

# SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY & AUDIOLOGY & HEARING AID DISPENSERS BOARD

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*CANDIDATE  
INFORMATION  
BULLETIN*

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## INTRODUCTION

State licensing boards are mandated to protect the public by developing licensing examinations that test for minimum competency for those who wish to provide professional services to the public. These examinations require candidates to demonstrate that they possess the minimum skills, knowledge, and abilities that are necessary to perform safely and effectively in independent practice without supervision. The Board is required by law to administer a minimum of two practical examinations a year.

## APPLYING FOR EXAMINATION

### WRITTEN EXAMINATION

The written examination is designed to assess the candidate's knowledge as applied to job activities of hearing aid dispensers. PSI, the testing agency, will mail a bulletin to the candidate with more information (after the fees have been processed) about the written examination and how to register to take the examination. Please visit the Board's website at [https://www.speechandhearing.ca.gov/applicants/exam\\_had](https://www.speechandhearing.ca.gov/applicants/exam_had) for Examination Outlines (Tasks and Knowledge) for written exam tasks and knowledge outline.

### PRACTICAL EXAMINATION

When a candidate passes the written examination, they will be given an application for the practical examination. The candidate must file the practical examination application and fee during the filing period posted on the website. Candidates may submit their applications and fees via overnight mail, to be received on the first day of filing; however, this does not guarantee acceptance into the examination. If an application is received before the first day of filing it will be returned.

The Board prefers email communication, and it is important that the email address is legible on the exam application. A confirmation email will be sent if the application has been accepted. The candidate will also receive an Exam Security Agreement and a Subject Application for the Board's review and approval prior to the examination. Both of these forms must be returned to the Board by the date indicated or the candidate will not be allowed to attend the exam, and the exam fee

will **not** be refunded. Please note, if the candidate does not have an email address, a current mailing address needs to be provided to the Board. Please visit the Board's website at [https://www.speechandhearing.ca.gov/applicants/exam\\_had](https://www.speechandhearing.ca.gov/applicants/exam_had) for Examination Outlines (Tasks and Knowledge) for practical exam tasks and knowledge outline.

## ESTABLISHING THE PASSING STANDARDS

A licensing examination determines whether an examinee is competent to practice, not whether the examinee performs better or worse than others who take the test.

In accordance with Business and Professions Code Section 101.6, the purpose of Boards, Bureaus, and Commissions is to "...establish minimum qualifications and levels of competency and license persons desiring to engage in the occupations they regulate upon determining that such persons possess the requisite skills and qualifications necessary to provide safe and effective services to the public, or register or otherwise certify persons in order to identify practitioners and ensure performance according to set and accepted professional standards."

## DAY OF EXAMINATION

Candidates should allow a minimum of three (3-4) hours. There are no breaks allowed during the exam. Once inside the testing area, the candidate is not allowed to leave until finished with the examination. Candidates and subjects must provide one of the following valid forms of government-issued photo identification before testing:

- Non-expired government issued driver's license
- Non-expired government-issued identification card (state, military)
- Non-expired passport

The name on the identification must be the same as the name used to register for the examination (including designations such as "Jr." or "III", etc.)

Failure to provide appropriate identification at the time of the examination will result in the candidate not being able to take the examination and the examination fee will **not** be refunded.

## SUBJECT INFORMATION

The candidate's subject **MUST** be approved by the Board prior to the practical exam. If the subject's application and security agreement are not returned to the Board by the date indicated, the candidate will not be allowed to take the exam and the exam fee will not be refunded.

It is important that the subject has a sufficiently clean ear canal and no medically related ear problems so that an impression can be made. It is the candidate's responsibility to select a subject. Be sure to check the subject's ears in the days prior to the exam. Please also notify the subject what is acceptable to bring and wear to the exam.

During the audiometric assessment, the candidate must take special care to observe a response from their client/patient, who may not be able or willing to respond by making overt gestures. When the audiometric test is administered by the candidate, the subject must be seated (placed) so that the subject's face can be observed by the candidate at all times during the Threshold of Discomfort (TD) test.

