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## How to get ready for cpc exam

If you're like most students taking the CPC® exam for the first time, chances are you want to pass it, get it over with and not have to pay the \$300 fee again (not to mention sit through another five and a half hour test!). So, here are some great tips for passing the exam on your first try. Passing the CPC® Exam 1. Start with the questions you know. Keep in mind that in order to pass, you only need a 70% score, which means you can miss 45 questions out of the 150. This means get the questions you know out of the way first. You don't want to leave easy questions unanswered. This will also help you build up confidence as you go through the exam; so leave the harder questions for later. 2. Invest in study guides and sample papers. Set timers and do them again and again, studying how you got to the correct answers and try to idnetify patterns as to why you didn't get correct answers on the questions you missed. Find your efficiency method. 3. Aim for 30 questions per hour. Draw a line after the 30th, 60th, 90th and 120th question to break them up into timed segments and start from 120-150, then 90-120. The questions at the end are easier. Mark harder questions and come back to them (if you're running out of time, mark them with guesses in case you don't get back to them). 4. Read the answers first. Knowing what to expect from the question will allow you to know which section of the CPT/ICD-9 or HCPCS you need to reference, cutting down on time wasted finding it. Flip right to the section you need to be in and then look at the question. Then, underline the keywords in the question which will lead you to the coding. For example, laparoscopic keywords in the question should key you in on open procedures versus closed procedures, essentially eliminating the wrong answers right off the bat. 5. Look for modifiers. Other answers give themselves away with modifiers so look for "post-surgical complications, staged procedures, discontinued procedures, etc." ICD diagnosis codes can also eliminate procedure codes you are not sure about. 6. Highlight key coding conventions. In the ICD, be sure you know your sepsis, HIV, poisoning, adverse effect, late effects, radiation treatments, neoplasm, diabetes, hypertension, CKD, fetal, maternal and infection codes. Highlight all of these coding conventions for quick key-ins as to the answers. 7. Pay close attention to modifier guidelines. Highlight all guidelines of usage and non-usage of modifiers, such as mod 53 in colonoscopy, mod 59 in skin repair, medicine sections modifier guidelines, mod 62 in spinal surgery use and non-usage for instrumentation and bone graft, etc. Highlight skin sections for each procedure as well. 8. Reuse terminology and codes. If you don't know some of the terminology in a question, look up the word in the back of the CPT code description. Also, keep an eye out for questions that answer other questions (i.e. one question might give away the coding that another question is asking for). 9. Stay calm throughout the test. Remember that you can miss quite a lot of the questions and still pass, so what you don't know, take a guess at. Try eliminating the answers you know are wrong so that you increase your chances for getting a guess correct. 10. Don't follow the advice to bring snacks. It's distracting and will take you off track. You can take little mental breathers, but unless you really need to eat for medical reasons, just buckle down, get in the zone and stay there! Final Thoughts on Taking the CPC® Exam Remember that taking and passing the CPC® exam is not about memorizing every code, it's about knowing how to find the best answer in the quickest amount of time. Study how to find answers quickly rather than trying to memorize them all. For detailed information about the CPC® Exam itself, read CPC® Exam Information - FAQ and How to Prepare. What is the CPC Exam? The CPC (Certified Professional Coder) Exam is a test to get certified in Medical Coding by the AAPC (American Academy of Professional Coders). AAPC is an educational board that conducts all types of health care certifications, including exams for CPC certifications in the US, as well as many other countries. The CPC Exam consists of 150 multiple choice questions which evaluate 17 areas of knowledge and a broad range of coding related topics, including: medical terminology, anatomy, anesthesia, medicine and pathology. It is well known throughout the world of medical healthcare as a gold standard for physician based Medical Coding. May be Taken In-person or Online You may choose to take the exam online or in-person. Both options have different specifications and rules. To pass this exam, you must get 70% of the answers correct. This means out of 150 questions, 105 questions must be marked right. The CPC Exam conducted online is an open book exam. You must have reliable internet connection and a stand-alone webcam that can be moved to show your face, hands, keyboard and the area around the keyboard. The Online