

The Respiratory Therapy Examination Detailed Content Outline

- **The Examination contains 160 items divided into two portions.**
 - The *Breadth of Knowledge* portion contains 100 items.
 - The *Depth of Clinical Judgement* portion contains 60 items.
- **Within each portion, multiple-choice items are assembled into a minipool containing an item sampling group (ISG) for each combination of specifications.**
- **When deployed for administrations, the committee-approved minipools are combined from the two portions to create one examination.**
- **Forms are administered by a linear-on-the-fly system produced from a set of ISGs while drawing from the combined minipool.**

Continued on the next page.



Specifications for the Breadth of Knowledge Portion

- Each item will be linked to a task and cognitive level described below.
- Items may also be linked to a patient condition, clinical judgment type, or setting described in the Depth of Clinical Judgment portion.
- *Test takers will be asked to integrate (apply or analyze) information.

	Ethics	Minimum Item Counts for Each Minipool			Item Counts for Each Form		Totals
		Cognitive Levels			Cognitive Levels		
		Recall	Application	Analysis	Recall	Integration*	
I. PATIENT DATA		6	15	4	6	19	25
A. Evaluate Data in the Patient Record		1	2	0	1	2	3
1. Patient history, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • history of present illness (HPI) • social, family, and medical history • consultations / orders • medication reconciliation • notes / flowsheet • DNR status / advance directives • vaccination status 							
2. Laboratory results, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CBC and differential • IgE • electrolytes • coagulation studies • Gram stain, culture, and sensitivities • respiratory pathogen studies • cardiac biomarkers • blood gas analysis and / or hemoximetry (CO-oximetry) 							



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		Recall	Application	Analysis	Recall	Integration*	
3. Pulmonary function testing results, for example <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • spirometry • lung volumes • DLCO 							
4. Imaging study results, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • chest radiograph • CT scan • ultrasonography and / or echocardiography • ventilation / perfusion scan • ECG 							
5. Maternal and perinatal / neonatal history, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APGAR scores • gestational age • L / S ratio 							
6. Sleep study results, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • apnea-hypopnea index (AHI) 							
7. Trends in monitoring results							
a. fluid balance							
b. vital signs / hemodynamics							
c. intracranial pressure							
d. ventilator liberation parameters							



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		Recall	Application	Analysis	Recall	Integration*	
e. pulmonary mechanics for screening <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • airway pressure • lung volume • flow 							
f. transtracheal cuff pressure							
g. noninvasive, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pulse oximetry and hemoximetry (CO-oximetry) • capnography • transcutaneous 							
8. Determination of a patient's condition							
B. Perform Clinical Assessment		2	4	0	2	4	6
1. Evaluating a patient through observation or interview							
a. general appearance							
b. mental status, level of consciousness and orientation, agitation, and ability to cooperate							
c. level of pain							
d. shortness of breath, cough, sputum (amount and character), and exercise tolerance							
e. signs of labored breathing							
f. vaping or smoking history							
g. occupational and environmental exposures							
h. activities of daily living							



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i. characteristics of the airway, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • patency • Mallampati classification • tracheal shift 							
j. neonatal characteristics, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APGAR scores • gestational age • cardiopulmonary status 							
k. skin integrity, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • injuries related to positioning or devices • stoma site 							
l. learning needs, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • literacy • preferred learning style and language • social / cultural 							
m. social determinants of health and health inequality / barriers to healthcare							
2. Evaluating a patient through palpation							
a. pulse, rhythm, intensity							
b. asymmetrical chest movements, crepitus, tenderness, tactile rhonchi, and / or tracheal deviation							
3. Auscultating to assess cardiopulmonary system							



