

Preparing for the American Board
of Pathology (ABPath)
Examination of Fundamental
Knowledge and Skills

Forensic Pathology

Content Specifications



3 Overview:

Forensic Pathology Content Specifications

This guide outlines the content that may appear on the American Board of Pathology's Forensic Pathology Subspecialty exam. It provides a framework based on the knowledge and skills typically covered in Fellow-level training, along with applicable Core and Advanced Resident topics from residency training that the trainee is expected to know or be able to perform.

Key to Designations:

C = Core/Foundational Knowledge

AR = Advanced Resident Knowledge

F = Fellow/Advanced Practitioner Knowledge

13 The exam assesses the knowledge, judgment, skills, and abilities necessary to identify specific entities,
14 properly process specimens, and diagnose and monitor diseases using methods common in the practice
15 of Forensic Pathology. The specific diseases, tests, and concepts listed in this document are important
16 for candidates to know, but it is not possible to create a fully comprehensive list of all the material
17 needed for certification and effective practice. Candidates should use this guide as a reference for
18 preparing for certification and professional practice.

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75	1. Natural Deaths	C
76		
77	2. Pediatric Deaths	
78	a. Deaths Associated with Prematurity	C
79	b. Congenital Anomalies, Common	C
80	c. Placental Disorders Associated with Intrauterine Fetal Demise	C
81	d. Congenital Anomalies, Complex	AR
82	e. Central Nervous System, Normal Anatomy & Variations	AR
83	f. Cardiovascular System, Normal Anatomy & Variations	AR
84	g. Respiratory System	AR
85	h. Hepatic, Gastrointestinal, Pancreatic System	AR
86	i. Hematopoietic / Lymphatic System	AR
87	j. Genitourinary System	AR
88	k. Endocrine System	AR
89	l. Skin	AR
90	m. Bones and Joints, Normal Anatomy & Variations	AR
91	n. Bleeding Diathesis / Thrombotic Disorders	AR
92	o. Immune Deficiency Disorders	AR
93	p. Nutritional Deficiencies	AR
94	q. Infectious Disease/ Microbiology	AR
95	r. Neoplastic Conditions	AR
96	s. Genetic Diseases	AR
97	t. Fluid and Electrolyte Disturbances	F
98	u. Unnatural Deaths in Childhood	
99	i. Estimation of Gestational Maturity	AR
100	ii. Birth-related Injuries	AR
101	iii. Stillbirth versus Livebirth	F
102	iv. Placental Injuries	F
103	v. Feticide	F
104	vi. Neonaticide	F
105	vii. Child Abuse / Non-accidental Injuries	F
106	viii. Blunt Trauma	F
107	ix. Retinal hemorrhages	F
108	x. Patterned Injuries	F
109	xi. Bite Marks	F
110	xii. Thermal Injuries	F

111	xiii. Poisoning	F
112	xiv. Forensic Imaging	F
113	xv. Neglect	F
114	xvi. Malnourishment	F
115	xvii. Asphyxia, including smothering suffocation, choking, wedging)	F
116		
117		

3. The Cardiovascular System

118	a. Normal Anatomy	C
119	b. Atherosclerosis	C
120	c. Myocardial Infarction	C
121	d. Hypertensive Cardiovascular Disease	C
122	e. Valvular Diseases	C
123	f. Aortic Dissection	C
124	g. Aortic Aneurysm	C
125	h. Vasculitides	AR
126	i. Myocarditis	AR
127	j. Sarcoidosis	AR
128	k. Dilated Cardiomyopathy	AR
129	l. Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy	AR
130	m. Tumors	AR
131	n. Congenital Diseases	AR
132	o. Amyloid	AR
133	p. Pericardial Diseases	AR
134	q. Nonatherosclerotic Coronary Artery Diseases/Anomalies	F
135	r. Arrhythmogenic Cardiomyopathy	F
136	s. Aortopathy	F
137	t. Sudden Cardiac Death	F
138	u. Cardiac Dysrhythmias	F
139		
140		

4. Chronic Alcoholism

141	a. Steatosis	C
142	b. Cirrhosis	C
143	c. Esophageal Varices	C
144	d. Steatohepatitis	AR
145	e. Cardiomyopathy	AR
146	f. Coagulopathy	AR
147	g. Infectious Complications	AR
148	h. Mallory Weiss Tear	F
149	i. Cerebellar Vermal Atrophy	F
150	j. Alcohol Withdrawal and Sudden Death	F
151	k. Nutritional Complication	F
152	l. Fluid / Electrolyte Disturbances	F
153		
154		

