



APPENDIX B

Exam Content Outline

For the most up-to-date version of the Exam Content Outline, please go to www.ACEfitness.org/HealthCoachexamcontent and download a free PDF.

Attention Exam Candidates!

When preparing for an ACE certification exam, be aware that the material presented in this manual, or any text, may become outdated due to the evolving nature of the fitness industry, as well as new developments in current and ongoing research. These exams are based on an in-depth job analysis and an industry-wide validation survey.

By design, these exams assess a candidate's knowledge and application of the most current scientifically based professional standards and guidelines. *The dynamic nature of this field requires that ACE certification exams be regularly updated to ensure that they reflect the latest industry findings and research. Therefore, the knowledge and skills required to pass these exams are not solely represented in this or any industry text.* In addition to learning the material presented on our website and in this manual, ACE strongly encourages all exam candidates and fitness professionals to keep abreast of new developments, guidelines, and standards from a variety of valid industry sources.

Exam Content Outline

The Examination Content Outline is essentially a blueprint for the exam. As you prepare for the ACE Health Coach certification exam, it is important to remember that all exam questions are based on this outline.

Target Audience Statement

The certified Health Coach is an advanced fitness professional responsible for working independently and with other professionals to help a wide variety of individuals and groups adopt structured behavior-change programs that focus on lifestyle and weight management through physical activity, nutrition, and

education necessary to improve and maintain health, fitness, weight, body composition, and metabolism. The following eligibility requirements have been established for individuals to sit for the ACE Health Coach certification examination:

- Must be at least 18 years of age
- Must hold a current adult CPR certificate and, if living in the U.S.A. or Canada, a current AED certificate*
- Must hold one of the following:
 - ✓ Current NCCA-accredited certification[†] in fitness, nutrition, healthcare, wellness, human resources, or a related field; or
 - ✓ An associate degree or higher from an accredited college or university in fitness, exercise science, nutrition, healthcare, wellness, or a related field; or
 - ✓ Completed a Health Coach training and education program approved by the International Consortium for Health and Wellness Coaches (ICHWC)[‡]; or
 - ✓ A minimum of 2 years of documented work experience in coaching, leading, designing, implementing, or facilitating one or more of the following: behavior or lifestyle change, exercise, wellness, nutrition, or physical activity

* CPR and AED are both required in the U.S. and Canada. Candidates outside the U.S. and Canada are required to hold only current CPR due to differing laws regarding AED use by non-medical professionals in some countries. Candidates taking an ACE exam via computer-based testing must hold a current CPR/AED certificate prior to registration.

[†] A list of NCCA-accredited certification programs can be found via the following link:
www.credentialingexcellence.org/p/cm/ld/fid=121

[‡] A list of ICHWC-approved training and education programs can be found via the following link:
<http://ichwc.org/organizations/>

Note: Candidates must submit supporting documentation of current NCCA-accredited certifications, degrees, and/or work experience used to meet eligibility requirements prior to registering for the ACE Health Coach exam.

Exam candidates who do not hold an ACE certification must submit documentation to validate that they meet eligibility requirements. This can include a copy of their current NCCA-accredited certification, degree, transcripts (“unofficial”), or a letter from a supervisor who can confirm their comparable work experience. A listing of all NCCA-accredited certifications can be viewed at www.credentialingexcellence.org/p/cm/ld/fid=121.

Domains, Tasks, and Knowledge and Skill Statements

A Role Delineation Study, or job analysis, was conducted by the American Council on Exercise and Castle Worldwide, Inc., for the ACE Health Coach certification. The first step in this process was completed by a panel of subject matter experts in the various disciplines within the field of health coaching as an advanced specialization within fitness. The primary goal of the panel was to identify the primary tasks performed by Health Coaches in helping a wide variety of individuals and groups adopt structured behavior-change programs that focus on weight management. The panel first identified the major responsibilities performed by a professional health coach. These categories are defined as “Tasks” and it was determined that the profession of health coaching could be described in 14 task statements. These tasks were then grouped into four Performance Domains, or major areas of responsibility.

These Performance Domains are listed below with the percentage indicating the portion of the exam devoted to each Domain:

Domain I: Coaching Behavior Change – 33%

Domain II: Conducting Assessments and Developing Plans – 26%

Domain III: Implementing and Adjusting Individualized Plans – 25%

Domain IV: Professional Conduct and Legal Responsibility – 16%

Each Domain is composed of Task Statements, which detail the job-related functions under that particular Domain. Each Task Statement is further divided into Knowledge and Skill Statements that detail the scope of information required to perform each Task and how that information is applied in a practical setting.

The Performance Domains, Task Statements, and Knowledge and Skill Statements identified by the panel of subject matter experts were then validated by a sample of currently practicing ACE Certified Health Coaches. This completed the Role Delineation Study, with the outcome of this study being the ACE Health Coach exam content outline detailed here. Please note that not all Knowledge and Skill Statements listed in the exam content outline will be addressed on each exam administration, as there are not enough questions on a certification exam to cover every knowledge and skill statement.

