



Texas Cosmetology Operator

Practice test

April 6, 2026

Time limit: 120 minutes

Official exam page

californiacerts.com/exams/tx-cosmetology

Online timed practice

californiacerts.com/exams/tx-cosmetology/practice

If the link does not open, copy and paste the full URL into your browser.

Answer key for this session (PDF):

californiacerts.com/resources/pdfs/tx-cosmetology/tx-cosmetology-practice-solution.pdf

1. Which state agency licenses and regulates cosmetologists, barbers, and estheticians in Texas?
 - A. Texas Workforce Commission
 - B. Texas State Board of Cosmetology (TSBOC)
 - C. Texas Health and Human Services Commission
 - D. Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR)
2. What is the term for the natural pigment that gives hair its color?
 - A. Collagen
 - B. Sebum
 - C. Melanin
 - D. Keratin
3. What term describes the process of destroying all microbial life including spores?
 - A. Decontamination
 - B. Sterilization
 - C. Disinfection
 - D. Sanitation
4. Which type of conditioner penetrates the cortex and repairs hair from within?
 - A. Instant conditioner
 - B. Surface (coating) conditioner
 - C. Balancing conditioner
 - D. Penetrating (protein/reconstructing) conditioner
5. A client presents with psoriasis on their scalp. The cosmetologist should:
 - A. Refuse service entirely
 - B. Apply medicated shampoo and continue
 - C. Refer to a physician and reschedule
 - D. Perform the service carefully if no open or bleeding lesions are present

6. Which of the following is required on the label of every professional chemical product?
- A. Instructions for use and fragrance ingredients only
 - B. Product name, hazard warnings, and manufacturer information
 - C. The salon's name and purchase date
 - D. Pricing and expiration date only
7. How often must disinfectant solution in a wet sanitizer jar be changed?
- A. After every single use
 - B. Once a week
 - C. Once a month
 - D. Daily or whenever visibly contaminated
8. The pH of the hair and scalp is approximately:
- A. 8.5–9.5 — alkaline
 - B. 4.5–5.5 — slightly acidic
 - C. 7.0 — neutral
 - D. 2.0–3.0 — strongly acidic
9. The four basic haircut shapes are:
- A. Rounded, square, oval, and triangular
 - B. Blunt, tapered, feathered, and textured
 - C. One-length, stacked, uniform, and graduated
 - D. Solid, graduated, layered, and combination
10. What is the minimum contact time required for most disinfectants to be effective on salon implements?
- A. 5 minutes regardless of the product label instructions
 - B. Contact time is irrelevant as long as the implement is fully submerged
 - C. 30 seconds is always sufficient for any EPA-registered disinfectant
 - D. The full immersion time listed on the disinfectant label
11. Which part of the hair is the only living portion?
- A. The hair follicle (dermal papilla)
 - B. The hair shaft
 - C. The cuticle layer
 - D. The cortex
12. Which chemical process permanently straightens curly or wavy hair using ammonium thioglycolate?
- A. Sodium hydroxide relaxer
 - B. Keratin treatment
 - C. Thio (ammonium thioglycolate) relaxer
 - D. Guanidine relaxer
13. What is the hyponychium?
- A. The nail matrix beneath the base of the nail
 - B. The cuticle fold over the nail base
 - C. The thickened skin beneath the free edge of the nail plate
 - D. The visible white tip of the nail plate
14. Single-use items such as neck strips, cotton rounds, and wooden applicators must be:
- A. Disinfected and stored for reuse
 - B. Autoclaved between clients
 - C. Used once then discarded
 - D. Washed with soap and water between clients
15. Hair texture is determined by the:
- A. Diameter of the individual hair strand
 - B. Elasticity of the cortex bonds
 - C. Color depth of the melanin
 - D. Porosity of the hair shaft
16. The term "porosity" in hair science refers to:
- A. The natural wave pattern of the hair
 - B. How quickly hair dries after washing
 - C. How readily the hair absorbs and retains moisture
 - D. The hair's resistance to breakage under tension
17. What minimum age must a person be to apply for a Texas cosmetology operator or Class A Barber license?
- A. 21 years old
 - B. 17 years old
 - C. 18 years old
 - D. 16 years old
18. A Texas licensee who practices cosmetology or barbering with an expired license is subject to:
- A. A written warning on the first offense only
 - B. Civil penalties, fines, and potential disciplinary action from TDLR
 - C. Automatic suspension of the establishment license
 - D. No penalty if the license expired less than 30 days ago