5. The Central Nervous System

155	a. Cerebrovascular Disease	C
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157	b. Aneurysms	C
158	c. Hypertensive Intracerebral Hemorrhage	C
159	d. Meningitis	C
160	e. Normal Anatomy and Variations	AR
161	f. Malformations	AR
162	g. Neoplasms	AR
163	h. Vascular Malformations	AR
164	i. Encephalitis	AR
165	j. Pituitary Disorders	AR
166	k. Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies	AR
167	l. Demyelinating Diseases	AR
168	m. Degenerative Diseases	AR
169	n. Phakomatoses	AR
170	o. Toxic and Acquired Metabolic Diseases	F
171	p. Seizure Disorders	F
172		

6. The Respiratory System

173	a. Pulmonary Infections	C
174	b. Pulmonary Thromboembolism	C
175	c. Diffuse Alveolar Damage	C
176	d. Tobacco & Vaping-Induced Lung Damage	C
177	e. Emphysema	C
178	f. Pneumothoraces	AR
179	g. Pneumoconioses	AR
180	h. Hypersensitivity Pneumonitis	AR
181	i. Pulmonary Hypertension	AR
182	j. Sarcoidosis	AR
183	k. Pulmonary Hemorrhage Syndromes	AR
184	l. Neoplasms	AR
185	m. Interstitial Lung Disease	AR
186	n. Asthma	F
187	o. Drug-Induced Lung Disease	F
188		
189		

7. The Genitourinary System

190	a. Obstructive Uropathy, including Prostate and Calculi	C
191	b. Congenital Anomalies	AR
192	c. Glomerular Diseases	AR
193	d. Tubulointerstitial and Renal Cystic Diseases	AR
194	e. Thrombotic Microangiopathies	AR
195	f. Neoplasms	AR
196	g. Genital Tract Disorders	AR
197	h. Bladder Diseases	AR
198	i. Infections	AR
199		
200		

8. The Hematopoietic/Lymphatic System

201	a. Leukemia / Lymphoma	AR
202	b. Hemoglobinopathies	AR

204	c. Bleeding Diathesis / Thrombotic Disorders	AR
205	d. Amyloidosis	AR
206		
207	9. The Hepatic, Gastrointestinal, and Pancreatic System	
208	a. Gastric / Duodenal Ulcers	C
209	b. Bile Duct / Gallbladder Disorders	C
210	c. Pancreatitis	C
211	d. Diabetes Mellitus	C
212	e. Enterocolitis	AR
213	f. Vascular Disorders	AR
214	g. Inflammatory Bowel Disease	AR
215	h. Neoplasms	AR
216	i. Hepatitis	AR
217	j. Inborn Errors of Metabolism	AR
218		
219	10. The Endocrine System	
220	a. Pituitary Disorders	AR
221	b. Thyroid Disorders	AR
222	c. Parathyroid Disorders	AR
223	d. Adrenal Diseases	AR
224		
225	11. The Skin and Nails	
226	a. Stasis Changes and Pressure Ulcers	C
227	b. Cutaneous Manifestations of Therapy	AR
228	c. Cutaneous Manifestations of Systemic Disease	AR
229	d. Common Neoplasms	AR
230	e. Common Infections	AR
231	f. Cutaneous Manifestations of Substance Abuse	F
232		
233	12. Bones, Joints, and Soft Tissue	
234	a. Degenerative Diseases	AR
235	b. Metabolic Diseases	AR
236	c. Pathologic Fractures	AR
237	d. Primary and Metastatic Neoplasms	AR
238	e. Common Infections	AR
239	f. Common Inflammatory Conditions	AR
240		
241	13. Peripheral Nerve and Skeletal System	
242	a. Specimen Procurement and Preparation	C
243		
244	14. Infectious Disease / Microbiology	
245	a. Specimen Procurement and Preparation	C
246	b. Bacterial Infections	C
247	c. Mycobacterial Infections	C
248	d. Viral Infections	C
249	e. Fungal Infections	C

