

BEGINNING THE PROGRAM: Entry-Level Classes

To enroll in the Pharmacy Technology program, students are not required to take any entrance examinations or complete any prerequisite courses.

To be successful, entering students should have the following:

- a good command of spoken English
- good listening skills
- the ability to follow verbal and written directions
- good basic math skills
- the ability to use a basic function calculator
- good reading and study skills

Students should honestly evaluate their readiness in these areas. English as a Second Language (ESL) courses are available at TAS.



BECOMING A PHARMACY TECH IN CALIFORNIA

In busy pharmacies, the addition of a pharmacy technician can be a very good solution to overworked pharmacists. Pharmacy technicians can help a pharmacist in many ways. Pharmacy technicians are responsible for:

- Taking prescription forms from patients
- Accepting call-in prescriptions from doctors
- Ensuring that the prescription forms are complete
- Taking insurance information
- Preparing and/or mixing prescriptions
- Counting out pills
- Printing labels to apply to the medication bottles
- Printing out contraindication information
- Delivering prescriptions to clients
- Directing client questions to the appropriate pharmacist
- Maintain thorough inventories of all prescription and non-prescription medications

Any prescription that is mixed or counted by a pharmacy technician is always double-checked by a pharmacist. This second check helps prevent mistakes when filling prescriptions.

Patients can always check their own prescription but not all are perceptive enough to realize how to look up the prescription on the computer and verify that the pills and doses match what

appears on the pharmaceutical company's website. Another serious issue is that more than 40% of all Americans cannot read, therefore they cannot verify the information found on their prescription bottle. They rely on what they hear the doctor or pharmacist tell them to take. This can be dangerous!

To become a pharmacy technician, it is advisable to complete a training program. Usually, these programs require under one year's time. Courses include:

- Anatomy
- Communication
- Drug Usage and Types
- Ethics & Patient Privacy
- Hospital Practices for Dispensing Medications
- Introduction to Pharmacy Assisting
- Mixing Prescriptions
- Pharmacy Assisting Lab
- Pharmacy Law
- Pharmacy Math
- Physiology
- Prescription Administration

Pharmacy Technician Requirements in California

Education

• Aspiring pharmacy technicians can take several routes to register with the board as a pharmacy technician. Acceptable prerequisites include training that provides at least 240 hours of instruction in areas outlined in the Board of Pharmacy Title 16 regulations such as medication identification and calculating dosages. The application must include an affidavit that attests to completing the required coursework filled out by the program provider.

Certification

• The Pharmacy Technician Certification Board administers a national certification exam for pharmacy technicians. Eligibility for this exam include having at least a high school diploma or its equivalent (GED) and being free of any felony convictions or any kind of convictions involving legal or illegal drugs. Anyone who has received this certification can register as a pharmacy technician in the state and must provide a notarized copy of the certificate.

Fingerprinting

• All applicants for pharmacy technician registration in California must arrange for fingerprint submission. Those who live in California can arrange electronic submission through one of the many Live Scan sites throughout the state. Applicants living outside the state must submit a fingerprint card to the Board of Pharmacy. The registration application contains all the information the applicants need to complete this step.

Test-Taking Guidelines:

To ensure that each student has the same opportunity for success, the following guidelines apply to **all** test-taking situations:

1. Students will place all personal items (backpacks, books, purses, etc.) on the front or side counters or floor before testing begins.
2. Students will sit in the seats assigned to them on the seating chart, **if** the instructor uses a seating chart.
3. Once testing begins, students will remain in the classroom. Students who leave the classroom may NOT be allowed to return to complete a test in progress, at the discretion of the instructor.
4. **Students must do their own work at all times.** Students must keep their eyes on their own papers. Students must **shield** their papers to prevent them from being visible to other students.
5. **Calculators:** Students may only use **basic function** calculators during testing; calculators with extensive memories will **not** be allowed. Calculators may not be shared between students. All calculators must be taken out of their cases prior to testing. If your calculator has a fixed case, the instructor may inspect it **prior to** or **during** testing.
6. Students are responsible for the cleanliness of their persons and surroundings. **ANY** writing on bodies, clothing, tabletops, etc., will be considered an attempt to cheat.
7. **No** talking is allowed during testing, unless the instructor indicates otherwise. Do not repeat the instructor's words out loud, even to yourself.
8. Students who complete a quiz or exam **before** the time limit will leave the classroom, unless otherwise instructed.
9. When the time limit is called, students must turn in their papers **immediately**. Students who continue to work **after** the time limit is called will have points deducted from their score, up to the full value of the test.

National Certification of Pharmacy Technicians

A **Certified Pharmacy Technician (CPhT)** has successfully passed the national Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (**PTCB**) exam. This exam tests the baseline knowledge and skills required of a pharmacy technician. By becoming certified, you are demonstrating your ability to work as a pharmacy technician.

