

California Manicurist

Solution key

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Online timed practice

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1. What is the hyponychium?

- A (correct). The thickened skin beneath the free edge of the nail plate**
- B. The nail matrix beneath the base of the nail
- C. The visible white tip of the nail plate
- D. The cuticle fold over the nail base

Rationale: The hyponychium is the thickened skin beneath the free edge of the nail plate where it meets the fingertip. It forms a seal that protects the nail bed from bacteria and debris.

2. A client presents with psoriasis on their scalp. The cosmetologist should:

- A. Refer to a physician and reschedule
- B. Apply medicated shampoo and continue
- C. Refuse service entirely
- D (correct). Perform the service carefully if no open or bleeding lesions are present**

Rationale: Psoriasis is a chronic, non-contagious autoimmune condition. Services may be performed if there are no open, bleeding lesions. The cosmetologist should handle the scalp gently and avoid irritating products.

3. A licensee cuts a client and draws blood. What is the correct first response?

- A. Apply antiseptic and continue immediately
- B. Continue the service wearing gloves
- C. Discard all tools and continue with new ones
- D (correct). Stop service, cover wound, remove and disinfect contaminated tools**

Rationale: Service stops immediately. The wound is covered, contaminated tools removed and disinfected, and the area cleaned per bloodborne pathogen protocols.

4. Under California law, a cosmetology establishment must display which of the following prominently?

- A. Only the health inspection report
- B (correct). Establishment license and all individual practitioner licenses where visible to clients**
- C. No display is required — licenses are held digitally
- D. Only the establishment license at the reception desk

Rationale: California Business and Professions Code requires cosmetology establishments to display the establishment license and all individual practitioner licenses where they are visible to clients.

5. Which of the following is a non-porous surface that can be effectively disinfected?

- A. A wooden cuticle pusher
- B. A porous sponge applicator
- C (correct). A metal shear blade**
- D. A fabric cape

Rationale: Non-porous materials (metal, glass, hard plastic) can be fully disinfected. Porous materials absorb disinfectants unevenly and cannot be reliably disinfected.

6. What is the purpose of wearing gloves when applying chemical services?

- A. They improve grip on tools during chemical services
- B (correct). Protect from chemical burns, skin sensitization, and absorption of harmful chemicals**
- C. They eliminate the need for an SDS review
- D. Required only when using bleach products

Rationale: Gloves protect the practitioner from chemical burns, skin sensitization, and absorption of potentially harmful chemicals during color, perm, and relaxer services.

7. Which of the following conditions requires the licensee to refuse service?

- A (correct). A client with head lice (pediculosis)**
- B. A client with dandruff
- C. A client with a minor cut on their arm
- D. A client with dry, flaky scalp

Rationale: Head lice (pediculosis) is contagious and requires refusal of service until the infestation is treated.

8. What does SPF (Sun Protection Factor) measure?

- A (correct). How long a sunscreen extends the skin's natural UVB protection**
- B. The moisturizing level of the product
- C. How resistant the skin is to UVA rays
- D. The percentage of chemical UV filters in the formula

Rationale: SPF measures how long a sunscreen extends the skin's natural protection against UVB rays. SPF 30 filters approximately 97% of UVB radiation.

9. Which layer of the epidermis contains melanocytes (pigment-producing cells)?

- A (correct). Stratum germinativum (stratum basale)**
- B. The subcutis layer
- C. The dermis
- D. Stratum corneum (outermost layer)

Rationale: Melanocytes are located in the stratum germinativum (stratum basale), the deepest layer of the epidermis. They produce melanin, which migrates upward to protect skin cells from UV damage.

10. When performing a pedicure, a foot file or pumice stone is used to:

- A. Massage deeper tissue during pedicure
- B. Apply color evenly to the toenails
- C. Disinfect the foot surface before soaking
- D (correct). Remove callus buildup and rough skin from heels and balls of feet**

Rationale: A foot file or pumice stone gently removes hyperkeratosis (callus buildup) and rough skin from the heels and balls of the feet during a pedicure service.