19. What is the correct order of steps when disinfecting tools at a cosmetology or barbering station?
- A. Disinfect, clean, rinse, dry
 - B. Clean, rinse, disinfect, rinse, dry
 - C. Rinse, disinfect, clean, dry
 - D. Disinfect, rinse, clean, dry
20. The three layers of the skin from outermost to innermost are:
- A. Subcutis, dermis, epidermis
 - B. Cuticle, cortex, medulla
 - C. Dermis, epidermis, subcutis
 - D. Epidermis, dermis, subcutis (hypodermis)
21. HIV is classified as which type of pathogen?
- A. An airborne pathogen
 - B. A food-borne pathogen
 - C. A waterborne pathogen
 - D. A bloodborne pathogen
22. The purpose of a cuticle softener or remover in a manicure service is to:
- A. Harden the cuticle for easier removal
 - B. Strengthen the nail plate before applying gel
 - C. Disinfect the cuticle area before a nail service
 - D. Break down dead cuticle skin so it can be pushed back or removed safely
23. Which type of disinfectant is EPA-registered and most commonly required for non-porous tools in Texas salons?
- A. Soap and hot water
 - B. EPA-registered hospital-grade disinfectant (quats or phenolics)
 - C. Bleach diluted in water
 - D. Isopropyl alcohol only
24. Which of the following nail conditions requires the cosmetologist to refuse nail services?
- A. Onychomycosis (nail fungus)
 - B. Brittle nails (onychorrhexis)
 - C. White spots (leukonychia)
 - D. Nail biting (onychophagy)
25. The three primary hair colors on the color wheel used in cosmetology are:
- A. Orange, green, and violet
 - B. Red, orange, and yellow
 - C. Blue, green, and violet
 - D. Red, yellow, and blue
26. EPA-registered salon disinfectants must be effective against which three categories of microorganisms?
- A. Viruses and fungi only
 - B. Bacteria and viruses only
 - C. Bacteria, viruses, and fungi
 - D. Bacteria only
27. What does hair elasticity refer to?
- A. The hair's resistance to chemical services
 - B. The diameter of the hair strand
 - C. The hair's ability to stretch and return to original length without breaking
 - D. The hair's natural color depth
28. Effleurage in a facial massage refers to:
- A. Light, gliding, stroking movement
 - B. Deep kneading of the muscle tissue
 - C. Vibrating movements using fingertips
 - D. Rapid tapping or drumming movements
29. What is the difference between cleaning and disinfecting?
- A. Cleaning kills pathogens; disinfecting removes dirt
 - B. Cleaning removes dirt physically; disinfecting uses chemicals to kill pathogens
 - C. Disinfecting always comes before cleaning
 - D. They are the same process
30. What is the purpose of a patch test (skin allergy test) before a hair color service?
- A. Determine the natural level and tone of the hair
 - B. Test if the developer will process the hair evenly
 - C. Check for allergic reaction to color chemicals 24–48 hours before the service
 - D. Check if the hair is healthy enough for color
31. What nail condition is characterized by separation of the nail plate from the nail bed?
- A. Leukonychia
 - B. Paronychia
 - C. Onycholysis
 - D. Onychomycosis