Throughout this exam content outline, the following definitions will be used:

Clients – Refers to individuals and groups with a variety of ages, fitness levels, etc.

Program – Refers to behavior-change programs that focus on lifestyle and weight management through physical activity, nutrition, and education necessary to improve and maintain health, fitness, weight, body composition, and metabolism.

I. Coaching Behavior Change

1. Establish rapport with clients using effective communication strategies in order to build and maintain collaborative relationships.

Knowledge of:

1. Verbal and nonverbal communication
2. Considerations of diverse populations
3. The role of empathy in establishing trust
4. Elements of an inclusive environment for establishing rapport
6. Impact of personal biases on coaching effectiveness
7. Implications of personality types (e.g., DISC classifications) on communication and rapport
8. Theories and models of behavior change

Skill in:

1. Using the principles of client-centered coaching (e.g., open-ended questions, affirmations, reflective listening, summary)
2. Listening with an intent to understand each client's perspective
3. Giving and interpreting verbal and nonverbal cues effectively
4. Establishing a positive client-coach relationship
5. Fostering an environment for effective communications

2. Help clients take responsibility for personal health by identifying strengths, challenges, and available resources in order to make healthful lifestyle choices.

Knowledge of:

1. Common barriers to change
2. Motivational strategies
3. Facilitators of change
4. Resources that facilitate health behavior change (e.g., social support, technology, educational materials)
5. Evidence-based coaching strategies
6. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation
7. Effective interviewing techniques (e.g., motivational interviewing, active listening)

Skill in:

1. Identifying and addressing obstacles to change
2. Identifying and encouraging facilitators of change
3. Helping clients discover personal strengths
4. Assisting clients in identifying and using available resources
5. Collaborating with clients to manage setbacks and celebrate successes
6. Helping clients gain insight and awareness of their health behavior–related actions
7. Helping clients understand their role in making healthful choices
8. Empowering clients to take responsibility for their decisions and actions

3. Facilitate client-directed behavior change using evidence-based coaching strategies to promote healthful lifestyle choices.

Knowledge of:

1. Theories and models of behavior change
2. Evidence-based coaching strategies
3. Strategies that build self-efficacy
4. Impact of lifestyle choices on health and quality of life
5. Health literacy

Skill in:

1. Applying theories of behavior change
2. Identifying appropriate coaching strategies to promote self-efficacy
3. Using evidence-based coaching strategies
4. Facilitating learning
5. Facilitating behavior change

II. Conducting Assessments and Developing Plans

1. Use available health, medical, wellness, and lifestyle information by employing appropriate assessment tools and standards in order to stratify risk, identify the need for medical clearance and referrals, establish baselines and facilitate plan development.

Knowledge of:

1. Purpose of assessment tools (e.g., health history, risk factor screening, readiness for change)
2. Appropriate use and interpretation of assessments that measure physical and behavioral health
3. Factors that impact plan development (e.g., risk factor stratification)
4. Appropriate referral sources and protocols
5. Theories of motivation and related coaching techniques
6. Effective interviewing techniques (e.g., motivational interviewing, active listening)
7. Modifiable risk factors
8. Health and behavioral factors that warrant referral

Skill in:

1. Recognizing if and when an assessment is indicated
2. Selecting, administering, and interpreting appropriate assessment protocols, including, but not limited to, physical activity, nutrition, lifestyle, wellness, medical and health history, and behavioral health
3. Communicating the purpose of the assessments and the rationale for the protocols being used
4. Using the principles of motivation throughout the assessment process
5. Building a referral network
6. Referring clients to appropriate resources
7. Conducting interviews

2. Design individualized plans based on interviews, screenings, assessment data, and goals in order to progress clients toward healthful lifestyle management.**Knowledge of:**

1. Behavior, exercise, and nutritional sciences
2. Principles of weight management and obesity prevention
3. Motivation theories and strategies
4. Principles of stress management
5. Role of healthful lifestyle habits in the prevention and self-management of chronic disease
6. Physical activity and nutrition guidelines
7. Principles of plan development and program design
8. Considerations related to individualizing plans for diverse populations
9. Safety considerations and precautions
10. Delivery methods
11. Triggers and other factors that affect adherence
12. Considerations for designing programs for individuals with health or medical issues

Skill in:

1. Identifying appropriate behavior-change strategies based on assessment findings
2. Collaborating with clients in goal setting

3. Collaborating with clients to create individualized behavior-change programs including, but not limited to, physical activity, nutrition, lifestyle, prevention and self-management of chronic disease, and stress management
4. Identifying and addressing triggers and other factors that affect adherence
5. Prioritizing behavior-change plan components

III. Implementing and Adjusting Individualized Plans

1. Implement individualized plans using evidence-based coaching practices in order to progress clients toward healthful lifestyle and behavior change.