11. Under California law, nail files used on a client must be:

- A. Autoclaved between uses
- B. Soaked in disinfectant solution for 10 minutes and reused
- C. Wiped with alcohol and reused for the next client
- D (correct). Discarded after each client or given to the client to take home**

Rationale: California BBC regulations require nail files (abrasive implements) that cannot be disinfected to be disposed of after each client use or given to the client. Porous items cannot be adequately disinfected.

12. What is the purpose of cuticle oil in a manicure service?

- A. Disinfect the cuticle before service
- B. Harden the cuticle for easier removal
- C. Strengthen the nail plate before polish
- D (correct). Moisturize and condition the cuticle and proximal nail fold, preventing dryness**

Rationale: Cuticle oil (typically containing vitamin E, jojoba, or almond oil) moisturizes and conditions the cuticle and proximal nail fold, preventing dryness, cracking, and hangnails.

13. What is the primary route of transmission for head lice in a salon?

- A. Airborne droplets in the salon
- B (correct). Direct head-to-head contact and shared tools, combs, and linens**
- C. Contaminated water in the shampoo bowl
- D. Skin-to-skin contact with the hands

Rationale: Head lice spread through direct head-to-head contact and shared tools, combs, and linens. Proper disinfection prevents salon transmission.

14. Which EPA registration category indicates a disinfectant is effective against both bacteria and viruses?

- A (correct). Hospital-grade or broad-spectrum disinfectant**
- B. Quaternary ammonium compound at any concentration
- C. Disinfectant labeled for household use only
- D. Bacteriostatic disinfectant

Rationale: The EPA registers disinfectants by efficacy level. A hospital-grade or broad-spectrum disinfectant label indicates effectiveness against both bacteria and viruses, making it suitable for non-porous salon implements per California Board of Barbering and Cosmetology rules.

15. California BBC inspectors have the authority to enter a licensed cosmetology establishment:

- A. Only on scheduled inspection dates
- B (correct). During business hours without prior notice**
- C. Only with a court order
- D. Only after a formal complaint has been filed

Rationale: California law authorizes BBC inspectors to enter licensed establishments during business hours without prior notice to conduct inspections for compliance with health, safety, and licensing requirements.

16. Which of the following best describes a bactericide?

- A (correct). A chemical that kills bacteria**
- B. A product that removes bacteria without chemicals
- C. A natural antibacterial derived from plants
- D. A chemical that inhibits bacterial growth without killing them

Rationale: A bactericide kills bacteria. A bacteriostat only inhibits growth. Salon disinfectants must be bactericidal, virucidal, and fungicidal to meet Texas TDLR requirements.

17. What is the correct order of steps when disinfecting tools at a cosmetology or barbering station?

- A. Disinfect, rinse, clean, dry
- B. Rinse, disinfect, clean, dry
- C (correct). Clean, rinse, disinfect, rinse, dry**
- D. Disinfect, clean, rinse, dry

Rationale: Tools must be cleaned before disinfection — disinfectants cannot penetrate organic matter.

The correct sequence is: clean, rinse, disinfect, rinse, dry.

18. Which of the following describes a first-degree (superficial) burn?

- A. Charring and nerve damage
- B. Blistering and damage into the dermis
- C (correct). Redness and minor pain affecting only the epidermis, no blistering**
- D. Full thickness damage through all skin layers

Rationale: A first-degree burn affects only the epidermis. It presents as redness, minor pain, and no blistering. Common examples include mild sunburn.

19. A client arrives with an open sore on their scalp. The licensee should:

- A. Proceed carefully while wearing gloves
- B. Refer the client to a dermatologist and continue the service
- C. Apply antiseptic and cover the area before proceeding
- D (correct). Refuse service until the condition has healed**

Rationale: Services on skin with open sores or active infections risk cross-contamination and harm. Services must be refused until the condition heals.

20. What does a bluish tint in the nail plate most commonly indicate?

- A. Excessive iron deposits in the nail bed
- B. Normal nail pigmentation variation
- C (correct). Reduced oxygen levels in the blood (cyanosis)**
- D. A reaction to dark nail polish

Rationale: A bluish discoloration of the nail plate, known as cyanosis, suggests reduced oxygen levels in the blood. This is a medical condition that a manicurist cannot treat; the client should be referred to a physician before any service is performed.

