

DANB CDA Cheat Sheet 2026

The night-before summary, built like the exam.

245 Scored questions	3h 15m Time limit	— Passing score
\$450 Exam fee	Dental Assisting Nationa... Governing body	— Pass rate

The numbers to remember

- 245 total questions on the combined CDA exam
- 195 minutes (3 hours 15 minutes) total time limit
- RHS component: 75 questions / 60 minutes
- GC component: 95 questions / 75 minutes
- ICE component fills the remaining questions and minutes within that same 245-question, 195-minute block
- Work experience pathway: 3,500 hours minimum, over 2-4 years
- Traditional-candidate exam fee: \$450
- Application fee: \$75 (non-refundable, always)
- Cancellation-after-authorization fee: \$40 (in addition to the forfeited \$75)
- Test window after authorization: 60 days
- Certification renewal: annually

Subtests and scores

The CDA exam is three scored components taken in one sitting: RHS (Radiation Health and Safety), ICE (Infection Control), and GC (General Chairside). DANB does not publish a specific numeric cut score or scaled passing score for these components in its public materials — don't trust a precise "you need X points" figure from an unofficial source. Instead, prepare to perform accurately and confidently across all three areas rather than chasing a target number. GC carries the largest question count of the three named components, so it's the single biggest content area to master.

High-yield review areas

- RHS: x-ray equipment operation, radiation biology and safety, patient/operator protection, image quality
- ICE: sterilization and disinfection procedures, PPE, hazard communication, disease-transmission prevention
- GC: chairside assisting across specialties, patient education, dental materials preparation and care — the broadest content pool of the three

Top traps

- Assuming there's one flat "CDA score" — it's three separately scored components administered together, not one blended score
- Underestimating RHS because it's the smallest section by question count — radiation-safety questions are detail-heavy and precise
- Treating the \$75 application fee as refundable if plans change — it is not, under any circumstances
- Waiting near the end of your 60-day test window to schedule — book as soon as you're authorized
- Forgetting that CDA certification requires annual renewal — passing the exam isn't the end of the commitment
- Studying each component in isolation instead of practicing the full 195-minute combined session, which is how the real exam actually runs

- Assuming eligibility hours can be rushed — the 3,500-hour minimum must be accrued over at least two years, so there's no way to compress the timeline by working extra shifts in a single month

Official sources

- Dental Assisting National Board (DANB) — DANB - CDA National Application Packet: <https://danbsfprodassets.azureedge.net/assets/docs/default-source/national-application-packets/cda-application-packet.pdf>
- Dental Assisting National Board (DANB) — DANB - CDA Exam: <https://www.danb.org/exams/exam/cda-exam>
- Dental Assisting National Board (DANB) — DANB - GC Exam: <https://www.danb.org/exams/exam/gc-exam>

Free practice questions for this exam: www.everyexamprep.com/practice/exams/healthcare/danb-cda