-social-effects-cancer>.
- National Cancer Institute. Coping with Cancer. <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/coping>
- American Cancer Society. Understanding Health Insurance. <https://www.cancer.org/treatment/finding-and-paying-for-treatment/understanding-health-insurance.html>.

## **Practice-Based Learning and Improvement**

- Utilize foundational resources.

## **Interpersonal and Communication Skills**

- Balogh EP, Ganz PA, Murphy SB, et al. Patient-centered cancer treatment planning: improving the quality of oncology care. Summary of an Institute of Medicine workshop. *Oncologist*. 2011;16(12):1800-1805. doi:10.1634/theoncologist.2011-0252.
- Patient Navigator Training Collaborative. Motivational Interviewing: A Brief Overview. <https://patientnavigatortraining.org/elearning/courses/motivational-interviewing-a-brief-overview/>.

## **Professionalism**

- Clinical Trials and Patient Navigation: A Tutorial for Patient Navigators. Patient Navigator Training Collaborative. [http://www.patientnavigatortraining.org/clinical\\_trials/](http://www.patientnavigatortraining.org/clinical_trials/).

## **Systems-Based Practice**

- Utilize the foundational resources.

## **Interprofessional Collaboration**

- Utilize the foundational resources.

## **Personal and Professional Development**

- Utilize the foundational resources.

# **SECTION IV: CREATING YOUR STUDY PLAN**

Use your knowledge of the Domains and Exam Blueprint as well as all printed or downloaded study materials to begin developing your study plan. There are several additional elements you should consider to ensure wise and effective use of your time.

- How much time do you have before exam day?
- What kind of learner are you?
- Do you have the space and support you need?
- Do you have a Local Navigator Network? (LNN)

These questions may lead you to think about the materials you need or connections you may wish to make.

### **How much time is enough time?**

You've heard this before—cramming for any exam is a terrible idea. While there are some people who seem to be able to cram right before an exam and succeed, that is not the norm. You must give yourself enough time to review the elements of the exam and the recommended study materials in a way that will be meaningful for your learning style.

## Consider the importance of certification

OPN-CG certification represents expertise in oncology patient navigation, which is why navigation experience is a prerequisite for applying to sit. When credentials are awarded, those letters mean that AONN+ FFL formally recognizes that individual as an expert in the field. That's a big deal!

Certification is common in medical care, especially for licensed professionals. For example, Oncology Nurse (OCN) Certification represents expertise in oncology practice and requires intense preparation, even for nurses who have worked in oncology for years. Critical Care and Emergency Department nurses spend long hours (sometimes years) preparing for their certification exams. The OPN-CG is no different. It represents excellence and expertise in Patient Navigation, across all aspects of generalized care. As AONN+ FFL commits to continued development of its programs, exams, and preparation materials to guide your development as an oncology patient navigator, you too must commit to dedicating the necessary time to professional certification preparation. As you study, you will learn new information and gain new skills that will, in turn, elevate your practice as an oncology patient navigator and a leader in oncology care.

## What kind of learner are you?

It's important to understand your learning style before developing study materials, as learning is not one-size-fits-all. Use this simple assessment to determine your style:

<http://www.educationplanner.org/students/self-assessments/learning-styles.shtml>.

There are numerous learning styles, but often they are simplified to the 3 main styles: Visual Learners, Auditory Learners, and Tactile Learners. In the following section, information from ThoughtCo., an online learning, education, and information site, outlines some strengths and recommended study strategies for each learning style.



**Visual  
Learning  
Style**

**Auditory  
Learning  
Style**

**Tactile  
Learning  
Style**

## Visual Learners

- ✓ Are often good at spelling and grammar
- ✓ May be able to quickly comprehend charts and graphs
- ✓ May have an ability to convey or prefer to convey complex ideas in a visual format
- ✓ May be good at sign language or other visual forms of communication
- ✓ Are often creative and may enjoy art or writing

## Learning Strategies for Visual Learners

- ✓ Print reading materials so you have handouts/notes
- ✓ Incorporate white space in your notes to prevent too much information in one place and to organize your thoughts
- ✓ Draw symbols and pictures to help you remember information
- ✓ Create flashcards
- ✓ Create graphs and charts
- ✓ Make outlines
- ✓ Write your own practice test