21. California requires cosmetology students to complete what percentage of their required training hours before being eligible to take the written exam?

- A. 50% of required hours
- B. No hours required before scheduling the exam
- C. 75% of required hours
- D (correct). 100% of required hours verified by their school**

Rationale: Under BBC regulations, cosmetology students must complete 100% of their required training hours (1,000) and have those hours verified by their school before they are eligible to sit for the written exam.

22. Which of the following is the correct order for hand washing in a salon setting?

- A. Apply hand sanitizer instead of soap and water
- B. Wet hands, rinse, apply soap, lather 5 seconds, dry
- C. Apply soap, wet hands, lather 10 seconds, rinse, air dry
- D (correct). Wet hands, apply soap, lather 20 seconds, rinse, dry with clean towel**

Rationale: Proper hand washing requires wetting hands first, then applying soap and lathering for at least 20 seconds, rinsing thoroughly, and drying with a clean towel. This sequence ensures maximum pathogen removal.

23. Which of the following is the primary purpose of performing a thorough client consultation before a nail service?

- A. To determine how much time to allocate for the appointment
- B (correct). To identify contraindications and tailor the service safely**
- C. To document the client's preferred nail polish colors
- D. To upsell additional nail services to the client

Rationale: The client consultation allows the manicurist to identify contraindications, nail disorders, or health conditions that could affect the service or the client's safety. It also helps the manicurist tailor the service to the client's needs and establish informed

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consent.

24. What is the purpose of a nail dehydrator before applying nail enhancements?

- A. Add moisture before applying enhancements
- B. Apply color more evenly
- C. Disinfect the nail plate

D (correct). Remove surface moisture and oils to improve adhesion and reduce lifting

Rationale: A nail dehydrator removes surface moisture, oils, and contaminants from the nail plate, improving adhesion and reducing the risk of lifting or premature loss of nail enhancements.

25. Which of the following is required on the label of every professional chemical product?

- A. Pricing and expiration date only
- B. The salon's name and purchase date
- C. Instructions for use and fragrance ingredients only

D (correct). Product name, hazard warnings, and manufacturer information

Rationale: OSHA Hazard Communication Standard requires labels with the product name, hazard warnings, and manufacturer information.

26. A California cosmetology license must be renewed how often?

- A. Every year

B (correct). Every two years

- C. Every five years

- D. Every three years

Rationale: California cosmetology licenses issued by the BBC are valid for two years and must be renewed biennially. Continuing education is required for renewal.

27. Gel nail polish requires curing under which type of light?

- A. Chemical catalyst mixed into the gel
- B. Heat from a warming lamp
- C. Air drying only

D (correct). UV or LED light to trigger polymerization

Rationale: Gel polish uses photo-initiators that require UV or LED light to trigger the polymerization reaction that hardens the gel. LED lamps cure faster and are more energy efficient.

28. What is the nail matrix?

A (correct). The tissue beneath the base of the nail plate that produces the nail plate

- B. The visible nail plate above the finger
- C. The cuticle that overlaps the nail plate
- D. The nail groove on the sides of the nail

Rationale: The nail matrix is the tissue beneath the base of the nail plate (under the lunula). It contains the cells that produce the nail plate. Damage to the matrix can permanently affect nail growth.

29. The purpose of a cuticle softener or remover in a manicure service is to:

A (correct). Break down dead cuticle skin so it can be pushed back or removed safely

- B. Strengthen the nail plate before applying gel
- C. Harden the cuticle for easier removal
- D. Disinfect the cuticle area before a nail service

Rationale: Cuticle softeners (usually alkaline products containing potassium hydroxide) break down the dead skin of the cuticle, making it easier to push back or remove without damage to the nail.

30. California SB 803, effective January 1, 2022, created a new license type for professionals who want to provide hairstyling services without chemical services. This license is called:

- A. Nail Technician
- B (correct). Hairstylist**
- C. Esthetician
- D. Cosmetology Apprentice

Rationale: SB 803 created the new "Hairstylist" license — a 600-hour pathway for those who wish to cut, style, shampoo, and blow-dry hair but do not plan to offer chemical services such as coloring or perming.