Knowledge of:

1. Theories of behavior change
2. Evidence-based coaching strategies
3. Verbal and nonverbal communication
4. Safety considerations and precautions
5. Methods for delivering health behavior change program components
6. Modifiable risk factors
7. Programming factors that facilitate health behavior and modifiable risk factor improvement

Skill in:

1. Using effective communication techniques, including, but not limited to, motivational interviewing, open-ended questioning, and active listening
2. Interpreting and responding to verbal and nonverbal cues
3. Recognizing each client's current stage of change
4. Providing relevant information and guidance to client
5. Leveraging available technology in program implementation
6. Facilitating behavior change

2. Evaluate plan effectiveness in collaboration with clients to monitor outcomes and support progress toward goals.

Knowledge of:

1. Tools and techniques to monitor and support progress toward goals
2. Scope of practice and indicators for referral
3. Obstacles and barriers to adherence
4. Behavior-change techniques
5. Types of feedback
6. Strategies for overcoming barriers
7. Lapse-prevention strategies

Skill in:

1. Interpreting progress toward client goals
2. Communicating progress toward goals with clients
3. Assisting in reflection and providing appropriate feedback
4. Collaborating with clients to identify strategies for overcoming barriers

5. Collaborating with clients to develop coping strategies
6. Leveraging available technology to monitor progress and support the program
7. Teaching clients to implement self-monitoring techniques
8. Identifying lapses

3. Collaborate with clients to adjust plans based on ongoing evaluations in order to promote adherence, personal responsibility, and success.

Knowledge of:

1. Evidence-based coaching strategies
2. Appropriate use and interpretation of assessments that measure physical and behavioral health
3. Verbal and nonverbal communication
4. Obstacles and barriers to adherence
5. Strategies that build self-efficacy
6. Lapse-prevention strategies

Skill in:

1. Interpreting and communicating progress toward client goals
2. Collaborating with clients to modify goals and adjust plans
3. Collaborating with clients to identify strategies for overcoming barriers
4. Collaborating with clients to develop coping strategies
5. Empowering clients to take responsibility for their decisions and actions
6. Supporting progress toward goals (e.g., celebrating success, affirmations)
7. Implementing lapse-prevention strategies
8. Adjusting the program based on modified client factors and goals

IV. Professional Conduct and Legal Responsibility

1. Adhere to legal requirements, the ACE Code of Ethics, and scope-of-practice guidelines in order to protect clients, maintain professional standards, and manage risk.

Knowledge of:

1. Scope of practice for ACE Certified Health Coaches
2. ACE Code of Ethics and Professional Practices and Disciplinary Procedures
3. Pertinent laws and regulations for health coaching in different settings (e.g., healthcare, workplace wellness)
4. Industry standards for health coaches
5. Fair business practices
6. Best practices pertaining to professional and personal boundaries
7. Roles of relevant healthcare professionals
8. Principles of risk management
9. Appropriate referral sources and protocols

Skill in:

1. Establishing and maintaining professional and personal boundaries
2. Building a referral network

3. Recognizing when to refer clients
4. Recognizing, preventing, and managing risk

2. Maintain accurate and confidential records using applicable standards in order to ensure quality care and manage risk.

Knowledge of:

1. Requirements pertaining to protected health information (e.g., HIPAA)
2. Documentation systems (e.g., electronic medical record, SOAP notes)
3. Appropriate terminology
4. Risk-management strategies
5. Systems and tools for maintaining secure client information

Skill in:

1. Retaining client information in a secure and confidential manner
2. Communicating professionally and with respect for client confidentiality
3. Leveraging available technology for secure and confidential storage of client information

3. Respond to emergencies and high-risk situations following established protocols in order to ensure safety and reduce liability.

Knowledge of:

1. Emergency action plans and related procedures
2. Situations that pose risk to clients, coaches, and others

Skill in:

1. Performing CPR, using an AED, and activating emergency medical services
2. Recognizing and mitigating dangerous situations
3. Recognizing and mitigating risk
4. Executing emergency action plans as appropriate
5. Identifying and responding to emergencies and high-risk situations

4. Maintain professional competence by staying current on research, technology, and industry standards in order to build proficiency as a health coach and optimize client outcomes.

Knowledge of:

1. Emerging technology that has application in health coaching
2. Criteria for evaluating the quality and applicability of information
3. Reliable sources for evidence-based information
4. Current industry standards related to health coaching and program development

Skill in:

1. Identifying sources of credible information
2. Applying current evidence-based information to practice
3. Leveraging available technology in health coaching

5. Create an inclusive environment by developing awareness of, and demonstrating sensitivity to, diverse populations.

Knowledge of:

1. Characteristics of diverse populations
2. Credible sources of information about diverse populations
3. Influence of cultural beliefs, attitudes, and values on lifestyle behaviors
4. Credible sources of information about cultural beliefs, attitudes, and values as they relate to health and healthcare
5. Communication styles that facilitate an inclusive environment

Skill in:

1. Demonstrating a commitment to culturally and linguistically appropriate health coaching
2. Providing an inclusive environment
3. Recognizing social determinants and their influence on health and healthcare
4. Participating effectively as a member of a diverse healthcare team