<https://www.thoughtco.com/visual-learning-style-p2-1857113>

## Auditory Learners

- ✓ Are often good at explaining things verbally
- ✓ May be adept at understanding changes in others' tone of voice
- ✓ Can be an effective member to include in study groups
- ✓ Often skilled at presentations
- ✓ Usually unafraid to speak up or verbalize ideas
- ✓ May follow verbal directions well
- ✓ May love to tell stories
- ✓ May find they work through complex problems by talking through them out loud

## Learning Strategies for Auditory Learners

- ✓ Find a study buddy or study group so you can discuss the study materials
- ✓ Read articles and study materials out loud and take notes while doing that
- ✓ Record yourself reading your study materials and play recordings back to yourself
- ✓ Listen to music without lyrics while studying
- ✓ If you need to memorize information, close your eyes and repeat that information out loud
- ✓ Pretend to "teach" the information to a fake audience

<https://www.thoughtco.com/auditory-learning-style-p3-3212038>

## Tactile Learners

- ✓ May struggle with sitting for too long, so may need to move around while reading materials
- ✓ May prefer to study with loud music
- ✓ Can be great at role-playing scenarios
- ✓ Often very good at assembling models or building things
- ✓ Are often active and enjoy a lot of activities like dance or fitness
- ✓ Excel at taking on new skills quickly

## Learning Strategies for Tactile Learners

- ✓ Study in small bursts
- ✓ When able, role-play or act out information to help you remember
- ✓ Create flashcards
- ✓ Use a Smart pen for notetaking
- ✓ Make up and answer your own essay questions to prepare for exams
- ✓ Create study games

<https://www.thoughtco.com/tactile-learning-style-1857111>

## Remember, space and support are important, too

No matter what style of learner you are, you will need a study space to claim as your own where you can read quietly, talk out loud, or act out scenarios. Find a time of day and a place you can use consistently so you can develop a routine and stick with it. Remember, learning styles are important. While a noisy family area may work as a study space for a tactile learner, it will never work well for an auditory learner.

Also important is to gain buy-in from your family and/or social support. You may have to get clever to find time to study. Make sure your loved ones and friends know what you're doing and support your decision to advance your career through certification. Allow them to help you create a study plan (this could be a fun activity with children), and if friends or loved ones are willing to help you with household chores or childcare so you can succeed, allow them to do so. Then, when you succeed at your goal, you all celebrate together.

## Local Navigator Networks (LNNs)

Another resource some AONN+ members may have available is an AONN+ Local Navigator Network. Because LNNs bring together navigators from a particular geographic area, it's a great way to stay current on navigation topics and network with peers. It's also a great place to find a study partner or create a study group. The LNN may also schedule guest speakers to discuss Domain-related topics and define best practices.

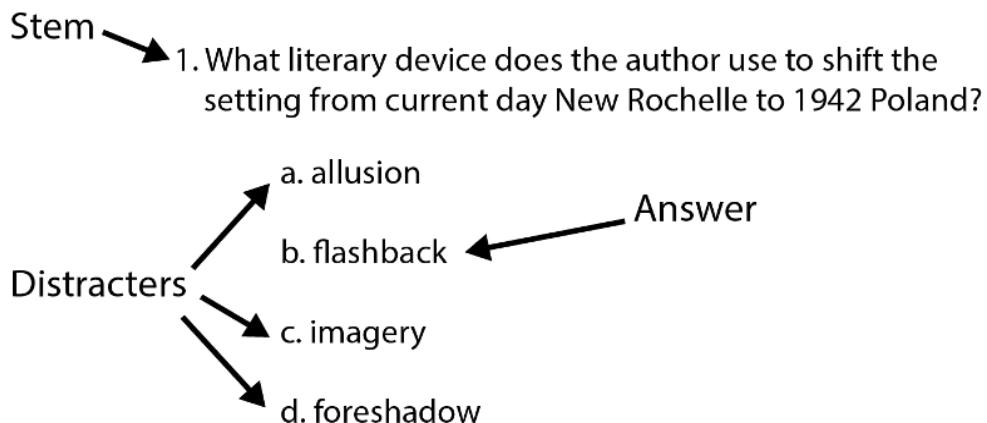
## SECTION V: ANSWERING MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

Certification exams often use complex multiple-choice questions. This type of question can be challenging, especially if it has been a long time since you've answered one. First, let's look at how complex multiple-choice questions are created and then outline a few tips to keep in mind when testing.