31. What is the correct response when a client has tinea unguium (nail fungus) during a nail service appointment?

- A. Proceed if the client signed a waiver
- B (correct). Refuse the nail service — tinea unguium is contagious**
- C. Apply antifungal nail polish and proceed
- D. File away the affected area and continue

Rationale: Tinea unguium is a contagious fungal infection. The manicurist must refuse the nail service to prevent spreading the infection to themselves, other clients, or implements.

32. Which nail shape is considered strongest because it follows the natural shape of the fingertip?

- A. Square
- B. Stiletto (pointed)
- C (correct). Oval or round**
- D. Coffin (ballerina)

Rationale: The oval or round nail shape follows the natural stress lines of the fingertip, distributing force evenly and making it more resistant to breakage than square or pointed shapes.

33. Effleurage in a facial massage refers to:

- A. Rapid tapping or drumming movements
- B. Vibrating movements using fingertips
- C. Deep kneading of the muscle tissue
- D (correct). Light, gliding, stroking movement**

Rationale: Effleurage is a light, gliding, stroking movement used at the beginning and end of a massage sequence to warm tissue, spread product, and relax the client.

34. A nail wrap (silk, linen, or fiberglass) is used to:

- A. Replace gel and acrylic products entirely
- B. Add length beyond the natural nail tip
- C. Disinfect the nail plate before polish application
- D (correct). Reinforce weak or damaged natural nails with fabric mesh**

Rationale: Nail wraps reinforce weak or damaged natural nails by adhering a mesh fabric layer that adds strength and flexibility without the bulk of acrylic or gel products.

35. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in the salon most commonly includes:

- A. A lab coat only
- B. Nitrile gloves only, no other equipment required
- C. A face mask and hairnet only
- D (correct). Gloves, safety glasses, and protective aprons as appropriate**

Rationale: PPE for salon professionals includes gloves when handling chemicals or during blood exposure risk, safety glasses, and protective aprons as appropriate.

36. What is the difference between a base coat and a top coat in nail polish application?

- A. Both base and top coat are the same product
- B. Base coat adds shine; top coat prevents discoloration
- C. Top coat is applied first to protect the nail

D (correct). Base coat bonds and prevents staining; top coat seals color and extends wear

Rationale: A base coat bonds polish to the nail, prevents staining, and creates an even surface. A top coat seals the color, adds shine, and extends the wear of the polish.

37. A French manicure is characterized by:

- A (correct). A natural or pale pink base with white tips mimicking the natural nail**
- B. Bold, dark-colored polish applied to the entire nail
- C. A two-tone design with gel polish only
- D. Glitter applied over a clear base coat

Rationale: A French manicure features a natural or pale pink base with white tips that mimic the look of a healthy natural nail with visible free edge, creating a clean, classic appearance.

38. Safety Data Sheets (SDS) are required to provide information about:

- A. Pricing and wholesale ordering information
- B (correct). Hazard information, safe handling, PPE requirements, and emergency response**
- C. Only the product ingredients and fragrance profile
- D. Instructions for mixing chemical formulas

Rationale: SDS provide hazard information, safe handling instructions, PPE requirements, and emergency response procedures for chemical products.

39. How often must disinfectant solution in a wet sanitizer jar be changed?

- A. Once a week
- B (correct). Daily or whenever visibly contaminated**
- C. Once a month
- D. After every single use

Rationale: Disinfectant solution becomes contaminated over time and loses efficacy. It must be changed daily or whenever visibly contaminated.

40. Acrylic nail enhancements are created by combining which two components?

- A. UV gel and a hardener
- B. Nail primer and base coat only
- C. Silk fabric and resin adhesive
- D (correct). Liquid monomer (ethyl methacrylate) and powder polymer**

Rationale: Acrylic (liquid and powder) nails are created by combining a liquid monomer (ethyl methacrylate) with a powder polymer to create a plastic-like material that hardens when exposed to air.

