

CRITICAL THINKING GUIDE

Taken from ATI ACHIEVE Tutorial
TEST TAKING Module
By Sherri Peterson – March 2022



Nursing knowledge is the acquisition for facts and principles based on evidence and are considered to be the foundation of reasoned action.

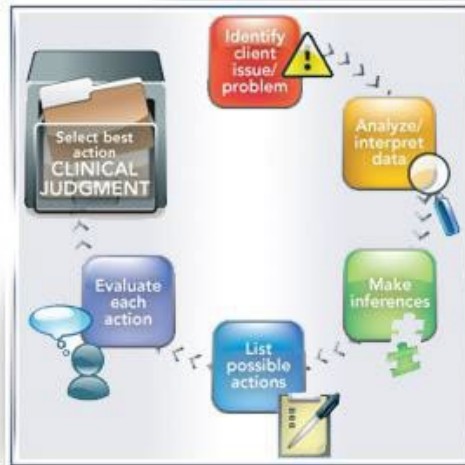
Foundational Thinking

- Foundational thinking is the ability to recall and comprehend information and concepts foundational to quality nursing practice. Recalling information involves being able to retrieve previously learned knowledge. Comprehending knowledge involves being able to understand the knowledge retrieved and verbalize or use it in some manner. “understanding” is another term for comprehension.

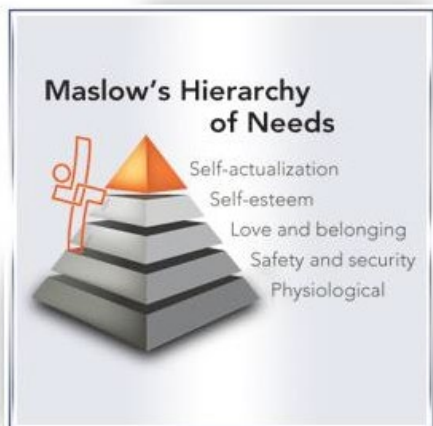
Critical Thinking

- Critical Thinking is the term given to the thinking skills used when analyzing client issues and problems. These thinking skills include interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, and explanation. They are used to facilitate a critical analysis of the client problem or issue and subsequently determine the most appropriate action to take.

Clinical Judgment:



Priority Setting Frameworks





Critically Reading Test Items

- Stem

Scenario: The scenario describes a client care-related situation. It provides information, context, and data you should take into consideration when answering a test item.

SCENARIO EXAMPLE:

A nurse is caring for a client with a history of congestive heart failure who is at risk for the development of fluid volume excess. When assessing the client, the nurse should monitor for which of the following signs of fluid overload?

○

Question: The question is usually the last sentence of the stem which you must answer based on the client care-related information provided in the scenario.

QUESTION EXAMPLE:

A nurse is caring for a client with a history of congestive heart failure who is at risk for the development of fluid volume excess. When assessing the client, the nurse should monitor for which of the following signs of fluid overload?

There are 3 types of questions.

POSITIVELY WORDED QUESTIONS EXAMPLE:

A nurse is caring for a client with a history of congestive heart failure who is at risk for the development of fluid volume excess. When assessing the client, the nurse should monitor for which of the following signs of fluid overload?

○

NEGATIVELY WORDED QUESTIONS EXAMPLE:

A nurse is caring for a client with a history of congestive heart failure who is at risk for the development of fluid volume excess. The nurse recognizes that the assistive personnel needs additional teaching when she is observed providing the client with which of the following?

○

PRIORITY-SETTING QUESTIONS EXAMPLE:

A nurse is caring for a client with a history of congestive heart failure who is at risk for the development of fluid volume excess. Which of the following is the priority finding during assessment of the client?

○

Person of Focus: The person of focus in the stem is the person who is the focus of nursing care in the scenario. This may be the client, a family member, a community or group, or another nurse. It is important to determine who the person of focus is in the item because it may influence which option is the correct option.

PERSON OF FOCUS EXAMPLE:

A nurse is caring for a client with a history of congestive heart failure who is at risk for the development of fluid volume excess. Upon entering the client's room the **daughter** is found crying at her mother's bedside. Which of the following would be an appropriate statement by the nurse?

○

Key words: Keywords help you identify important words or phrases in an item. The stem provides critical information that will help focus your attention. It is important to be able to recognize and identify keywords, because a wrong option is frequently a statement that could be correct if the key words were different. Keywords are found in both the scenario and question.

Distractor: Distractors are the options that are incorrect and will distract you from the correct option. Distractors should be plausible, so you must make a clinical judgment based on an analysis of the options using nursing knowledge. Distractors for priority-setting questions should be viable, which means that all the options are actions that would be appropriate for the nurse to take but one action is the first or priority action or response by the nurse based on a priority-setting framework.

Key: The option that provides the correct answer to the question is the key. Depending on whether the item has a positively or negatively worded question, the key may be a correct or incorrect action by the nurse.

- Traditional multiple-choice items have one key and three plausible options
- SATA items have two or more keys
- Priority-setting items have only one key but four viable options.

Critically Read Item:

Critical reading skills that will help you to correctly read the stem of an item include carefully reading the scenario for the item, identifying the person of focus, determining what the question is asking, and identifying what type of question is being asked. This means is it a positively or negatively worded question or a priority-setting question. And don't forget to identify the stem's keywords and refer back to them when reading the item's options. Finally, use a method for eliminating incorrect options.

- **Step 1:** First, read all the options carefully and assign a code to each option. Assign a **plus sign** to options that are **probably correct**, assign a **minus sign** to options that are **probably incorrect**, and assign a **question mark** to options that are **possibly correct**. If any part of an option is incorrect, assign a **minus sign**.
- **Step 2:** Then, interpret the assigned codes disregarding any options for which you assigned a minus sign. For options that you assigned a plus sign, or a question mark use the following guidelines to interpret your coding.
 - + and ? = +
 - + and ?? = +
 - + and ??? = +
- **Step 3:** When selecting the correct option ALWAYS GO WITH WHAT YOU KNOW and select the option you assigned a plus sign!!! Don't try to second guess yourself. Even if you are not sure which is the correct option, go with what you know and make your best guess based on this coding system.

Use Appropriate Priority-Setting Framework

There are keywords that should clue you into the fact that the question in the stem is asking for the priority answer. Some of these words include first, next, priority action or finding, most important,

best, and immediate. Critically reading the stem of the item while looking for keywords will help you select the most appropriate priority-setting framework for the item.