

Preparing for Part 1 of the ABR Exam

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This handout briefly describes techniques for studying for part 1 of the ABR exam, provides advice on the process of taking the exam, and points towards resources for additional information. The material in this handout is based on the personal experiences of the author, and some details may not be applicable to all test-takers.

Study techniques

- **A study partner** or two can help you stay motivated and on task
- **Practice, practice, practice!** Write practice exams and share with your study partners, so that you not only learn the material but also have experience solving actual problems in a limited time frame.
- **Flashcards** and **memory hooks/mnemonics** can help with the clinical section, which covers material you are probably less well versed in and where you will need to rely more on rote memorization.
- In the clinical portion, especially anatomy/physiology, there is an incredibly broad range of possible questions, so it will help to **learn typical root words** and prefixes/suffixes. This way, even if a word is unfamiliar, you may be able to extract enough context clues to determine the answer.
- Make **note of the list of constants** provided during the exam. You don't necessarily need to spend time memorizing these, as they will be provided, however, having some committed to memory will help you save time during the exam.

Exam information and advice

- In 2013, the clinical section was one hour, and the general section was approximately four hours. **Be prepared for a long exam** (which may mean having a snack ahead of time, and wearing comfortable clothing.)
- **Be prepared to not know every answer.** If you don't know an answer, flag the question, guess, and move on. After you've made your initial sweep through the questions, you can spend more time on advanced techniques (e.g., working backwards from the answer choices). Possibly, a later question will provide insight into the skipped problem.
- Try to **practice with the simulated calculator** ahead of time. It can be a little confusing, especially with keyboard operation (e.g., pressing backspace and clearing everything, instead of a single number)
- **Register for the exam as soon as possible**, as test centers can fill up.
- **Stay confident.** If you study and are prepared, you will probably pass. If during the exam, you feel nervous, don't let it distract you or get you down. You need to win the mental battle.
- **Be mindful of the rules.** Government issued ID with signature required to check in, no cell phones (or virtually any object at all) allowed when taking the test. Storage lockers may be provided.

Resources

- <http://www.theabr.org/ic-rp-study>
 - Study guide
 - Sample questions
 - Calculator
 - Constants list
 - Administrative Information (Fees/Dates/Locations, Scoring and results, Registration, etc)
- Raphex Exams
 - www.medicalphysics.org
 - Your department library might have copies
 - Some questions are probably too simple, and some may be on material that is too specific, but there will be a cross section of good problems to form a basis for further problem development
 - Raphex exams are targeted at Radiology and Radiation oncology residents, not Medical Physics residents. However, they are written in part by Medical Physicists
- Textbooks and lecture notes from your classes. For reference, some of the books that I found useful are
 - Introduction to Radiological Physics (Attix) for basic interactions and dosimetry)
 - Physics in Nuclear Medicine (Cherry) for nuclear medicine and some statistics
 - Atoms, Radiation, and Radiation Protection (Turner) for health physics material
 - Medical Imaging Signals and Systems (Prince) for basic imaging material