32. What is a texturizing technique used to remove bulk without shortening the overall length?
- A. Slicing
 - B. Razor cutting
 - C. Point cutting (notching)
 - D. Blunt cutting
33. Which of the following conditions requires the licensee to refuse service?
- A. A client with dry, flaky scalp
 - B. A client with head lice (pediculosis)
 - C. A client with dandruff
 - D. A client with a minor cut on their arm
34. Which of the following best describes the difference between bacteriostatic and bactericidal agents?
- A. Bacteriostatic agents kill bacteria; bactericidal agents only slow growth
 - B. Bacteriostatic agents inhibit bacterial growth; bactericidal agents kill bacteria
 - C. Both terms describe the same level of disinfection
 - D. Bacteriostatic agents are stronger and required for all salon tools
35. The wet hair cutting guide should be used because:
- A. Dry cutting is always more accurate
 - B. Wet cutting causes more split ends
 - C. Wet hair must never be cut with shears
 - D. Wet hair is easier to control and section precisely
36. What is the function of the dermal papilla?
- A. Determines the natural curl pattern of the hair
 - B. Supplies nutrients to the hair matrix cells via blood vessels, driving hair growth
 - C. Contains melanocytes that produce hair pigment
 - D. Produces the hair's natural oil (sebum)
37. What is the technical term for split ends?
- A. Trichoptilosis
 - B. Hypertrichosis
 - C. Alopecia
 - D. Pityriasis
38. What is the term for excessive, unwanted hair growth on the face or body?
- A. Alopecia
 - B. Monilethrix
 - C. Hypertrichosis
 - D. Trichoptilosis
39. How often must a Texas cosmetology or barbering license be renewed?
- A. Every 3 years
 - B. Every 2 years
 - C. Every 1 year
 - D. Every 5 years
40. What is alopecia?
- A. A fungal scalp infection
 - B. Hair loss
 - C. An allergic reaction to color chemicals
 - D. Excessive hair growth
41. Which of the following best describes the purpose of the Texas Barbering and Cosmetology Act?
- A. Protect public health and safety by establishing standards and disciplinary authority
 - B. Generate revenue for the state through licensing fees
 - C. Limit competition among cosmetology businesses
 - D. Standardize pricing for cosmetology services
42. What is the maximum civil penalty per day that can be assessed against a Texas salon or barbershop for each violation?
- A. \$5,000 per day
 - B. \$100 per day
 - C. \$500 per day
 - D. \$1,000 per day
43. Which of the following is required to be posted in a Texas salon or barbershop in addition to the establishment license?
- A. Only the establishment license at the front desk
 - B. Individual practitioner licenses at each workstation, plus establishment license and complaint contact info
 - C. A copy of the health inspection report only
 - D. No postings are required — licenses are held digitally
44. The three phases of the hair growth cycle in correct order are:
- A. Telogen, anagen, catagen
 - B. Catagen, telogen, anagen
 - C. Anagen, catagen, telogen
 - D. Anagen, telogen, catagen