At this time, certification is *voluntary* in California. Pharmacy technicians can become licensed *without* being certified. However, being a CPhT is one way to qualify for a pharmacy technician license. CPhT's must still complete the Board of Pharmacy licensing process before working as a technician.

Although certification is voluntary, Santa Ana College strongly encourages its graduates to take the PTCB exam. Many employers prefer that all of their technicians be certified, so passing the PTCB exam may help you get a job!

If you are interested in becoming a **certified** pharmacy technician, contact the **PTCB on-line** or by calling (202) 429-7576.

The PTCB can provide you with a candidate's handbook; current testing date windows, locations, and fees, and information on the recertification process.

The PTCB also offers an **on-line practice exam** for a fee.

Recertification:

To remain a CPhT, you will be required to renew your certification every two years. To recertify, you will have to complete twenty hours of continuing education, at least one hour of which must be in pharmacy law. You will also submit a renewal fee, which is less expensive if you renew on-line.



Pharmacy Technician Certification Board

Pharmacy Technician Certification Exam (PTCE) Eligibility Requirements (Effective January 2009)

The Pharmacy Technician Certification Board's (PTCB) eligibility requirements for a candidate to take the Pharmacy Technician Certification Board Examination are as follows:

Requirements

- High school diploma or its equivalent (e.g., a GED or foreign diploma).
- No felony conviction.
- No drug or pharmacy related convictions, including misdemeanors. These violations must be disclosed to PTCB.
- No denial, suspension, revocation, or restriction of registration or licensure, consent order or other restriction by any State Board of Pharmacy.
- No admission of misconduct or violation of regulations of any State Board of Pharmacy.

NOTE:

PTCB will review denial of eligibility upon request on a case-by-case basis. If eligibility requirements are not met; a candidate may request a review in special circumstances,

e.g. if the non-drug related misconduct occurred longer than five (5) years ago or the individual is currently working under the Board of Pharmacy authority.

PTCB reserves the right to investigate criminal background, verify candidate eligibility and deny certification to any individual.

*It is the responsibility of the **CPhT** to report any felony conviction, drug or pharmacy related violations, or Board of Pharmacy action taken against their license or registration at the occurrence and at the time of recertification, for review by PTCB.*

What is on the PTCE?

The Pharmacy Technician Certification Examination samples your knowledge and skill base for activities performed during work as a pharmacy technician.

The PTCE contains 80 multiple-choice questions plus an additional 10 pre-test questions that will not count toward your final score. PTCB and its testing providers use the results of the non-scored section for statistics used in designing future examinations. These questions are placed randomly throughout the exam. Candidates should answer all questions even if they are guessing. The total examination lasts two hours.

The exam is made of three basic knowledge functions:

- I. **Assisting the Pharmacist in Serving Patients**
- II. **Maintaining Medication and Inventory Control Systems**
- III. **Participating in the Administration and Management of Pharmacy Practice**

To go to the PTCE sample examination, click this link: <http://www.testrac.com/ptcb/>

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Job Opportunities / Salary

Pharmacy technicians must be licensed with the State Board of Pharmacy before they can begin to work in California.

There is a tremendous projected growth in career opportunities for pharmacy technicians over the next several years. "Pharmacy technician" is listed as number **16** on CareerBuilder.com's list of "**30 Top Jobs of 2008**". Orange County has a projected growth of nearly **36.5%** in pharmacy technician job openings between 2006 and 2016. Many of those employment opportunities will be in **retail** or **community** pharmacies, especially with the chain drug stores. An article in the April 2009 edition of the OC Register listed Pharmacy Technician as number 6 of the 25 Top Jobs of 2009.

Pharmacy technicians working in retail pharmacies generally begin earning between \$12 and \$13 per hour. Entry-level salaries depend on the previous experience and the technical ability of the applicant. The median salary for pharmacy technicians in California in 2005 was approximately \$16 per hour, with more experienced technicians earning \$18 per hour, according to the California EDD. The top earning technicians in the state were paid over \$21 per hour.

Note that many retail pharmacies also employ *pharmacy clerks*. Pharmacy clerks are not licensed by the California State Board of Pharmacy and there are no specific educational requirements for clerk jobs. Students who are enrolled in the Pharmacy Technology program are encouraged to apply for clerk jobs to gain additional experience in the pharmacy workplace. Pharmacy clerks generally earn between \$9 and \$11 per hour, though experienced clerks may earn \$12 per hour or more.

Pharmacy technicians also work in acute care (**hospital**), **home infusion**, and **compounding** pharmacies. These pharmacies may pay at a higher rate because they demand a more advanced level of technical skill. Students who want to work in one of these practice sites must complete the ASHP-accredited certificate or the associate degree program.

Pharmacy technicians can expect to work varying shifts. Many pharmacies are open seven days a week, with daytime and evening hours. Some pharmacies provide 24-hour service. Part-time and *per diem* (on-call) positions are also available for pharmacy technicians.