



Practical Examination Candidate Guide

2023 Version

About the International Hearing Society

The International Hearing Society (IHS) is a membership association that represents hearing healthcare professionals worldwide. IHS members are engaged in the practice of testing human hearing and selecting, ordering the use of, fitting and dispensing hearing instruments and counseling patients. Founded in 1951, the Society continues to recognize the need for promoting and maintaining the highest possible standards for its members in the best interests of the hearing impaired it serves.

As the membership organization for thousands of independent specialists, IHS conducts programs in competency accreditation, education and training and encourages specialty-level certification for its members.

Mission

To protect, represent, and promote the interests of hearing healthcare and hearing healthcare professionals.

Vision

Empowering hearing healthcare professionals to deliver high-quality accessible hearing care.

International Hearing Society

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About the Candidate Guide

This Guide provides information related to the examination content only; **all matters of administration, including but not limited to exam cost, exam dates, eligibility criteria, re-take policies, and exam accommodations are the purview of the jurisdiction and questions about such matters should be directed to the licensing agency.** In addition to the examination content, the Study Guide shares information about the recommended study references. Use of this guide and/or any of the recommended reference materials does not assure a passing score on the Practical Examination.

About the Practical Examination

The IHS Practical Examination is designed to be used by licensing agencies throughout the United States and Canada as one part of a licensing process to determine who is qualified to hold a license as a hearing aid specialist. The Practical Examination is created and maintained by the International Hearing Society and administered by state/provincial licensing agencies.

Description of a Successful Candidate

The successful candidate is knowledgeable of, and capable of, safely performing within the scope of practice permitted by the governing agency's license. Within the permitted scope of practice, they are independently capable of determining and understanding a patient's/client's hearing and listening needs; discovering a patient's/client's health history; determining, conducting, and interpreting appropriate audiometric tests; selecting, ordering the use of, and fitting appropriate instrumentation and other assistive devices; performing proper sanitation; recognizing when referrals to other health care professionals – including more experienced hearing aid specialists – are necessary, and working, when necessary, with associated healthcare professionals to help a patient/client fully understand their particular issues related to hearing and hearing loss.

The candidate must be supervised in accordance with the laws and rules of the governing agency where they intend to practice.

Preparing for the Examination

The Practical Examination is just that – practical. This means that it is designed to test a candidate's hands-on skills in the same tasks that are required to practice independently as a licensed hearing aid specialist. There are several possible ways to gain the experience and expertise needed to be successful on the Practical Examination and in this career field. In any pathway, *hands-on practice is paramount*.

Reference Materials

In addition to hands-on training, these reference materials will provide a foundation of knowledge as you prepare for this and other examinations.

Recommended Readings

International Hearing Society. (2022). *Professional training textbook in hearing health sciences*. Hayden-McNeil. www.ihinfo.org/dlcourse

International Hearing Society. (2022). *Professional training workbook in hearing health sciences*. Hayden-McNeil. www.ihinfo.org/dlcourse

International Hearing Society. (2022). *Trainer manual (4th edition)*. Hayden-McNeil. www.ihinfo.org/dlcourse

Supplemental Texts

Bankaitis, A.U. & Kemp, R.J. (2005). *Infection control in the audiology clinic*. (2nd edition or later). Oaktree Products.

Martin, F.N. & Clark, J.G. (2012). *Introduction to audiology*. (11th edition or later). Pearson.

Metz, M.J. (Ed.) (2014). *Sandlin's textbook of hearing aid amplification: Technical and clinical considerations*. (3rd edition). Plural Publishing.

Taylor, B. & Mueller, H.G. (2011). *Fitting and dispensing hearing aids*. (1st edition or later). Plural Publishing.

Wayner, D.S. & Abrahamson, J.E. (2000). *Learning to hear again: An audiological rehabilitation curriculum guide*. (2nd edition). Hear Again.

Note: When information presented in a text conflicts with the IHS Distance Learning for Professionals in Hearing Health Sciences course, the IHS course prevails for purposes of the exam.

Examination Outline

Below is an outline of the Practical Exam. There are six (6) sections of the exam, and each has its own weight. The section weight shows how that section impacts the final score; for example, Section 5 contributes 10% of the overall final score; it is worth 10% of the grade.

Section #	Section Name	Section Weight
1	Otoscopy and Ear Impression	15%
2	Audiometric Evaluation	25%
3	Audiometric Interpretation	20%
4	Hearing Aid Selection, Fitting, and Follow-Up	20%
5	Verification	10%
6	Hearing Aid Troubleshooting	10%

In each section, there are a variety of scoring elements that the candidate will be graded on. The table below shows what the candidate will be graded on in each section.

Section #	Key Scoring Elements
1: Otoscopy and Ear Impression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain otoscopy to patient/client • Perform otoscopy & document findings • Explain ear impression to patient/client • Otoblock selection and placement • Impression preparation, execution, and removal • Evaluation of impression • Infection control throughout
2: Audiometric Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biologic check • Audiometric tests – instructing patient/client, completing test, documenting results: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pure tone: AC and BC testing, unmasked and masked; LDL ○ Speech: MCL; UCL; SRT, unmasked and masked; WR, unmasked and masked

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infection control throughout
3: Audiometric Interpretation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpret type, degree, symmetry, and configuration of the hearing loss • Assess if PTA and SRT are in agreement • Determine if amplification should be recommended
4: Hearing Aid Selection, Fitting, and Follow-Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on test results, recommend appropriate style of hearing aid, coupler, and venting. • Create electronic patient/client file and enter the audiometric and demographic data. • Connect hearing aid to software and perform initial fitting. • Answer a series of 5 hearing aid delivery and/or follow-up questions.
5: Verification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place probe tube, probe tube mic assembly, and hearing aid correctly in the ear. • Assess probe tube placement via graphs • Assess if a fitting is meeting target at certain frequencies via REAR graph • Assess if MPO has been exceeded via REAR graph
6: Hearing Aid Troubleshooting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide fixes to common hearing aid problems – 6 questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2 physical adjustments ○ 2 software adjustments ○ 2 counseling recommendations

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assess 3 broken/damaged/non-functioning hearing aids and determine what is wrong with them.
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Note: At certain points throughout the exam, it may be appropriate to provide instruction or explanation before you proceed with doing something. In this case, you should give instructions to whom or whatever you are performing the task on/with (i.e., to the rubber ear, if you're using one).

What to Bring

Below is a checklist of items required for the exam. **Your licensing agency may require you to bring additional supplies or equipment. Read all information provided thoroughly to ensure you take everything you need to your exam appointment.** It is the purview of your licensing agency to determine protocols to follow if you forget something.

YOU MUST BRING:

- Infection control supplies
- Ear impression supplies including an otoscope
- Functioning and calibrated (bring calibration certificate) audiometer with supra-aural or insert earphones
- Recorded speech materials
- A functioning hearing aid and corresponding programming device
- Laptop equipped with stand-alone fitting software corresponding to the hearing aid above
- Listening stethoscope
- Functional batteries in sizes: 10, 13, 312, 675
- Battery tester

Confidentiality

You are provided with examination content for the sole purpose of testing your competence. You must not discuss the content of the examination with anyone; doing so is cheating and could invalidate your examination results, jeopardize your license, and/or warrant legal action.

Other Exam Details

All matters of exam administration, including but not limited to exam cost, exam dates, eligibility criteria, re-take policies, passing scores, exam results, and exam accommodations are the purview of the jurisdiction *and questions about such matters should be directed to your licensing agency.*