exam is taken at home in a quiet area during two separate 2 hour and 45 minute sessions and proctored by Examity. The cost is \$299 for one attempt but is included with our course. The in-person test is also open book and must be taken within 5 hours and 40 minutes total in one session. In-person test takers are given two attempts at passing. If you are not able to pass the examination in the 1st attempt, you will have one more free opportunity to take it again. The cost is \$399 to take the CPC in-person. Test Taking Strategies While taking the test, be aware of the time restrictions. Make it your goal to read and answer all questions. Section out the test to know how much time you may have on each area of study. You may want to go through and answer all the questions that you know first and come back to the more challenging ones in the end. Bring a watch. Your proctor will not allow you to look at your cell phone. Be sure to get ample sleep the night before and eat prior to the exam in-person or online. What Books do I Study? We use four books in our course to study and prepare for this exam. 1. Current Year Medical Coding Training: CPC®; AAPC; AAPC publisher; ISBN-13:978-1-626863-44-2. CPT® Professional Edition (current year), AMA publisher 3. ICD-10-CM Code Set (current year), any publisher 4.HCPCS Level II (current year), any publisher What Topics does the Exam Focus on? 10,000, 20,000, 30,000, 40,000, 50,000 and 60,000 Series CPT This includes surgical procedures performed on the integumentary system, musculoskeletal system, digestive system, urinary system and nervous system. Evaluation and Management Coding proficiency related to place of services and preventive medicine. Anesthesia Anesthesia in time reporting, qualifying circumstances, physical status modifiers, surgical, diagnostic and OB services. Radiology This includes both diagnostic and interventional radiology. Laboratory / Pathology Path/lab of organ and disease panels, drug testing, therapeutic drug assays, evocation/suppression testing, consultations, urinalysis, molecular pathology, MAAA, chemistry, hematology and coagulation, immunology, transfusions, microbiology, anatomic pathology, cytopathology, cytogenetic studies, surgical pathology, in vivo and reproductive. Medicine Specialty-specific coding, immunizations, biofeedback, dialysis, central nervous system assessments, health and behavior assessments, hydration, medical nutrition, therapeutic and diagnostic administration, chemotherapy administration, photodynamic therapy, osteopathic manipulative treatment, patient education and training, non-face-to-face non-physician services and moderate sedation. Medical Terminology Medical terminology for all systems in the human body. Anatomy Anatomy for all parts of the body. ICD-10-CM/Diagnosis Diagnosis for all the chapters included in ICD-10-CM, Official Guidelines for Coding and Reporting. HCPCS Level II HCPCS Level II coding, focusing on modifiers, supplies, medications and professional services for Medicare patients. Coding Guidelines ICD-10-CM Official Guidelines for Coding and Reporting. CPT®, parenthetical notes and modifier use. Compliance and Regulatory Compliance and regulations of Medicare Parts A, B, C and D; applying coding to payment policy, place of service reporting, fraud and abuse, NCCI edits, NCD/LCD, HIPAA, ABNs and RVUs. Finding a Medical Coding School Choosing the right Medical Coding School is key to your success when taking the CPC Exam. Coding Clarified will teach you everything that you need to know to pass your certification exam and to become certified as a medical coder. We include all above books in written and audio form, a CPC Exam Voucher and so much more. We wish you the best of luck on your exam. Apply for a Medical Coding scholarship today to prepare for your CPC Exam. Learn more about what Coding Clarified offers. If you're reading this blog post, then you already know that medical coding careers aren't going anywhere, anytime soon. They're an elite bunch of individuals that work in the background of the healthcare landscape, working for both organizations and the patients that visit.They don't need to be in the limelight because they know that what they do is at the heart of this industry and they help keep it pumping.You've probably also done your research prior to deciding that this career is your calling. Of course, you're also comfortable with the salary that's waiting for you once you're ordained as a professional coder.Before all of that happens, though, you have one last hurdle to overcome. You have to pass a medical coding exam.I purposefully put the word "a" there instead of "the" because there are multiple routes you could go.If you're just starting out then you're probably preparing for one of the following exams...Certified Professional Coder (CPC)Certified Coding Specialist (CCS)Certified Medical Coder (CMC)Maybe you've already achieved one of those entry-level certifications and are at a point in your career where you've decided it's time to specialize. If that's the case then you're