250	f. Parasitic Infections	AR
251	g. Zoonoses	AR
252		
253	15. Immune Deficiency Disorders (Primary & Secondary)	AR
254		
255	16. Obesity	C
256		
257	17. Medicolegal Investigation of Natural Deaths	F
258		
259	18. Mechanisms of Traumatic Death	F
260	(e.g., Types of Shock, Blood Loss, Neurogenic, Embolic)	
261		
262	19. Blunt Trauma	
263	a. Abrasions, Contusions, and Lacerations	AR
264	b. Epidural Hematoma	AR
265	c. Subdural Hematoma	AR
266	d. Subarachnoid Hemorrhage	AR
267	e. Herniation	AR
268	f. Fat Emboli	AR
269	g. Dating of Injuries	F
270	h. Patterned Injuries	F
271	i. Defensive Injuries	F
272	j. Skull Fractures	F
273	k. Cerebral Contusion	F
274	l. Cerebral Laceration	F
275	m. Traumatic Brain Injury	F
276	n. Sequelae of Traumatic Brain Injury	F
277	o. Neck Injury	F
278	p. Vascular Injury	F
279	q. Spinal Cord Injury	F
280	r. Commotio Cordis	F
281	s. Visceral Injuries	F
282	t. Fractures	F
283	u. Healing of Fractures	F
284	v. Medical Complications of Injuries	F
285	w. Fat Embolization Syndrome	F
286	x. Human Bite Marks	F
287	y. Animal Bite Marks	F
288		
289	20. Asphyxia	
290	a. Hanging	AR
291	b. Suffocation	F
292	c. Choking	F
293	d. Manual Strangulation	F
294	e. Ligature Strangulation	F
295	f. Positional, Mechanical, and Traumatic Asphyxia	F

296	g. Asphyxia by Gases	F
297	h. Petechiae	F
298		
299	21. Firearm-Related Injuries	
300	a. Entrance Wounds	AR
301	b. Exit Wounds	AR
302	c. Contact Wounds	AR
303	d. Wound Ballistics	F
304	e. Atypical Entrance Wounds	F
305	f. Graze Wounds	F
306	g. Shored Exit Wounds	F
307	h. Range of Fire Estimation	F
308	i. Intermediate Target Ballistics	F
309	j. Near-Contact Wounds	F
310	k. Close/Intermediate Wounds	F
311	l. Cylinder Gap	F
312	m. Stippling	F
313	n. Intermediate (Distant) Wounds	F
314	o. Ricochet Wounds	F
315	p. Bullet Wipe	F
316	q. Handgun-Related Injuries	F
317	r. Rifle-Related Injuries	F
318	s. Shotgun-Related Injuries	F
319	t. Airgun-Related Injuries	F
320	u. Delayed Firearm-Related Deaths	F
321	v. Ammunition	F
322	w. DNA of Tissue on Bullets	F
323	x. Retained Bullets	F
324	y. Lead Poisoning	F
325	z. Less Lethal Ammunition	F
326	aa. Nail Gun Injuries	F
327	bb. Homemade (Zip) Guns	F
328	cc. Detection of Gunshot Residue	F
329	dd. Radiography of Gunshot Wounds	F
330		
331	22. Bombs and Explosions	
332	a. Mechanical Injuries	F
333	b. Atmospheric Blast Injuries	F
334	c. Classification of Blast Injuries	F
335		
336	23. Sharp Injuries (Cutting & Stabbing)	
337	a. Stab Wounds	AR
338	b. Incised Wounds	AR
339	c. Incised Wounds of the Neck	F
340	d. Defensive and Hesitation Injuries	F
341	e. Chop Wounds	F
342	f. Sharp Injury caused by objects other than a knife	F

343	g. Patterned Injuries-Sharp	F
344	h. Toolmark Identification	F
345	i. Antemortem versus Postmortem Wounds	F
346	j. Dismemberment	F
347		
348	24. Electrical and Lightning Injuries	
349	a. Basic Concepts of Electricity	F
350	b. Alternating Current Related Deaths	F
351	c. Direct Current Related Deaths	F
352	d. Low and High Voltage Electrocution	F
353	e. Lightning Related Deaths	F
354	f. Cutaneous Manifestations	F
355	g. Conducted Energy Device (e.g., TASER)	F
356		
357	25. Anaphylaxis Related Deaths	
358	a. Gross and Microscopic Findings	F
359	b. Laboratory Diagnostics	F
360		
361	26. Deaths due to Change in Atmosphere (i.e., Barotrauma)	F
362		
363	27. Environmental Exposure Deaths	
364	a. Hypothermia	F
365	b. Hyperthermia	F
366	c. Heat Stroke	F
367		
368	28. Fire / Thermal/ Burn Injuries	
369	a. Carbon Monoxide	AR
370	b. Identification of Fire Victims	F
371	c. Smoke and Fume Inhalation	F
372	d. Thermal Burns	F
373	e. Scalding Injuries	F
374	f. Thermal Artifacts	F
375	g. Arson Investigation	F
376	h. Self Immolation	F
377	i. Flash Fires	F
378	j. Chemical Burns	F
379		
380	29. Radiation Exposure	F
381		
382	30. Forensic Toxicology and Postmortem Chemistry	
383	a. Specimen Types, Collection, and Storage	AR
384	b. Ethanol	AR
385	c. Common Illicit Drugs (e.g., heroin, fentanyl, cocaine, methamphetamine)	AR
386	d. Alcohols other than Ethanol	F
387	e. Body Packing	F

