ACLS Course Exam Guide

The AHA ACLS Provider written exam and Megacode under the 2025 course materials: format, content, eligibility, an 8-week plan and test-day tips

ICU Basics
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THE EXAM AT A GLANCE

ITEM	2025 ACLS PROVIDER COURSE
Written exam	Proctored, online at the end of class; paper backup
Number of items	Not posted publicly by AHA; ask your instructor
Passing score	84% minimum
Time limit	Untimed per AHA's last public exam FAQ (2020); confirm locally
Open resource	Manual, your notes, ECC Handbook; no talking
Skills tests	High-quality BLS (CPR, AED), airway management, team Megacode; AHA checklists
HeartCode	Adaptive online part (exam built in), then an instructor or manikin skills session
Length	Full class 13.25 to 16.5 h; Update 8.25 to 9.5 h; HeartCode skills 6.75 to 7.75 h
Cost	Set by each Training Center; HeartCode online $178
Card	Completion card valid 2 years, to month end

WHAT IS ON IT

AHA publishes no percentages or item counts. These areas come from the 2025 course FAQ; 2025 materials are required from March 1, 2026.

AREA	FOCUS	APP SUBJECT
Assessment and BLS	Systematic approach; early CPR and AED	BLS
Airway	Bag-mask, advanced airway, capnography	ACLS Algorithms
Cardiac arrest	VF/pVT, asystole/PEA, shocks, reversible causes	ACLS Algorithms
Brady and tachy	Rhythm ID, pacing, cardioversion	Rhythm Recognition
Medications	Arrest and peri-arrest drugs, timing	ACLS Pharmacology
ACS and stroke	Early recognition, reperfusion	ACLS Algorithms
Post-arrest care	ROSC targets, temperature control	Post-Cardiac Arrest Care
Teams, special cases	Roles, closed-loop talk, CCF; LVAD, drowning	Special Situations

EXAM TIP The exam reflects 2025 science. Know these changes:

- One 6-link Chain of Survival; SVT renamed narrow-complex tachycardia
- Sotalol dropped from the tachycardia algorithm
- Synchronized starting doses: 100 J narrow-complex or monomorphic VT; 200 J AF or flutter
- IV first, then IO; no drugs via ET tube; squeeze the bag one-third to one-half for chest rise
- Post-ROSC: MAP at least 65 mm Hg, SpO_2 90 to 98%
- Not following commands after ROSC: 32 to 37.5 °C for at least 36 h
- Tenecteplase for stroke; LBBB alone no longer defines STEMI

SAFETY Values are typical adult figures for exam study. Follow your institution's or agency's protocols and device guidance.

WHO CAN TAKE IT

- Healthcare professionals who lead or join cardiac arrest, stroke and cardiopulmonary emergency care
- Expected skills: high-quality BLS, ECG reading, ACLS drugs, bag-mask ventilation
- BLS card: not required by AHA, though your Training Center may; some classes add one
- Classroom: Precourse Self-Assessment at 70% or higher; print and bring the report
- HeartCode: bring your online completion certificate to the skills session
- Update (renewal) course: shorter; ask your Training Center if you qualify

EXAM TIP The Precourse Self-Assessment has 3 sections: rhythm recognition, pharmacology and practical application (20 items each on the 2025 written form).

HOW TO STUDY (8 WEEKS)

1. Week 1: free AHA Precourse Self-Assessment and one app Mock Exam as baselines; start Daily Review.
2. Weeks 1 to 2: Rhythm Recognition with the Rhythm Gallery One-Pager.
3. Weeks 3 to 4: ACLS Algorithms and Pharmacology with the ACLS Algorithms in Brief One-Pager; say each next step aloud.
4. Week 5: BLS, Post-Cardiac Arrest Care, Special Situations and the Capnography One-Pager.
5. Week 6: Weakest Subject and Level Up sessions, then Missed Questions.
6. Week 7: rehearse leading Megacode cases aloud with the testing checklists in your manual's appendix; finish any prework.
7. Week 8: two full Mock Exams (aim well above 84%) and Trouble Questions.

EXAM TIP Megacode cases open with a bradycardia or tachycardia, pass through a shockable and a nonshockable arrest rhythm, and end with post-arrest care.

TEST-DAY TIPS

- Bring your passing self-assessment report or HeartCode certificate
- Bring the provider manual (print or eBook) with algorithms and drug tables tabbed
- Open resource is not open time: answer what you know, then look up flagged items
- Megacode leader: assign roles, use closed-loop talk, keep CCF above 80%, check rhythm every 2 minutes
- Not passed? Your Training Center sets remediation and retesting

OFFICIAL RESOURCES

- ACLS Provider Manual, 2025 (25-1106 print, 25-3100 eBook)
- 2025 Handbook of Emergency Cardiovascular Care (25-1100 print, 25-3105 eBook)
- ACLS Reference Cards, set of 3 (25-1120)
- Precourse Self-Assessment and Video Prework, free at eLearning.heart.org
- 2025 algorithms, Guidelines Parts 9 and 11, manual change notice (August 2026)

Links are in the sources. AHA and HeartCode are trademarks of the American Heart Association, Inc. This app is independent and not endorsed by the AHA. Only AHA-authorized training (classroom, HeartCode, HeartCode Complete or RQI) leads to an ACLS Provider card.

Sources (25) are listed with links at icubasics.com/sheets/guide-acls.html. For education and exam preparation only. Not medical advice; follow current guidelines and your institution's protocols. ICU Basics is an independent study aid not affiliated with any certifying body.