The candidate must bring the subject into Stations A and B. The subject must meet the following criteria:

1. Must be at least 18 years of age and have valid government issued photo identification at the exam.
2. Has not acted as a subject for any examination for a hearing aid dispensing license within the past year and will not be allowed to be a subject for one year from the date of this exam.
3. Is not now, nor in the past 10 years, been licensed in California, or any other state/country, with a trainee license or a permanent license as a hearing aid dispenser.
4. Is not now, nor in the past 10 years, been licensed in California, or any other state/country, with a Required Professional Experience (RPE) license or a permanent license as an audiologist or dispensing audiologist.
5. Is not now, nor in the past 10 years, been an employee or officer of a hearing aid dispensing department within a company/corporation engaged in the fitting and selling of hearing aids.

6. Is not now, nor in the past 10 years, been an employee or officer of a hearing aid department of a supplier or manufacturer of hearing aids.
7. Is not now, nor in the past 10 years, been associated with a school or business that provides tutorial courses, training, or coaching to prepare an applicant for dispensing hearing aids.
8. Understand that the Board and its agents are not responsible for acts of negligence committed by any candidate during the course of the examination, or which may result from any procedure performed on them.
9. Understand that no representations or statements have been made by the Board and its agents will not be responsible for any acts committed by any candidate which may result in injury to them.
10. Understand that the Board and its agents have no responsibility or duty to notify or inform them of any faulty work done by the candidate.

## EQUIPMENT

Candidate must provide their own equipment. There is no sharing allowed. Candidate must bring their own audiometer, with proof of calibration within the last 12 months. This will be verified at the check-in desk. All calibration serial numbers and certification documents must match the audiometer, otherwise, the candidate will not be able to take the exam and the fee will **not** be refunded.

The following is a list of the equipment the candidate is required to have:

- Audiometer with non-insert headphones
- Otoscope
- Bone Oscillators
- Ear light
- Clear syringe with a clear non-detachable tip OR a non-electric impression gun
- Impression material (check the expiration date)
- Ear dams in various sizes
- Stethoscope or other listening device
- Sanitizer - maximum size of container should be no larger than 10oz.
- Wipes – non-bleach

*Please note that the Board cannot provide advice or approve any of the above-mentioned items.*

## EXAMINATION ROOMS

Two examiners will be assigned to each examination room, if the candidate is familiar with an examiner, notify the proctor or Board staff and the candidate will be directed to another room. Conferring between the examiners and the candidate is not allowed.

To ensure the consistency of the exam among candidates, examiners will read the same instructions to each candidate. If a candidate asks for clarification, the examiners can only repeat the instructions. They must adhere to the script and may not engage in any additional conversation or education activity to upgrade the competency of a candidate during the exam. The prompts for all stations will be written on cards so that the candidates can read and refer to them as needed.

## BOARD SECURITY REQUIREMENTS

The Board is committed to maintaining the security and the confidentiality of all examination materials during every phase of development, implementation, and storage. If a candidate is found in violation of any security procedure, the following actions may be taken: the candidate's results may be delayed; the candidate's examination materials may be voided; and/or the candidate's application for future examinations may be denied. The Board strictly enforces examination security and will prosecute any individual who has been determined to be in violation of statutes pertaining to security.

**For security reasons, all required equipment and supplies must be in a clear plastic bag (exception is made for the audiometer).**

Candidates are neither permitted to discuss the content of the examination nor remove any examination materials from the testing sites at any time. All examination materials are confidential.

A candidate taking the practical examination is required to follow the provisions of Business and Professions Code Section 123, 496, and 584 and is **not** allowed to do any of the following:

- Have an imposter take the examination on one's behalf;
- Impersonate another to take the examination on that person's behalf;
- Communicate examination content with another examinee or with any person other than the examination staff;
- Reproduce or make notes of examination materials and/or content and reveal them to others who are preparing to take the practical examination, or to those who are preparing other examinees to take such an examination; and
- Obstruct the administration of the examination in any way;
- Use any reference materials. Candidates found with reference/study materials or other aids will not be allowed to continue the exam and their answers will not be scored.