45. What does "sanitation" mean in the context of a salon?
- A. Remove all physical debris from a surface
 - B. Reduce microbial contamination to safe levels but not eliminate all pathogens
 - C. Kill all bacteria but not viruses
 - D. Destroy all microbial life including spores
46. Sebum is produced by which gland in the scalp?
- A. The dermal papilla
 - B. Sebaceous glands
 - C. Arrector pili muscles
 - D. Sudoriferous (sweat) glands
47. Which of the following requires a separate specialty license in Texas rather than a standard cosmetology operator license?
- A. Esthetics (skin care), manicuring, and hair braiding
 - B. Shampooing and conditioning services
 - C. Hair coloring services
 - D. Blow-drying and styling
48. How many training hours are required for a Texas Class A Barber license?
- A. 2,000 hours
 - B. 500 hours
 - C. 1,000 hours
 - D. 1,500 hours
49. During a permanent wave service, the neutralizer's purpose is to:
- A. Open the cuticle for deeper processing
 - B. Add shine and conditioning to the hair
 - C. Re-form the disulfide bonds in the new wave position
 - D. Remove the perm rod curl
50. How many continuing education hours are required for renewing a Texas cosmetology or barber license?
- A. 2 hours
 - B. 4 hours
 - C. 8 hours
 - D. 12 hours
51. What is the minimum contact time required for most EPA-registered disinfectants to effectively kill pathogens?
- A. 1 minute
 - B. 10 minutes
 - C. 30 minutes
 - D. 5 minutes
52. What is the recommended safety precaution before applying any chemical relaxer?
- A. Applying heat to the scalp to open follicles
 - B. Applying developer to open the cuticle first
 - C. Pre-softening the hair with a clarifying shampoo
 - D. Performing a scalp/hairline analysis and applying a protective base
53. A Texas cosmetology or barbering license must be displayed:
- A. In a back office drawer
 - B. Mailed to TDLR for safekeeping
 - C. Only if a client requests to see it
 - D. In plain view of clients at the workstation
54. What does SPF (Sun Protection Factor) measure?
- A. How long a sunscreen extends the skin's natural UVB protection
 - B. How resistant the skin is to UVA rays
 - C. The percentage of chemical UV filters in the formula
 - D. The moisturizing level of the product
55. Which pathogen causes ringworm (tinea capitis) of the scalp?
- A. A bacterium
 - B. A dermatophyte fungus
 - C. A virus
 - D. A parasitic worm
56. A client has tinea capitis. What should the licensee do?
- A. Proceed carefully using extra gloves
 - B. Complete the service but disinfect all tools after
 - C. Use an antifungal shampoo and continue
 - D. Refuse service and refer the client to a physician
57. Which of the following is a requirement for a Texas salon or barbershop establishment license?
- A. Register with the local health department only
 - B. No license is required for sole proprietorships
 - C. Only individual practitioner licenses are required
 - D. Hold a valid TDLR establishment license posted conspicuously

58. What does the term "on-the-scalp lightener" mean?
- A. A lightener mixed with developer only — no powder
 - B. A lightener formulated to be applied directly to the scalp safely
 - C. A lightener used only on previously colored hair
 - D. A lightener that activates only at high temperatures
59. A licensee cuts a client and draws blood. What is the correct first response?
- A. Stop service, cover wound, remove and disinfect contaminated tools
 - B. Discard all tools and continue with new ones
 - C. Continue the service wearing gloves
 - D. Apply antiseptic and continue immediately
60. What is the active ingredient in most permanent wave solutions?
- A. Ammonium thioglycolate
 - B. Hydrogen peroxide
 - C. Sodium hydroxide
 - D. Glycerol monothioglycolate
61. The term "pathogen" refers to:
- A. Any microorganism capable of causing disease
 - B. A type of allergen found in hair dye
 - C. Any chemical substance found in salon products
 - D. A virus that only affects plants
62. What is the primary chemical used in most chemical hair relaxers?
- A. Sodium hydroxide (lye)
 - B. Potassium hydroxide
 - C. Ammonium thioglycolate
 - D. Hydrogen peroxide
63. Which layer of the epidermis contains melanocytes (pigment-producing cells)?
- A. The subcutis layer
 - B. Stratum germinativum (stratum basale)
 - C. Stratum corneum (outermost layer)
 - D. The dermis
64. Under Texas law, a TDLR inspector may enter a salon or barbershop:
- A. Only with a court order
 - B. At any time during normal business hours without prior notice
 - C. Only on scheduled inspection dates
 - D. Only after a formal complaint has been filed
65. The three main layers of the hair shaft from outer to inner are:
- A. Epidermis, dermis, cortex
 - B. Medulla, cortex, cuticle
 - C. Cortex, cuticle, medulla
 - D. Cuticle, cortex, medulla
66. Texas cosmetology school programs require a minimum of how many training hours for a cosmetology operator license?
- A. 1,000 hours
 - B. 1,500 hours
 - C. 500 hours
 - D. 750 hours
67. What is the arrector pili muscle?
- A. A blood vessel that nourishes the follicle
 - B. A small muscle attached to each follicle that causes hair to stand upright
 - C. The innermost layer of the hair shaft
 - D. A nerve ending in the scalp
68. How must soiled towels and linens be stored in a Texas salon or barbershop?
- A. Mixed with clean linens and washed later
 - B. In a closed, covered container separate from clean linens
 - C. Left on the counter until end of day
 - D. On the floor near the workstation
69. What is the purpose of using a toner after lightening hair?
- A. Neutralize unwanted warm/brassy tones after bleaching
 - B. Darken the hair to the desired final level
 - C. Protect the scalp during a bleach application
 - D. Add warmth and golden tones after lightening
70. What is the purpose of an autoclave?
- A. Use UV light to kill surface bacteria
 - B. Dry heat metal instruments to 400°F
 - C. Use steam under pressure to sterilize instruments completely
 - D. Circulate disinfectant chemical through a sealed chamber