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		Recall	Application	Analysis	Recall	Integration*	
4. Evaluating a patient's chest radiograph							
a. quality of imaging, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • patient positioning • penetration • lung inflation 							
b. presence and position of tubes, airways, lines, and drains							
c. presence of foreign bodies							
d. heart size and position							
e. presence of, or change in, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) cardiopulmonary abnormalities, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pneumothorax • consolidation • pleural effusion • pulmonary edema (ii) diaphragm, mediastinum, and / or trachea 							
C. Perform Procedures to Gather Clinical Information		1	3	1	1	4	5
1. ECG							
2. Noninvasive monitoring, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SpO₂ • SpCO • capnography • transcutaneous 							



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	Ethics	Minimum Item Counts for Each Minipool			Item Counts for Each Form		Totals
		Cognitive Levels			Cognitive Levels		
		Recall	Application	Analysis	Recall	Integration*	
3. Mechanics of spontaneous ventilation linked to tidal volume, minute volume, maximal inspiratory pressure, and vital capacity							
4. Blood gas sample collection							
5. Blood gas analysis / hemoximetry (CO-oximetry)							
6. Oxygen titration with exercise							
7. Cardiopulmonary calculations, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P(A-a)O₂ • V_D/V_T • P/F • OI • SpO₂/FIO₂ 							
8. Pulmonary compliance and airway resistance							
9. Plateau pressure							
10. Auto-PEEP determination							
11. Spontaneous breathing trial (SBT)							
12. Apnea monitoring							
13. Apnea test (brain death determination)							
14. Overnight pulse oximetry / transcutaneous CO ₂ monitoring							
15. CPAP / NPPV titration during sleep							
16. Cuff management, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tracheal • supraglottic airway 							
17. Sputum induction							



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	Ethics	Minimum Item Counts for Each Minipool			Item Counts for Each Form		Totals
		Cognitive Levels			Cognitive Levels		
		Recall	Application	Analysis	Recall	Integration*	
18. 6-minute walk test							
19. Oxygen titration							
20. Spirometry							
21. DLCO							
22. Lung volumes							
23. Tests of respiratory muscle strength – MIP, MEP, MVV							
24. Mini-BAL							
D. Evaluate Procedure Results		2	4	1	2	5	7
1. ECG							
2. Noninvasive monitoring, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SpO₂ • SpCO • capnography • transcutaneous 							
3. Peak flow							
4. Mechanics of spontaneous ventilation linked to tidal volume, minute volume, maximal inspiratory pressure, and vital capacity							
5. Blood gas analysis / hemoximetry (CO-oximetry)							
6. Oxygen titration with exercise							



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		Cognitive Levels			Cognitive Levels		
		Recall	Application	Analysis	Recall	Integration*	
7. Cardiopulmonary calculations, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • $P(A-a)O_2$ • V_D / V_T • P / F • OI • SpO_2 / FiO_2 							
8. Hemodynamic parameters							
9. Pulmonary compliance and airway resistance							
10. Plateau pressure							
11. Auto-PEEP							
12. Spontaneous breathing trial (SBT)							
13. Apnea monitoring							
14. Apnea test (brain death determination)							
15. Overnight pulse oximetry / transcutaneous CO ₂ monitoring							
16. CPAP / NPPV titration during sleep							
17. Cuff status, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tracheal • supraglottic airway 							
18. Sputum sample characteristics							
19. 6-minute walk test							
20. Oxygen titration							
21. Spirometry							
22. DLCO							



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		Cognitive Levels			Cognitive Levels		
		Recall	Application	Analysis	Recall	Integration*	
23. Lung volumes							
24. Tests of respiratory muscle strength – MIP, MEP, MVV							
25. Mini-BAL							
E. Recommend Diagnostic Procedures		0	2	2	0	4	4
1. Testing for tuberculosis							
2. Laboratory tests, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CBC and differential • IgE • electrolytes • coagulation studies • sputum culture and sensitivities • cardiac biomarkers • respiratory pathogen studies 							
3. Imaging studies							
4. Bronchoscopy – diagnostic, therapeutic							
5. Bronchoalveolar lavage (BAL)							
6. Pulmonary function testing – spirometry, lung volumes, DLCO							
7. Noninvasive monitoring, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SpO₂ • SpCO • capnography • transcutaneous 							
8. Blood gas and/or hemoximetry (CO-oximetry)							