## **IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT TAKING AN EXAMINATION**

1. The temperature in the examination rooms is maintained at a moderate level. Candidates are advised to layer clothing. Acceptable layered clothing includes lightweight shirts, sweaters, and pullovers without pockets. These items must be worn upon check-in, while the candidate waits to enter the testing room, and during the initial seating for the examination.
2. There are timing mechanisms available at the exam site to help candidates keep track of time during the exam administration. Watches or other timekeeping devices are not permitted in the examination rooms.
3. Only one candidate or one subject will be allowed to take a restroom break at a time. If a candidate's restroom break is longer than 5 (five) minutes, board staff or a proctor will check on the candidate and will notify the applicable regulatory entity of the occurrence, which will take appropriate action.

4. The following items are not permitted in the examination rooms:
  - a. Cellular telephones, personal digital assistants (PDAs), recording devices, cameras, pagers, purses, notebooks, notebook/laptop computers, reference or reading material, music players, radios, tablets, electronic games, calculators, or briefcases.
  - b. Personal items including watches, backpacks, wallets (men and women), pens, pencils, or other writing devices, food, drinks (water in clear bottles/containers are acceptable), keys, chewing gum, and good-luck items.
  - c. Hats, baseball caps, or visors (with the exception of religious apparel), coats, shawls, hooded clothing, heavy jackets or overcoats.
  - d. Large jewelry pieces (e.g. lapel pins, brooches, cameos, statement necklaces, tie tacks, tie pins)
  - e. Wheeled/rolling carts
  - f. Other items deemed inappropriate by proctors

All eyeglasses may be subject to a visual inspection. Please note that all items are subject to search by Board staff and examiners at any time during the exam process

During the check-in process, all candidates will be asked if they possess any of the prohibited items and all candidates will be asked to empty their pockets. If prohibited items are found during check-in, candidates shall return these items to their vehicle or other place of safekeeping. Limited storage space will be available onsite. Neither the Department of Consumer Affairs, nor the Board, shall be responsible for any stored items. Any candidate possessing the prohibited items in the examination areas/rooms shall have his or her test results invalidated and not scored.

5. Copying or communicating examination content is a violation of exam security policy and existing law. Either one may result in the disqualification or invalidation of examination results, the denial of the candidate's license, and maybe subject to criminal prosecution.

## DISCIPLINARY REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Candidates are required to report immediately to the Speech-Language Pathology & Audiology & Hearing Aid Dispensers Board if convicted of **any** offense that occurs between the date of the original application and the date that a California hearing aid dispenser's license is issued. Candidates are also required to report to the Board any disciplinary action and/or voluntary surrender against **any** license as a hearing aid dispenser or any dispensing related license that occurs between the date of original application and the date that a California hearing aid dispenser's license is issued. Failure to do so may result in denial of license application or subsequent disciplinary action against the California hearing aid dispenser's license.

## EXAM RESULTS/SCORE

Candidates will be notified in writing of the results of their exam within six (6) to eight (8) weeks from the exam date. If the candidate passes the practical exam, they will also receive an application for licensure. If the candidate fails the practical exam, they will receive an application to retake the exam.

## APPEALS

The regulation regarding the appeal process is **California Code of Regulations Title 16 Division 13.3 Section 1399.122 – Practical Examination Appeals**

- a) An applicant who has failed the practical examination may appeal to the Board within 60 days following receipt of his/her examination results. The bases for appeal are:
  - 1) Examiner misconduct, which means prejudice or bias as evidenced by the statements and/or actions of an examiner; and
  - 2) Significant procedural error in the examination process.
- b) The appeal shall be in writing and shall specify the grounds upon which the appeal is based.
- c) An applicant will be notified in writing of the results of the appeal. In acting on appeals, the board may take such action as it deems appropriate.

## **CHANGE OF ADDRESS OR NAME**

As a licensee (or applicant or candidate), the licensee must notify the Board *in writing within 30 days* of any address change on the form provided by the Board. Similarly, if there is a name change, please must notify the Board *in writing* on the form provided by the Board. The former name and new name should be accompanied by the license number (or application identification) and a copy of the legal document initiating the change. Once licensed, it is the licensees' responsibility to maintain a current address with the Board.