studying for...Certified Outpatient Coder (COC)Certified Inpatient Coder (CIC)Certified Professional Coder-Payer (CPC-P)Certified Risk Adjustment Coder (CRC)My point after all of this isn't to make you feel nervous because of all the testing involved in your career choice. There are many exciting avenues to head down to further boost your success. Regardless of which stage of this career you're at, there's always room for improvement in your test-taking skills. Even if you're a master test-taker, it doesn't hurt to research what to expect for preparation's sake.Regardless of what side of that coin you're on, we asked certified coders for their biggest tips in preparation for medical coding exams.The first couple of tips within this blog post deal with steps you should take prior to exam day. What happens prior to that big day? Studying.The only way to pass any test, especially one that's as comprehensive as any of the ones relevant to your career choice is to study. Not to mention you have to pay to take them, so you might as well come prepared.I don't need to throw in some statistics proving that statement above, it's obvious that if you study you'll perform better. Some people might still need to hear that, though.It's no secret that these tests are very comprehensive. After all, the majority of them take an entire afternoon to complete.Where do you start? It's not like the AAPC gives you a study guide with all of the answers like your old History teachers used to do back in high school. At least, not without paying extra.Sure, each of the proctoring organizations provide some downloadable resources directly on their exam webpages. But, oftentimes, these are too vague to rely on to fully prepare yourself. As a result, you really have no other choice but to purchase an official study guide textbook for the exam you're taking. A lot of the testing organizations offer bundles that include the entry-fee and their study guide books. Since it's from the official site, these are great resources that you shouldn't overlook. If you know someone who recently took the test you're about to take and no longer needs the resources they used to pass, you could always try to borrow them to save money. But, the chances of that aren't very high.However, there's a lesser-known alternative if you don't know someone who's already passed; Facebook Groups. There are multiple different Facebook Groups out there with the sole purpose of helping people pass their medical coding exams. Oftentimes people within those groups will offer their study guides once they no longer have a use for them. They won't give them to you for free but they'll ask for a reasonable price.Sure, they'll probably come with some bent corners, coffee stains and highlighter marks but those might actually help you study as it did for them. If you're worried about costs, try joining some of these groups and see if you can get lucky.When Youtube first started out way back in 2005, I don't think anyone foresaw how helpful it could be in education. From raw lecture videos to animated shorts, there are hundreds of thousands of hours of educational content on the video juggernaut free to consume.The pessimist would say that medical coding is too niche of a topic for there to be any educational content about it from Youtube. That assumption is wrong. There's so much helpful content about preparing you for these exams that some of the certified coders who answered our question recommended channels.Specifically, they mentioned the channel, Code Master Coach. Her channel has more than 48,000 subscribers, 200 videos and is over 4 years old. Code Master Coach's sole purpose is to share the knowledge and expertise she's gained over the course of her 28-year medical coding career.OK, sure, maybe you're game to watch some of her videos as a part of your preparation. If the average length of her videos were 10 minutes long, it would take you 83 days to get through all of that content. That's time most of us don't have.So how do you prioritize which videos to watch? The answer is simple: sort her videos by "most viewed".The truth is, you're not the only person savvy enough to use Youtube to your advantage in your test preparation. The "type" of videos that Code Master Coach creates falls under "Educational" and/or "How-to". These two categories happen to be two of the most popular categories on Youtube. As a result, other people in a similar situation are trying to figure out...What certification should they go for?Which study guide should they purchase?What in the world is a Z code?Are there any "secrets to success" to keep in mind during test day?Luckily for you and them, Code Master Coach has videos that answer each of those questions. They also all happen to land at the top of her channel's most-watched videos.Everyone's experienced the scenario I'm about to describe to you at some point during their education.You've spent weeks studying for your exam, putting in hours both during the day and at night. Test day arrives, you're well-rested and ready to take on the