388	f. Stimulants	F
389	g. Hallucinogens	F
390	h. Novel Psychoactive Substances	F
391	i. Over the Counter Drugs	F
392	j. Prescription Drugs (e.g., Insulin, Digoxin)	F
393	k. Opioids/Opiates	F
394	l. Sedatives/Hypnotics	F
395	m. Synthetic Cannabinoids	F
396	n. Mixed Drug Toxicity	F
397	o. Herbal Remedies	F
398	p. Inhalants	F
399	q. Carbon Monoxide	F
400	r. Ethylene Glycol	F
401	s. Poisons (e.g., Arsenic, Cyanide)	F
402	t. Anesthetics	F
403	u. Acids and Bases	F
404	v. Vitreous Chemistry	F
405	w. Entomotoxicology	F
406		
407	31. Toxicologic Analytic Methods	
408	a. Methodology	F
409	b. Screening Tests	F
410	c. Confirmatory Tests	F
411		
412	32. Interpretive Toxicology	
413	a. Postmortem Redistribution	F
414	b. Drug Interactions	F
415	c. Metabolism and Pharmacogenetics	F
416		
417	33. Environmental and Industrial Toxicology	
418	a. Organophosphate Toxicity	F
419	b. Volatile Organic Compounds	F
420	c. Aromatic Halogenated Compounds	F
421	d. Metals	F
422	e. Pesticides	F
423		
424	34. Identification of Human Remains	
425	a. Fingerprints	F
426	b. Tattoos	F
427	c. Forensic Radiology	F
428	d. Dental Identification	F
429	e. Disaster Victim Identification	F
430	f. Missing and Unidentified Persons	F
431	g. Dental Age Estimation	F
432	h. DNA Identification	F
433	i. Unique Physical Characteristics	F

434		
435	35. Postmortem Changes and Artifacts	
436	a. Rigor Mortis	C
437	b. Livor Mortis	C
438	c. Algor Mortis	C
439	d. Common Postmortem Artifacts	AR
440	e. Time of Death/Postmortem Interval	F
441	f. Postmortem Insect Activity	F
442	g. Postmortem Animal Activity	F
443	h. Postmortem Trauma	F
444	i. Chemical Changes in Body Fluids	F
445	j. Forensic Entomology	F
446	k. Collection of Entomological Evidence	F
447	l. Embalming	F
448	m. Exhumation	F
449	n. Cremations	F
450	o. Decomposition	F
451		
452	36. Forensic Anthropology	
453	a. Human Osteology	F
454	b. Gender Determination	F
455	c. Age Estimation	F
456	d. Ancestry Assessment	F
457	e. Stature Estimation	F
458	f. Trauma Effects and Tool Mark Analysis	F
459	g. Taphonomy of Fire	F
460	h. Animal Scavenging	F
461	i. Nonhuman Remains	F
462		
463	37. Elder Abuse	
464	a. Neglect	F
465	b. Blunt Trauma	F
466	c. Drug Toxicity	F
467	d. Malnutrition	F
468	e. Dehydration	F
469	f. Pressure Ulcers	F
470	g. Sexual Abuse	F
471		
472	38. Pregnancy-Related Deaths	
473	a. Pulmonary Artery Thromboembolism	AR
474	b. Amniotic Fluid Embolism	AR
475	c. Coronary Artery Dissection	AR
476	d. Preeclampsia/Eclampsia/HELLP Syndrome	AR
477	e. Coagulation Disorders	AR
478	f. Utero-Placental Hemorrhage	AR
479	g. Infection	AR