There are 3 parts to every multiple-choice question: **the stem, the answer, and the distractors**. The **stem** is the question being asked. Sometimes, you might discover a question containing a long lead-in patient scenario prior to the stem. In that case, determine the stem first, then go back through the scenario so you can pull relevant information. Regardless of whether the question is short or long,

take time to locate the stem so you know what is being asked. Look at the question shown in the graphic below and locate the stem. In this instance, the stem is asking us to name the literary device that allows a shift in perspective from modern day to 1942.

## Parts of a Multiple-choice Question



Once you've located and analyzed the stem, you can determine that to answer the question, you will need to know the definitions of various literary devices—it's a simple knowledge check. In your mind, you should review the definitions of allusion, flashback, imagery, and foreshadowing to determine which means “to shift perspective from modern day to a time in the past.” Once you do (and if you know the definitions), the **answer, or correct answer**, is clear: flashback. The incorrect answers are known as **distractors**, as they are incorrect answers that may distract you from the correct answer. Well-written distractors are not intentionally tricky, nor do they hint at the correct answer by being a “goofy” choice. You should have to apply critical thinking to reach the correct answer, but ultimately, only one answer IS the correct answer.

Let's look at another question:

**A 25-year-old woman with cystic fibrosis is receiving care for her condition in a patient-centered medical home. Her care is most likely to differ from traditional services by including:**

- a) Coverage for both outpatient and emergency room care
- b) Instruction on how to manage her GI and respiratory symptoms
- c) Only protocols that follow US Preventative Services guidelines for care of patients with cystic fibrosis
- d) Rapid access to emergency room care when she experiences exacerbated shortness of breath
- e) Reduced cost of Pancreatic enzymes, Fluticasone, Albuterol, nebulized DNase and Montelukast

Question taken from: [https://medicine.utah.edu/faculty-dev/programs/academy-med-education/files/symposium\\_2015\\_powerpoints/scenario-based-mcqs.pdf](https://medicine.utah.edu/faculty-dev/programs/academy-med-education/files/symposium_2015_powerpoints/scenario-based-mcqs.pdf)

The stem of this question is quite direct, but what do you need to know? What is it asking? To answer this question, you need to understand the basics of cystic fibrosis as well as the patient-centered medical home model. Upon reading the answer choices, there is one correct answer based on what the stem is asking: **B**.

The other answers are distractors. Some, you may have been able to eliminate immediately, while others may have left you questioning yourself. While D seems like a good option upon first reading, critical thinking reminds us that ALL patients with shortness of breath receive rapid access in the ED, and this answer is not centered on what this patient needs to know to manage care in the patient-centered medical home model.

The more time you can prepare by writing and reviewing your own questions—based upon the study materials—the better prepared you will be.

## Test-Taking Tips/Reminders

- ✓ Identify the stem and determine what the question is asking
- ✓ Review the stem to determine if the question is a simple knowledge question, or if you need to think critically to answer
- ✓ While you want to reference your personal experience to help you answer, do not create what-if scenarios by asking, “but in this situation...” or “if the patient did this...” Stick to what the question asks and only what the question asks
- ✓ Read the question more than once before reviewing the potential answers
- ✓ Cross out answers you know are incorrect
- ✓ Once you select an answer, do not change it
- ✓ If you become frustrated by a question, skip it
- ✓ Remember, there is only one correct answer
- ✓ The intent is not to trick you—certification should be challenging, as it tests your level of expertise and ability to think critically

## SECTION VI: EXAM DAY

Finally, let's review some recommendations for handling the stress of exam day.

- ✓ If you're able, wake up early and give yourself plenty of time for a last-minute review
- ✓ Take a walk or exercise in the morning—this will reduce your stress, increase your focus, and boost your mood
- ✓ If you struggle with test anxiety, practice meditation, deep breathing techniques, or power poses right before the exam begins (the bathroom is a perfect place for this). If you've never tried power poses, they can sound silly, but many people have found them beneficial for boosting confidence. More information may be found here: <https://jamesclear.com/body-language-how-to-be-confident>.
- ✓ Make sure you're well-hydrated
- ✓ Give yourself plenty of time to commute to and locate the testing facility. You don't want to be rushing last minute to check in.

**And most importantly, believe in yourself! You wouldn't be qualified to sit for the exam if you didn't have the experience necessary to succeed. Have confidence, trust your study plan, and just do it!**