41. What does "sanitation" mean in the context of a salon?

- A. Kill all bacteria but not viruses
- B. Remove all physical debris from a surface
- C (correct). Reduce microbial contamination to safe levels but not eliminate all pathogens**
- D. Destroy all microbial life including spores

Rationale: Sanitation reduces microbial contamination to safe levels but does not eliminate all pathogens. It is a lower level than disinfection or sterilization.

42. HIV is classified as which type of pathogen?

- A. A food-borne pathogen
- B (correct). A bloodborne pathogen**
- C. A waterborne pathogen
- D. An airborne pathogen

Rationale: HIV is a bloodborne pathogen. Accidental cuts are the primary risk in salon settings.

Standard disinfection protocols protect against HIV transmission.

43. A comedone is:

- A. A bacterial skin infection
- B. A type of skin tumor
- C (correct). A clogged hair follicle — open (blackhead) or closed (whitehead)**
- D. A superficial fungal skin condition

Rationale: A comedone is a clogged hair follicle. Open comedones (blackheads) are oxidized; closed comedones (whiteheads) are covered by skin. They are a primary feature of acne vulgaris.

44. Under California Health and Safety Code, cosmetology establishments must maintain hot and cold running water:

- A. Only licensed medical facilities are required to have running water
- B. Water is optional if alcohol-based sanitizers are used
- C. Only cold water is required
- D (correct). Hot and cold running water accessible for sanitation and handwashing**

Rationale: California law requires cosmetology establishments to have adequate hot and cold running water accessible for sanitation of implements and handwashing, as a basic health and safety requirement.

45. What is a paraffin wax treatment used for in nail care?

- A. Harden the nail plate before enhancement application
- B (correct). Open pores, increase circulation, moisturize deeply, and relieve joint stiffness**
- C. Remove callus and rough skin from hands
- D. Disinfect the hand and nail surface

Rationale: Paraffin wax treatments are a thermotherapy service — warm paraffin is applied to hands or feet to open pores, increase blood circulation, moisturize deeply, and relieve joint stiffness.

46. How must clean, disinfected implements be stored?

- A (correct). In a clean, covered container or drawer separate from soiled tools**
- B. Wrapped in a paper towel until needed
- C. In an open container on the counter
- D. Next to the disinfectant jar

Rationale: Disinfected implements must be stored in a clean, covered container or drawer — separate from soiled tools — to maintain their disinfected status.

47. Single-use items such as neck strips, cotton rounds, and wooden applicators must be:

- A (correct). Used once then discarded**
- B. Disinfected and stored for reuse
- C. Autoclaved between clients
- D. Washed with soap and water between clients

Rationale: Single-use items are used on one client then discarded. They cannot be disinfected and reused — reuse creates a cross-contamination risk.

48. The correct sequence for a basic manicure service is:

- A. Apply top coat first, then base coat, then color
- B. Soak, shape, apply color, push cuticles, remove old polish
- C. Apply base coat, soak, shape, remove old polish, massage
- D (correct). Remove old polish, shape, soak, treat cuticles, massage, apply base coat and polish**

Rationale: A proper manicure follows: remove old polish, shape nails, soak, push/treat cuticles, massage, apply base coat, color coats, top coat. Soaking before cuticle work softens tissue for safe removal.

49. When shaping nails with an emery board, the correct technique is to file:

- A. Back and forth in a sawing motion for fastest results
- B. Only use electric files for proper technique
- C (correct). In one direction toward the center of the nail**
- D. Always from the center outward

Rationale: Filing in one direction (toward the center) prevents splitting and fraying of the nail tip. A back-and-forth sawing motion weakens the nail edge.

50. Under California law, a cosmetologist found practicing without a current, valid license is subject to:

- A. A written warning only
- B. No penalty if unlicensed for less than 90 days
- C (correct). A misdemeanor — subject to fines and potential criminal charges**
- D. An automatic 30-day suspension

Rationale: Practicing cosmetology without a valid California license is a misdemeanor under Business and Professions Code Section 7317, subject to fines and potential criminal charges.