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		Recall	Application	Analysis	Recall	Integration*	
9. ECG							
10. Exhaled gas analysis, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CO₂ • CO 							
11. Hemodynamic monitoring							
12. Sleep studies							
13. Thoracentesis							
II. MANAGEMENT of DEVICES and PATIENT SAFETY PROCEDURES		8	12	5	8	17	25
A. Troubleshoot Devices During and After Assembling		4	10	5	4	15	19
1. Medical gas delivery interfaces, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mask • cannula 							
2. Medical gas delivery and /or clinical analyzing devices, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • concentrator • liquid system • flowmeter • regulator • gas cylinder • blender • air compressor • gas analyzer 							
3. Heated high-flow devices							



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		Recall	Application	Analysis	Recall	Integration*	
4. CPAP / NPPV with patient interfaces							
5. Humidifiers							
6. Nebulizers							
7. Inhalers and accessories, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MDI • DPI • SMI • spacer • valved holding chamber 							
8. Resuscitation equipment, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-inflating resuscitator • flow-inflating resuscitator • T-piece resuscitator • defibrillator 							
9. Mechanical ventilators							
10. Intubation equipment, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • direct laryngoscope • video laryngoscope • flexible fiberoptic bronchoscope 							



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		Recall	Application	Analysis	Recall	Integration*	
11. Artificial airways and accessories, for example <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cuff manometer • endotracheal tube • supraglottic airway • tracheostomy / laryngectomy tube 							
12. Suctioning equipment, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • regulator • canister • tubing • catheter 							
13. Blood analyzers, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hemoximetry (CO-oximetry) • point of care • blood gas 							
14. Breathing circuits							
15. Hyperinflation devices							
16. Secretion clearance devices							
17. Inhaled gas or medication delivery devices, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He/O₂ • nitric oxide • epoprostenol 							
18. Portable spirometer							
19. Lung testing equipment in a pulmonary function laboratory							



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		Recall	Application	Analysis	Recall	Integration*	
20. Chest drainage system							
21. Noninvasive monitoring, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pulse oximeter • capnometer • transcutaneous 							
22. Bronchoscopes							
23. Hemodynamic monitors, transducers, and arterial catheters							
B. Ensure Infection Prevention or Control, Safety, and Performance of Quality Assurance Procedures		4	2	0	4	2	6
1. Adhering to infection prevention / control policies and procedures, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard Precautions • donning/doffing • isolation 							
2. Adhering to disinfection policies and procedures							
3. Proper handling of biohazardous materials							
4. Performing quality control procedures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. blood analyzers b. gas analyzers c. pulmonary function equipment for testing d. mechanical ventilators e. noninvasive monitors 							
5. Initiating protocols to prevent ventilator-associated events (VAE)							



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		Recall	Application	Analysis	Recall	Integration*	
III. INITIATION and MODIFICATION of INTERVENTIONS		9	25	16	9	41	50
A. Maintain a Patent Airway Including the Care of Artificial Airways		1	3	2	1	5	6
1. Proper positioning of a patient							
2. Recognizing a difficult airway							
3. Establishing and managing a patient's airway							
a. nasopharyngeal airway							
b. oropharyngeal airway							
c. supraglottic airway							
d. endotracheal tube							
e. tracheostomy tube							
f. laryngectomy tube							
g. speaking valve							
h. device that assists with intubation, for example,							
• endotracheal tube exchanger							
• video laryngoscope							
• bougie							
4. Performing tracheostomy care							
5. Exchanging artificial airways							
6. Maintaining adequate humidification							
7. Performing extubation							



