EKG TECH BASICS · ONE-PAGER

NHA CET Exam Guide

Format, scoring, eligibility, the 2017 test plan in use now and the 2026 plan coming in late 2027 or winter 2027-28, and a 6-week study plan

7 sources + more detail
ekgtechbasics.com/sheets/guide-nha-cet.html
checked Nov 2026

1 The exam at a glance

FEATURE	DETAIL
Questions	120 multiple choice: 100 scored, 20 unscored pretest (you cannot tell which)
Time	2 hours, one continuous session
Scoring	Scaled score from 200 to 500; 390 or higher passes
Where	Your school (if it is an NHA test site), a PSI testing center, or live remote proctoring
Eligibility	High school diploma or equivalent, plus an EKG training program in the last 5 years or supervised EKG work experience, plus at least 10 EKGs done on live people
Fee	Paid when you apply and set a date, unless a school or employer pays; the amount is not printed in the handbook or on the CET page (see the NHA Shop)
Results	School: preliminary report at once. PSI or remote: within 48 hours
Retakes	Wait 30 days; 3 attempts, then 1 year before each further try; full fee each time
Renewal	Every 2 years with 10 continuing education credits

2 The test plan: now and next

Scored items per domain; with 100 items, items equal percent

DOMAIN	2017 PLAN (IN USE NOW)	2026 PLAN (FROM LATE 2027 OR WINTER 2027-28)
1. Safety, Compliance, and Coordinated Patient Care	32	34
2. EKG Acquisition	44	40
3. EKG Analysis and Interpretation	24	26
Total scored items	100	100

Same length, same time. NHA says the new exam has minimal impact on topics. Its news post says it launches in winter 2027-28 (its prep page says fall 2027); no day is named. NHA's 7 new tasks: verify identity with patient identifiers, consent, overall health status, report signs needing further evaluation, body mechanics, privacy, and sending the tracing electronically after checking two identifiers. One task is rewritten: check tracing quality and lead accuracy before interpreting or escalating.

EXAM TIP If you fail the current exam in the 30 days before the new one launches, your retake will be on the new exam. Testing close to the switch? Study the 2026 plan's new tasks too.

3 What each domain asks

Tasks from the 2017 plan in use now; the in-depth table lists what the 2026 plan changes

DOMAIN	TASKS YOU ARE TESTED ON
Safety and patient care	HIPAA; infection control; scope of practice and ethics; communicating with patients and the team; vital signs; teaching patients before stress tests and Holter or event monitors; entering data in the health record; recognizing cardiopulmonary compromise
Acquisition	Equipment care (paper, clips, disinfection); speed and gain; skin prep; positioning; electrodes for 12-lead, Holter and event monitors, stress tests, telemetry and special cases (right-sided, posterior, amputation, children); checking all leads recorded; fixing artifact; mounting strips; watching and helping during stress tests
Analysis	Heart rate (6-second, R-R and sequence methods; target and maximum heart rate); regularity; PR, QRS and QT; P, QRS, ST and T shape, including electrolyte effects; sinus, atrial, junctional, ventricular rhythms and heart blocks; pacemaker spikes; ischemia, injury and infarction; acting on life-threatening rhythms

Core knowledge used in any domain: heart anatomy and physiology, emergencies during cardiac testing (fainting, chest pain, abnormal vital signs), and CPR and basic life support.

EXAM TIP Acquisition is the largest domain on both plans. Electrode placement, artifact and machine settings are where most points are.

4 How to study: 6 weeks

1. Week 1: read NHA's free test plan, then take a timed Mock Exam (120 questions, 2 hours) as a baseline. Start Daily Review and keep it going every day.
2. Week 2: Acquisition I. Electrode and Lead Placement; Paper, Settings and Measurement (speed, gain, calibration). Practice EKG Acquisition questions.
3. Week 3: Acquisition II. Artifact and Lead Problems (artifact, lead reversals, cable faults); Holter, Event and Patch Monitors; Exercise and Pharmacologic Stress Testing; Telemetry Monitoring and Reporting.
4. Week 4: Analysis. Paper, Settings and Measurement (rate and intervals), Analyzing a Rhythm Strip Step by Step, then the Rhythm Gallery. Use the Heart Rate from Boxes and Stress Test Target Heart Rate calculators to check your math.
5. Week 5: Safety. Safety, Compliance and Patient Care: HIPAA, infection control, scope, consent, vital signs and emergencies. Second Mock Exam at the end of the week.
6. Week 6: Weakest Subject sets, Missed Questions and Trouble Questions. Last Mock Exam 3 to 5 days before the test; light review the day before.

EXAM TIP The pace is about 1 minute per question. Pretest questions look like scored ones, so give every question full effort.

5 Test-day tips

- Bring a current government-issued photo ID with your signature and permanent address. If the address differs from your registration, bring proof such as a utility bill.
- No phones, watches, earbuds, AI glasses or personal calculators. Use the calculator built into the exam.
- You get a whiteboard at PSI, a digital whiteboard on remote proctoring, or 2 sheets of scratch paper at a school.
- Breaks: an in-person proctor may allow one if needed, but the clock keeps running. No breaks on remote proctoring.
- Remote testing: you must be alone in the room.
- Need to change the date? At PSI or on remote proctoring, reschedule in your NHA account at least 24 hours ahead, to a date within 6 months, or you lose the fee. At a school, ask the school before the exam starts.

6 Official resources

- CET certification page: nhanow.com/certifications/ekg-technician
- Current test plan (2017): info.nhanow.com/hubfs/Test Plans/nha_2017-cet-test-plan.pdf
- Both test plans: nhanow.com/certification/Before-After-Certification/prep. The 2017-to-2026 crosswalk: linked from NHA's September 2026 news post on the updated CET exam
- Candidate Handbook: nhanow.com/docs/default-source/test-plans/candidate_handbook.pdf
- NHA's own CET study guide and practice tests: store.nhanow.com (optional; not required to test)

EKG Tech Basics is an independent study aid. It is not affiliated with, endorsed by, or sponsored by the National Healthcareer Association (NHA) or Assessment Technologies Institute. NHA is a registered trademark of its owner. Exam names and trademarks belong to their respective owners.

MORE Eligibility in detail

1. High school diploma or an equivalent your state recognizes (such as the GED). No diploma yet? If you will graduate from high school or a GED program within 18 months, you may test for a Provisional Certification. It expires 18 months after the exam and must be converted to full certification after you graduate.
2. One pathway. Training: within the past 5 years, an EKG program at an accredited or state-recognized school, a Department of Labor registered apprenticeship, or U.S. military medical training; or the coursework of an employer program or school program whose employer or school has an agreement with NHA (the on-the-job training or externship is finished after the exam, and the certificate is held until then). Work experience: 1 year supervised in the last 3 years, or 2 years in the last 5.
3. Proof that you have done at least 10 EKGs on live people.

You create your own NHA account and complete your own application; a teacher or employer may not do it for you. Use a personal email so NHA can reach you after you leave school.

For education and exam preparation only. Not medical advice; follow current guidelines and your institution's protocols. EKG Tech Basics is an independent study aid not affiliated with any certifying body.