51. Which type of disinfectant is EPA-registered and most commonly required for non-porous tools in Texas salons?

- A (correct). EPA-registered hospital-grade disinfectant (quats or phenolics)**
- B. Soap and hot water
- C. Isopropyl alcohol only
- D. Bleach diluted in water

Rationale: EPA-registered hospital-grade disinfectants (quaternary ammonium compounds or phenolics) are required for non-porous implements in Texas cosmetology and barbering establishments.

52. How must soiled towels and linens be stored in a Texas salon or barbershop?

- A. On the floor near the workstation
- B. Mixed with clean linens and washed later
- C (correct). In a closed, covered container separate from clean linens**
- D. Left on the counter until end of day

Rationale: Texas regulations require soiled linens to be stored in a closed, covered container separate from clean linens to prevent cross-contamination.

53. The three layers of the skin from outermost to innermost are:

- A. Dermis, epidermis, subcutis
- B (correct). Epidermis, dermis, subcutis (hypodermis)**
- C. Subcutis, dermis, epidermis
- D. Cuticle, cortex, medulla

Rationale: The epidermis is the outer protective layer. The dermis contains hair follicles, sweat glands, and sebaceous glands. The subcutis (hypodermis) is the deepest fatty layer.

54. As of January 1, 2022, how many training hours are required to qualify for the California Cosmetology Operator written exam?

- A. 2,000 hours
- B (correct). 1,000 hours**
- C. 600 hours
- D. 1,600 hours

Rationale: SB 803 (effective January 1, 2022) reduced the required cosmetology training hours from 1,600 to 1,000. Apprenticeship programs may offer an alternative pathway.

55. The California cosmetology written exam is available in which languages as of 2024?

- A (correct). English, Spanish, Korean, Simplified Chinese, Vietnamese, and Tagalog**
- B. English, French, and Spanish
- C. English and Spanish only
- D. English only

Rationale: Per Assembly Bill 451 (effective January 1, 2024), the BBC is required to offer its written exams in English, Spanish, Korean, Simplified Chinese, Vietnamese, and Tagalog.

56. What is the purpose of an autoclave?

- A. Use UV light to kill surface bacteria
- B. Dry heat metal instruments to 400°F
- C (correct). Use steam under pressure to sterilize instruments completely**
- D. Circulate disinfectant chemical through a sealed chamber

Rationale: An autoclave uses steam under pressure (~250°F/121°C) to sterilize instruments by destroying all microorganisms including bacterial endospores.

57. During a client consultation, a manicurist notices the client's nails are unusually thin and bend easily. Which condition does this describe?

- A. Beau's lines
- B. Onychorrhexis
- C (correct). Eggshell nails**
- D. Leukonychia

Rationale: Nails that are abnormally thin and flex easily are described as having "eggshell" nail texture. This is a nail disorder, not a disease, so services can generally be performed with extra care, but the manicurist should note the condition and advise the client accordingly.

58. What nail condition is characterized by separation of the nail plate from the nail bed?

- A. Onychomycosis
- B. Leukonychia
- C (correct). Onycholysis**
- D. Paronychia

Rationale: Onycholysis is the separation of the nail plate from the nail bed, starting at the free edge and progressing toward the cuticle. It can be caused by trauma, psoriasis, or fungal infection.

59. Which of the following nail conditions requires the cosmetologist to refuse nail services?

- A. Brittle nails (onychorrhexis)
- B. Nail biting (onychophagy)
- C. White spots (leukonychia)
- D (correct). Onychomycosis (nail fungus)**

Rationale: Onychomycosis (nail fungus) is contagious and requires refusal of service. Implements that contact a fungal infection cannot be safely disinfected and must be discarded.

60. The purpose of a nail primer in acrylic nail application is to:

- A. Add shine to the finished nail
- B. Cure the gel polish under UV light
- C. Soften the nail plate for easier filing
- D (correct). Improve adhesion between natural nail and acrylic product, reducing lifting**

Rationale: Nail primer (acid-based or acid-free) improves adhesion between the natural nail plate and acrylic product by etching the surface or providing a bonding agent, reducing lifting.