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		Recall	Application	Analysis	Recall	Integration*	
B. Perform Airway Clearance and Lung Expansion Techniques		1	2	1	1	3	4
1. Postural drainage, percussion, or vibration							
2. Suctioning, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • nasotracheal • oropharyngeal • artificial airway 							
3. Mechanical devices, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high-frequency chest wall oscillation • vibratory PEP • oscillating lung expansion • insufflation / exsufflation 							
4. Assisted cough, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • huff • abdominal thrust 							
5. Hyperinflation therapy							
6. Inspiratory muscle training							
C. Support Oxygenation and Ventilation		0	4	6	0	10	10
1. Minimizing hypoxemia, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • patient positioning • airway clearance 							
2. Initiating, maintaining, and titrating <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. oxygen therapy 							



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		Recall	Application	Analysis	Recall	Integration*	
b. heated high-flow devices							
c. CPAP by mask or nasal interface							
3. Initiating, maintaining, and titrating mechanical ventilation settings							
a. invasive mechanical ventilation							
b. noninvasive ventilation							
c. high-frequency ventilation							
d. alarms							
4. Recognizing and correcting patient-ventilator dyssynchrony							
5. Using ventilator graphics							
6. Performing lung recruitment maneuvers							
7. Liberating a patient from mechanical ventilation							
D. Administer Medications and Specialty Gases		2	1	0	2	1	3
1. Aerosolized therapies							
a. antimicrobials							
b. pulmonary vasodilators							
c. bronchodilators							
d. mucolytics							
e. steroids							
f. antifibrinolytics							
g. anticoagulants							
2. Endotracheal instillation							



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3. Specialty gases, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He/O₂ • inhaled NO 							
E. Make or Recommend Changes to the Respiratory Care Plan		0	6	4	0	10	10
1. Treatment termination for a severe complication or adverse event							
2. Recommendations							
a. Initiation of treatment based on patient response							
b. treatment of pneumothorax							
c. adjustment of fluid balance							
d. treatment of electrolyte imbalances, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hyperkalemia 							
e. insertion or change of artificial airway							
f. liberation from mechanical ventilation							
g. extubation							
h. discontinuation of treatment based on patient response							
i. consultation from a specialist							
j. patient positioning							
k. oxygen therapy							
l. humidification							
m. airway clearance							
n. hyperinflation							
o. mechanical ventilation							



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		Recall	Application	Analysis	Recall	Integration*	
3. Recommendations for pharmacologic interventions							
a. bronchodilators							
b. anti-inflammatory drugs							
c. mucolytics							
d. inhaled pulmonary vasodilators							
e. vasoactives and antiarrhythmics							
f. antimicrobials - inhaled and systemic							
g. sedatives and hypnotics							
h. analgesics							
i. antagonists – narcotic and benzodiazepine							
j. neuromuscular blocking and reversal agents							
k. diuretics							
l. surfactants							
m. antifibrinolytics							
n. biologics for asthma, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dupilumab (Dupixent) 							
o. CFTR modulators for cystic fibrosis, for example <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • elexacaftor / tezacaftor / ivacaftor (Trikafta) 							
p. changes to drug, dosage, administration frequency, mode, or concentration							



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F. Use Evidence-Based Practice		1	2	0	1	2	3
1. Adherence to respiratory-driven protocols <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • oxygen titration • weaning • aerosol therapy 							
2. Classification of disease severity							
3. Application of national or international guidelines for diseases / conditions, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ARDS • asthma • COPD • brain death • cystic fibrosis 							
G. Provide Respiratory Care in High-Risk Situations		2	2	1	2	3	5
1. Emergency							
a. cardiopulmonary emergencies, excluding CPR							
b. neonatal resuscitation							
c. disaster management							
d. medical emergency team (MET)							
2. Closed loop communication							
3. Patient transport							
a. land / air between hospitals							