## PRACTICAL EXAMINATION OUTLINE

<i>Station</i>	<i>Area Number</i>	<i>Content Areas Covered in the Examination</i>
A	I	Ear Inspection
	II	Audiometric Assessment
B	III	Ear Impression
	IV	Evaluating Hearing Instruments
	V	Fitting
	VI	Post-fitting

### STATION A: Ear Inspection and Audiometric Assessment – Time Limit: 35 minutes

Candidate establishes pure tone air, pure tone bone thresholds, and uncomfortable listening level on a human subject.

#### PROCEDURES FOR THRESHOLD OF DISCOMFORT (TD)

The following are only suggestions and will not preclude the use or demonstration of other acceptable procedures.

- Start the threshold of discomfort (TD) test at the highest frequency to be tested. Start the presentation of tone at 70 dB. Present tones in pairs of short bursts. The pause between pairs of presented tones should be no shorter than one second.
- Between each pair of presented tones, increase level no more than 5 dB and continue increasing intensity until the instructed level or the limit of the audiometer has been reached.
- Record values in the same manner used to record conventional values and mark the point with the initials TD at the appropriate spot on the audiogram.
- If there is no subject response when the maximum output of the audiometer is reached, record that information as an arrow pointing down at the 110 dB line on the audiogram and mark that point with TD.
  - Suggested instructions to subject: “You will hear pairs of beeped tones. Each pair of tones will be louder than the last pair. Listen to them as they get louder, even when they become very loud. When the sounds get loud enough to be annoying, raise your finger. I will continue to make them louder. When the tones become so loud you don’t want to listen anymore due to the discomfort, raise your hand.”
  - The candidate is advised to observe the subject closely for reflex actions such as eye blinks, change of expression or head jerk preceding the instructed response. These actions of a subject can be an important indication that the candidate has reached the tolerance level of the subject. Note them carefully.
  - During the audiometric assessment, the candidate must take special care to observe a response from their client/patient, who may not be able or willing to respond by making overt gestures.

**NOTE: The subject must be seated (placed) so that the subject’s face can be observed by the candidate at all times during the Threshold of Discomfort (TD) test.**

This area assesses the candidate’s ability to evaluate the external ear to determine if the client’s need for a medical referral and determine the client’s hearing ability from pure tone tests. If an examiner believes that the candidate is performing a task in an unsafe manner, they will be asked to stop. The candidate may not be allowed to complete the task. However, the candidate should continue to complete any remaining stations.

Safe Support Technique: To protect the safety of subjects used during the exam, candidates must use a safe support technique when placing any type of instrument in or near the ear. The goal is that the candidate’s hands must move with the subject’s head to prevent “back and forth” motion and injury to the ear should the subject’s head move unexpectedly. When done safely, the instrument will move with the head and not into the ear.



## STATION A: Continued

Apparatus/Equipment	Focus of Assessment
<b>Candidate Equipment</b>	<b>Room and Equipment Preparation</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Otoscope</li><li>• Bone Oscillator</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clinical audiometer</li><li>• Headphones (non-insert)</li></ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Procedures to prepare audiometer</li><li>• Procedures for listening check</li></ul>
<b>Station Provided Equipment</b>	<b>Otoscopic Inspection</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Audiograms</li><li>• Red/Blue/Black pens</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Otoscopic technique</li><li>• Hygienic precautions</li></ul>
<b>Reference Standards and Protocol</b>	<b>Audiometric Thresholds</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• National standards for establishing pure tone thresholds</li><li>• "Plateau" method for establishing masked thresholds</li><li>• Methodology for establishing TD</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Procedure for unmasked thresholds</li><li>• Procedure for masked thresholds</li><li>• Procedure for pure tone uncomfortable listening levels</li><li>• Procedure for recording thresholds</li></ul>

## STATION B: Procedures for Evaluating Hearing Instruments and Procedures for Evaluating Ear Impressions – Time Limit: 30 minutes

Candidate performs an otoscopic inspection, produces a finished ear impression on a subject, identifies conditions suitable for ear impression, evaluates hearing instrument(s), evaluates and fits new hearing instrument, and identifies source of client complaints with the hearing instruments. Only one ear impression will be taken.