480	h. Venous Air Embolism	F
481	i. Peripartum Cardiomyopathy	F
482	j. Acute Fatty Liver of Pregnancy	F
483		
484	39. Sex-Related Deaths	
485	a. Sexual Assault	F
486	b. Trace Evidence	F
487	c. Bite Marks	F
488	d. DNA Analysis	F
489	e. Criminal Abortion	F
490	f. Autoerotic Deaths	F
491	g. Special Procedures (e.g., Dissection & Evidence Collection)	F
492	h. Drug-Facilitated	F
493		
494	40. Complications of Diagnostic and Therapeutic Procedures	
495	a. Resuscitation Artifacts	AR
496	b. Surgical/Medical Complications / Intervention Artifact	AR
497		
498	41. Water-Related Deaths	
499	a. Natural Deaths while in Water	F
500	b. Drowning	F
501	c. Near Drowning	F
502	d. S.C.U.B.A related	F
503	e. Injuries Sustained in the Water	F
504	f. Dangerous Aquatic Life	F
505	g. Bodies Found in Water	F
506		
507	42. Acute Stress Related Deaths	
508	a. Acute Psychotic Episodes	F
509	b. Excited/Agitated States	F
510	c. Stimulant Drug Toxicity	F
511	d. Physical Altercations/Restraint Related	F
512	e. Stress-Related Sudden Death	F
513		
514	43. Mental Illness Related Mortality	
515	a. Schizophrenia	F
516	b. Depression/Bipolar	F
517	c. Eating Disorders	F
518	d. Medical Management Complications	F
519	e. Substance Use Disorder	F
520		
521	44. Jurisprudence and Certification of Death	
522	a. Death Certification	C
523	b. Proximate Cause of Death	C
524	c. Contributory Conditions	C
525	d. Mechanisms of Death	AR

526	e. Manner of Death	AR
527	f. Death from Remote Events	F
528	g. Undetermined Manner of Death	F
529	h. Forensic Pathologist as Expert Witness	F
530	i. Degrees of Certainty for Manner Determination	F
531		
532	45. Criminalistics	
533	a. Chain of Custody	AR
534	b. Crime Scene	F
535	c. Scene Integrity	F
536	d. Blood Stain Pattern Interpretation	F
537	e. Biological Evidence on the Body	F
538	f. Trace Evidence	F
539		
540	46. Bioterrorism and Chemical Agents	F
541		
542	47. Molecular Pathology	
543	a. Thrombophilias	AR
544	b. Hemoglobinopathies	AR
545	c. DNA for Identification	F
546	d. Sudden Unexplained Deaths	F
547	e. Preservation of Samples	F
548		
549	48. Transportation Related Deaths	
550	a. Scene Investigation	F
551	b. Pedestrian Deaths	F
552	c. Motor Vehicle Deaths	F
553	d. Determination of the Driver	F
554	e. Ejected or Entrapped Occupant	F
555	f. Run Over by Vehicle	F
556	g. Seat Belt and Airbag Related Injuries	F
557	h. Motor Vehicle Fires	F
558	i. Motorcycle Related Deaths	F
559	j. Bicycle Related Deaths	F
560	k. Train Related Deaths	F
561	l. Aircraft	F
562	m. Aircraft Crash Scene	F
563		
564	49. In-Custody Deaths	F
565		
566	50. Postmortem Radiology	
567	a. Plain Film Radiography	F
568	b. Computed Tomography	F
569	c. Documentation of Injuries	F
570	d. Decedent Identification	F
571	e. Foreign Body Identification	F

572	f. Pediatric Skeletal Surveys	F
573	g. Stillborn versus Live Born Imaging	F
574		
575	51. Selected Topics/Management in Forensic Pathology	
576	a. Medicolegal Autopsy Report	F
577	b. Administration and Management	F
578	c. Quality Assurance	F
579	d. Autopsy Hazards	F
580	e. Regulations and Safety	F
581	f. Mass Disasters	F
582	g. Organ/Tissue Procurement	F
583		
584	52. Autopsy Procedures	
585	a. Evisceration Techniques	AR
586	b. Leg Vein Dissection	AR
587	c. Spinal Cord Removal, Anterior and Posterior	AR
588	d. Layered Anterior and Posterior Neck	F
589	e. Orbital Exenteration	F
590	f. Vertebral Artery	F
591	g. Facial Tissue Dissection	F
592	h. Posterior Subcutaneous Examination	F
593	i. Middle Ear Dissection	F
594	j. Cardiac Conduction System	F
595	k. Medical Device Evaluation	F
596		
597		