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		Recall	Application	Analysis	Recall	Integration*	
b. within a hospital							
4. Debriefing following adverse patient events							
H. Assist a Physician or Provider in Performing Procedures		1	2	1	1	3	4
1. Intubation							
2. Bronchoscopy							
3. Specialized bronchoscopy, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • endobronchial ultrasound (EBUS) • electromagnetic navigational bronchoscopy (ENB) 							
4. Thoracentesis							
5. Tracheotomy							
6. Chest tube insertion							
7. Insertion of arterial or venous catheter							
8. Moderate (conscious) sedation							
9. Cardioversion							
10. Withdrawal of life support							
I. Interact with Team Members, Patients, and Families		1	3	1	1	4	5
1. Interdisciplinary Team							
a. transitioning care / handoffs							
b. responding to proposed care plan modifications from other team members							
c. communicating concerns leading to the escalation of care							
d. providing education about available respiratory care services							



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e. facilitating optimal team and patient interactions, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • patient centered • trauma informed • culturally aware 							
2. Patient and family education							
a. safety and infection control							
b. home care and related equipment							
c. lifestyle changes, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • smoking / vaping cessation • exercise 							
d. pulmonary rehabilitation							
e. disease / condition management, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • asthma • COPD • Cystic Fibrosis • tracheostomy care • ventilator dependent 							
Totals	**	23	52	25	23	77	100

**Each minipool will include at least 5 items that engage thinking about medical ethics in this portion; however, a form may be assembled by LOFT without an item linked to ethics.

Continued on the next page.

Specifications for the Depth of Clinical Judgment Portion		Item Counts for Each Form
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each item will be linked to a patient condition, a clinical judgment type, and a setting described below plus a task statement described in the Breadth of Knowledge portion. Complexities of these items are limited to the application or analysis cognitive levels. 		
Patient Condition Type		
1. ADULTS		50
A. Chronic Lung Disease (for example, COPD, asthma, restrictive lung disease, bronchiectasis, cystic fibrosis)		17
1. intubation and invasive mechanical ventilation		5
2. noninvasive management (for example, medical treatment, noninvasive positive pressure ventilation)		6
3. outpatient management (for example, medical treatment, discharge planning, rehabilitation)		3
4. evaluation for a new diagnosis		3
B. Trauma		4
C. Cardiovascular (for example, heart failure, arrhythmia, pulmonary hypertension, myocardial ischemia / infarction, pulmonary embolism, shock)		5
D. Neurological or Neuromuscular		4
E. Medical		15
1. infectious disease		5
2. acute respiratory distress syndrome		5
3. other (for example, immunocompromised, obesity, drug toxicity)		5
F. Pre- and Post-Operative Care		5
2. CHILDREN		10
A. Pediatric (for example, asthma, infectious disease, bronchiolitis, chronic lung disease of prematurity, congenital defect)		4
B. Neonatal		6
1. resuscitation		3
2. Respiratory Distress Syndrome		3
TOTAL		60

Each minipool will include at least 3 items that engage thinking about medical ethics in this portion; however, a form may be assembled by LOFT without an item linked to ethics. Items linked to ethics from this portion must fit a task from the Breadth of Knowledge portion that shows it is open for ethics content.

Continued on the next page.

Additional Specifications Within the Depth of Clinical Judgment Portion

Clinical Judgment Type	Item Counts for Each Form
Information Gathering <i>Choose what to assess or interpret information</i>	20
Decision Making <i>Decide what to add, modify, continue, or discontinue</i>	40
Total	60

Setting	Item Counts for Each Form
In a hospital	46
Outside a hospital	14
Total	60

Additional Specifications Within the Whole Examination

Patient Age	Item Counts for Each Form	
	Minimum	Maximum
Neonatal (birth to 1 month of age) OR Pediatric (1 month to 17 years of age)	15	18
Adult or General	Balance	
Total	160	

The Respiratory Therapy Examination consists of 185 multiple-choice items (160 scored and 25 pretest) taken over a 4-hour period.