This area assesses the candidate's ability to produce an accurate impression of the client's ear and determine whether the hearing instruments meet manufacturer and dispenser specifications, validate fitting and instruct the client in care and use of the hearing instrument, and identify sources of electronic and acoustic problems associated with common client complaints. If an examiner believes that the candidate is performing a task in an unsafe manner, the candidate will be asked to stop. The candidate will not be allowed to complete that task. However, the candidate should continue to complete any remaining stations.

**Safe Support Technique:** To protect the safety of subjects used during the exam, candidates must use a safe support technique when placing any type of instrument in or near the ear, e.g., otoscope, ear light, and impression syringe or gun. The goal is that the candidate's hands must move with the subject's head to prevent "to and fro" motion and injury to the ear should the subject's head move unexpectedly. When done safely, the instrument will move with the head and not into the ear. Please see the Board's website at [http://www.speechandhearing.ca.gov/applicants/exam\\_info](http://www.speechandhearing.ca.gov/applicants/exam_info) for examples of Safe Support Techniques.

**Note:** Candidate must fully express ear impression material to the end of the syringe/gun tip prior to ear impression.

<b>Apparatus/Equipment</b>	<b>Focus of Assessment</b>
<b>Candidate Equipment</b>	<b>Otoscopic Inspection</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Otoscope</li> <li>• Ear light</li> <li>• Ear dams in different sizes</li> <li>• Impression material</li> <li>• Stethoscope or other listening device</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear syringe with a clear non-detachable tip OR</li> <li>• Impression gun (non- electric)</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Otoscopic technique</li> <li>• Hygienic precautions</li> </ul>
<b>Station Provided Equipment</b>	<b>Recognition of Health Conditions Suitable for Ear Impressions</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scissors</li> <li>• Blower bulb</li> <li>• Hearing aid batteries</li> <li>• Battery tester</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of conditions for referral</li> <li>• Identification of conditions suitable for ear impression procedures</li> </ul>
<b>Candidate Equipment</b>	<b>Preparation for Ear Impression</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Otoscope</li> <li>• Stethoscope or other listening device</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selection of ear dam</li> <li>• Ear dam insertion and placement</li> </ul>
<b>Station Provided Equipment</b>	<b>Ear Impression Procedure</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-bent #13 tubing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparation of ear impression material</li> <li>• Insertion of ear impression material</li> <li>• Removal of ear impression</li> <li>• Recognition of well-formed ear impressions</li> </ul>
<b>Tools Provided</b>	<b>RIC Delivery and Orientation</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blunt-tipped scissors</li> <li>• Tubing stretchers, expanders, pullers</li> <li>• Blower bulb</li> <li>• Needle-nosed pliers</li> <li>• Screwdriver</li> <li>• Battery tester</li> <li>• Twist reamer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brush</li> <li>• Pipe cleaners</li> <li>• Wax pick/loop</li> <li>• Cotton swabs</li> <li>• Emery board</li> <li>• Black felt pen</li> <li>• Hearing aid batteries</li> <li>• Magnifying glass</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fit tubing in earmolds</li> <li>• Fit RIC assembly to ear and orientation to new hearing aid user</li> <li>• Procedures for delivery process</li> <li>• Realistic expectations of hearing aid use</li> <li>• Care and maintenance of the hearing aid</li> </ul>
	<b>Replacing Tubing on Earmolds</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procedure for replacing tubing on earmolds</li> </ul>
	<b>Troubleshooting</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procedures for physical inspection</li> <li>• Procedures for listening check</li> <li>• Procedures for testing instrument</li> <li>• Strategies for correcting problems</li> <li>• Identification of hearing aid</li> <li>• Specifications to be affected by</li> <li>• Service</li> <li>• Identification of electroacoustic parameters affected</li> </ul>