71. A Texas cosmetology or barber school must maintain student training records for a minimum of:
- A. 1 year
 - B. 2 years
 - C. 5 years
 - D. 10 years
72. A comedone is:
- A. A bacterial skin infection
 - B. A type of skin tumor
 - C. A clogged hair follicle — open (blackhead) or closed (whitehead)
 - D. A superficial fungal skin condition
73. What is the primary route of transmission for head lice in a salon?
- A. Skin-to-skin contact with the hands
 - B. Direct head-to-head contact and shared tools, combs, and linens
 - C. Contaminated water in the shampoo bowl
 - D. Airborne droplets in the salon
74. What type of haircut creates a bevel where all hair is cut to the same length, falling to one level?
- A. Layered haircut
 - B. Blunt (one-length) cut
 - C. Graduated cut
 - D. Razor cut
75. The cortex of the hair contains what bonds that give hair its shape?
- A. Hydrogen bonds and disulfide bonds
 - B. Covalent and ionic bonds only
 - C. Peptide bonds only
 - D. Salt bonds only
76. Hydrogen peroxide developer volume indicates:
- A. The oxidizing strength and amount of lift the developer provides
 - B. The pH of the developer
 - C. How long the developer takes to process
 - D. The amount of ammonia in the color formula
77. How must clean, disinfected implements be stored?
- A. Next to the disinfectant jar
 - B. In a clean, covered container or drawer separate from soiled tools
 - C. Wrapped in a paper towel until needed
 - D. In an open container on the counter
78. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in the salon most commonly includes:
- A. A lab coat only
 - B. A face mask and hairnet only
 - C. Nitrile gloves only, no other equipment required
 - D. Gloves, safety glasses, and protective aprons as appropriate
79. Under Texas state rules, which items must be discarded after a single use and cannot be disinfected for reuse?
- A. Glass manicure bowls, which are soaked overnight
 - B. Single-use porous items such as nail files, buffers, and cotton pads
 - C. Plastic combs, provided they are rinsed with water between uses
 - D. Metal clippers and shears, which can be sterilized between clients
80. Under the Texas Barbering and Cosmetology Act, which of the following actions by a licensee may result in license revocation?
- A. Using an out-of-state product brand
 - B. Missing a single license renewal deadline
 - C. Fraud in obtaining license, practicing while impaired, or repeated violations
 - D. Only if convicted of a felony
81. What is the purpose of a base color application in hair coloring?
- A. Using high-lift color to dramatically lighten
 - B. Applying color to the full length of the hair
 - C. Applying a toner to neutralize brassy tones
 - D. Depositing color at the roots only to match the existing colored length
82. What is the primary protein that makes up the hair shaft?
- A. Elastin
 - B. Melanin
 - C. Keratin
 - D. Collagen
83. Semi-permanent hair color differs from permanent color in that it:
- A. Contains developer and lifts natural hair color
 - B. Provides 100% gray coverage
 - C. Contains no developer, does not lift, and fades gradually
 - D. Permanently alters the cortex structure

