

Don't Let These Words Stump You on the Sleep Exam

There are words you need to know in order to understand the questions on the sleep exam.

Aerophagia	the swallowing of air, sometimes caused by the use of an improperly adjusted CPAP pressure
Atelectasis	partial or complete collapse of the lung
Atonia	the paralyzed or extremely relaxed state of skeletal muscles in rapid eye movement sleep (REM sleep)
Attenuate	to reduce; filters attenuate the size of brain waves
Cessation	the fact or process of ending or being brought to an end
CMS	Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
Comorbidity	the simultaneous presence of two chronic diseases or conditions in a patient
Contraindication	(of a condition or circumstance) suggest or indicate that (a particular technique or drug) should not be used in the case in question
Cyanosis	a bluish discoloration of the skin resulting from poor circulation or inadequate oxygenation of the blood
Diffusion	the movement of atoms or molecules from an area of higher concentration to an area of lower concentration—occurs when oxygen moves from the lungs into the blood vessels and carbon dioxide moves from blood vessels into the lungs.
Diurnal	daily; of each day; of or during the day
Etiology	the cause, set of causes, or manner of causation of a disease or condition
Exacerbation	in medicine, exacerbation may refer to an increase in the severity of a disease or its signs and symptoms
Febrile	having or showing the symptoms of a fever
Homeostasis	the tendency toward a relatively stable equilibrium between interdependent elements—the body always seeks balance or equilibrium (homeostasis)
Hypercapnia	excessive carbon dioxide in the bloodstream, typically caused by inadequate respiration
Hypnopompic	relating to the state immediately before waking up

Hyponagogic	relating to the state immediately before falling asleep
Hypoxic Drive	a form of respiratory drive in which the body uses oxygen chemoreceptors instead of carbon dioxide receptors to regulate the respiratory cycle
Ictal	relating to a seizure
Idiopathic	relating to or denoting any disease or condition that arises spontaneously or for which the cause is unknown
Impede	delay or prevent (someone or something) by obstructing them; hinder
Latency	the delay from input into a system to desired outcome—in sleep medicine, latency has to do with sleep reporting. Time from lights out to first epoch of sleep is sleep latency; time from sleep onset to first epoch of REM sleep is REM latency
mmHg	symbol for mercury. Used in measuring carbon dioxide, atmospheric pressure, blood pressure and other measurements
Morphology	form, shape or structure; the shape of a brain wave; multifocal PVCs have different morphologies
Nadir	the lowest point; related to measuring respiratory events; start with the nadir of the first clearly reduced breath
Nares	nostrils
Nocturnal	occurring or active at night
Nosocomial	(of a disease) originating in a hospital
Nosology	the branch of medical science dealing with the classification of diseases
Occlude	stop, close up, or obstruct; OSA occludes the airway
Occlusion	blockage or closing of a blood vessel or hollow organ
Oscillate	move or swing back and forth at a regular speed; an alpha wave oscillates up and down 8-13 times per second
Paroxysmal	sudden occurrence
Patent / Patency	open and unobstructed; failing to close. CPAP keeps the airway patent
Perfusion	passage of fluid through the circulatory system or lymphatic system to an organ or a tissue, usually referring to the delivery of blood to a capillary bed in tissue. Poor perfusion prohibits blood from getting to the capillaries

Phasic	characterized by occurrence in phases rather than continuously; rapid eye movements are phasic activity
Pneumothorax	collapsed lung
Sequelae	a condition that is the consequence of a previous disease or injury
Soporific	tending to induce drowsiness or sleep; the environment during a MWT test is designed to be soporific to induce sleepiness
Synchronization	NREM sleep is synchronized; REM sleep is desynchronized
Tetrad	a group or set of four; in sleep, tetrad is most commonly known in describing the symptoms of narcolepsy: (1) excessive daytime sleepiness; (2) cataplexy; (3) sleep paralysis; and (4) hypnagogic hallucinations
Tonic	referring to non-rapid eye movements
Zeitgeber	a cue given by the environment, such as a change in light or temperature, to reset the internal body clock