behemoth that stands before you. You've got a cool head.Then, you get to the first question and it catches you completely off-guard. You have no idea what the answer is and start to overthink. When this happens, how detrimental is it to your confidence?What ends up happening is you'll go through the rest of the test with a low morale, all because of one question. As a result, you overanalyze everything that's asked and every answer that's available to choose from.If this happens during your medical coding exam, you can't let it weigh on you. If you let it overshadow your confidence, you'll end up thinking that everything on the test is a trick question. That's simply not the case with these exams, according to the certified coders we asked. If you take every question as it comes and keep a cool head, you won't slip up and overthink what they're asking you.According to Dr. Timothy Coppock, "Anxious over-thinking can result in missed deadlines, impaired decision making, and disrupt professional performance."Regardless of the medical coding exam you're taking, it has a time limit associated with it. Thus, you'll have to keep a certain pace while you're working through it or you won't finish in time. If you overthink every question that's in front of you, you'll also have a hard time finishing within the time that's allotted.If you keep pace, answer each question as they come and don't second guess each question you'll be cruising at the rate you need to.That doesn't mean you can't go back and review the test once you're complete.There's a common misconception in test-taking where people think the answer they choose in their first go-around is the correct choice. A study conducted over the course of 70 years found that people who change their answers perform better than those who don't.Don't be afraid to select or change your selections, just don't overthink it.Spending an entire morning or afternoon devoted to one of these exams isn't easy on your body. Look at it this way, the average workday is 8 hours long, 4 hours in the morning and 4 hours in the afternoon. In between, there's time allotted for 30 minute to 1 hour-long lunch. Some of these exams take up to five hours long. That's 1 hour over a standard workday's "shifts".My point after all of this is that you're going to get hungry. Snacks were a huge topic for multiple certified coders because of the reason I already stated; it's a long test. Thus, having them could make a difference in your success. According to a Canadian study, thinking causes fluctuations in your glucose and insulin levels which makes you hungry.Now, that doesn't mean you should bring a full meal along with you, unpack it at question 50 and start a one-person all you can eat buffet. That would not only get messy but also disturb those around you, which isn't a good idea.Smaller snacks that don't make a lot of noise are the perfect option. Furthermore, you should also bring a bottle of water with you. A European study found that people who bring water with them into an exam perform at least 5% better than those who don't.Everyone has their own way of taking tests, these are generally habits we picked up from grade school that stay with us all the way through high school and beyond. I bet once the day comes to take your medical coding exam you'll find that you end up returning to your old strategies. That's OK, as long as you're comfortable with them and they're productive.A lot of the professionals we asked had different suggestions and techniques that worked for them. A common denominator with all of them, though, was to ensure that you don't leave anything blank."Don't leave your answers blank," is a phrase we've all probably heard at some point during our schooling. Back in the day, our teachers would tell us that because even if they were short answer questions they would likely still give us partial credit, even if we were wrong (thank you, Mrs. Johnson).But this is an even more powerful strategy when it comes to your medical coding exam because it's all multiple choice. In other words, you have a 25% chance to get the question right if you guess. Those are great odds.Of course, you could still try a totally new strategy than what you normally do when taking tests. Just start practicing it while you're studying ahead of time, that way you won't fall into old habits when the day comes.It doesn't matter which medical coding exam you take, they're all difficult in their own way. You could have two credentials going for your third or a newcomer trying to get into the industry, either way, it's helpful to refresh yourself with new strategies, what to expect and what to bring.What better way to prepare for your exam than by hearing tips from actual, certified coders?I'm not saying you need to take their ideas to heart, they're just giving advice based on what worked for them. Maybe next time we look for tips about these exams, we'll feature you here too. how to prepare for the cpc exam. how to prepare for the cpc certification exam



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