84. Which of the following best describes a bactericide?
- A. A chemical that inhibits bacterial growth without killing them
 - B. A chemical that kills bacteria
 - C. A product that removes bacteria without chemicals
 - D. A natural antibacterial derived from plants
85. What is a scalp massage most beneficial for during a shampoo service?
- A. Stimulates blood circulation to nourish hair follicles
 - B. Opens the cuticle for better product penetration
 - C. Removes product buildup from the scalp
 - D. Reduces scalp oil production
86. Which of the following is a non-porous surface that can be effectively disinfected?
- A. A porous sponge applicator
 - B. A metal shear blade
 - C. A wooden cuticle pusher
 - D. A fabric cape
87. In Texas, the Barbering and Cosmetology Act is enforced by:
- A. TDLR — Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation
 - B. The local county health department
 - C. The Texas Attorney General's office
 - D. The Texas State Board of Health
88. A strand test before a chemical service is performed to:
- A. Confirm the correct developer volume to use
 - B. Measure the hair's natural pH level
 - C. Test timing, color result, and hair condition to avoid over-processing
 - D. Check the client's allergy to PPD
89. Under Texas regulations, which of the following chemicals is prohibited from being used by cosmetologists and barbers on clients?
- A. Ammonium thioglycolate perm solution
 - B. Liquid methyl methacrylate (MMA) monomer
 - C. Hydrogen peroxide developer
 - D. Sodium hydroxide relaxer
90. A 45-degree elevation during a haircut produces:
- A. A uniform layer throughout
 - B. A blunt one-length cut
 - C. A graduated (stacked) effect — shorter at nape, longer above
 - D. No layering, just a straight horizontal line
91. Which scalp condition is characterized by white or yellowish flakes and itching?
- A. Pityriasis (dandruff)
 - B. Tinea capitis
 - C. Seborrheic dermatitis
 - D. Psoriasis
92. Safety Data Sheets (SDS) are required to provide information about:
- A. Pricing and wholesale ordering information
 - B. Instructions for mixing chemical formulas
 - C. Only the product ingredients and fragrance profile
 - D. Hazard information, safe handling, PPE requirements, and emergency response
93. What is the nail matrix?
- A. The cuticle that overlaps the nail plate
 - B. The tissue beneath the base of the nail plate that produces the nail plate
 - C. The nail groove on the sides of the nail
 - D. The visible nail plate above the finger
94. Texas law requires that a client complaint procedure be:
- A. Available only in the employee break room
 - B. Filed with the establishment license in a locked cabinet
 - C. Provided only if a client specifically asks
 - D. Posted visibly so clients can access TDLR complaint contact information
95. A client arrives with an open sore on their scalp. The licensee should:
- A. Refuse service until the condition has healed
 - B. Apply antiseptic and cover the area before proceeding
 - C. Refer the client to a dermatologist and continue the service
 - D. Proceed carefully while wearing gloves
96. What is the purpose of wearing gloves when applying chemical services?
- A. They improve grip on tools during chemical services
 - B. Required only when using bleach products
 - C. Protect from chemical burns, skin sensitization, and absorption of harmful chemicals
 - D. They eliminate the need for an SDS review

97. Which of the following describes a first-degree (superficial) burn?
- A. Redness and minor pain affecting only the epidermis, no blistering
 - B. Full thickness damage through all skin layers
 - C. Blistering and damage into the dermis
 - D. Charring and nerve damage
98. If a TDLR inspector finds a violation during a salon inspection, the establishment owner must:
- A. Close the establishment until violations are reviewed
 - B. Ignore the violations and wait for a follow-up inspection
 - C. Appeal all violations to avoid correcting them
 - D. Correct violations within the timeframe specified in the inspection report
99. Which of the following describes hair that has been chemically over-processed?
- A. Extremely low porosity and high elasticity
 - B. Extreme porosity, poor elasticity, gummy texture when wet
 - C. High shine and smooth cuticle
 - D. Tightly closed cuticle with low moisture absorption
100. When performing a color retouch service, the new growth is processed first because:
- A. The ends are more resistant to color than new growth
 - B. Scalp heat makes the ends process faster
 - C. New growth is more porous and processes faster
 - D. Process the ends first since they need more color