

California RDA Cheat Sheet 2026

The night-before summary, built like the exam.

Questions	Time limit	Passing score
\$46.59 Exam fee	Dental Board of California Governing body	

The numbers to remember

- Written exam fee: \$46.59
- License application fee: \$120 (nonrefundable, due before scheduling)
- Application abandonment: exam must be taken within 2 years of application receipt
- Retake/reschedule window after a fail or miss: about 7-10 business days through PSI
- Work experience pathway: at least 15 months and 1,280 hours
- Required coursework: 8 hours Infection Control, 32 hours Radiation Safety
- License renewal: every 2 years, \$100 fee, 25 CE units required (waived first renewal)

Subtests and scores

The written exam is not split into separately scored subtests; instead it is scored across four weighted content domains from a single outline. The Dental Board of California does not publish a specific numeric cut score or fixed question count in its public materials, so do not trust any exact pass-percentage figure unless it traces back to an official Board or PSI source. Treat the exam as pass/fail against a fixed standard, not a curve against other candidates, and expect the standard computer-based licensing exam format: check-in at a PSI testing center, a timed session, and a near-immediate result.

High-yield review areas

- Dental Procedures — 50%. The single largest domain by far; chairside treatment-support knowledge deserves the majority of your final review, since it alone outweighs the other three domains combined.
- Infection Control and Health and Safety — 25%. Sterilization, barrier technique, and hazard management; pairs directly with your 8-hour Infection Control coursework, so revisit those course notes rather than starting from scratch.
- Assessment and Diagnostic Records — 15%. Reviewing patient history and diagnostic information used to plan care; smaller but still worth a focused pass the night before.
- Laws and Regulations — 10%. Licensing requirements and scope-of-practice rules; the smallest domain, but do not skip it entirely, since a handful of easy points here can offset a rough section elsewhere.

Top traps

- Assuming the exam works like a walk-in test — it is fee-gated (\$46.59 written exam fee) and scheduled through PSI, not a drop-in.
- Letting an application sit unaddressed — it is deemed abandoned after 2 years without taking the exam, forcing you to reapply and repay fees.
- Studying all four domains equally instead of weighting time toward Dental Procedures (50%) and Infection Control (25%), which together make up three-quarters of the exam.
- Assuming CE is required at every renewal — the 25-unit requirement applies to renewal cycles, except the very first renewal, which is CE-free.
- Panicking after a fail — rescheduling through PSI generally opens back up within about 7-10 business days, so plan your next attempt rather than treating one miss as final.

Official sources

- Dental Board of California — Registered Dental Assistant Applicants - Dental Board of California: https://www.dbc.ca.gov/applicants/become_licensed_rda.shtml
- Dental Board of California — Registered Dental Assistant Combined Written and Law and Ethics Examination Outline (2023) - Dental Board of California: https://www.dbc.ca.gov/formspubs/rda_exam_outline.pdf
- Dental Board of California — Renewal Information - Registered Dental Assistants, Registered Dental Assistants in Extended Functions, Orthodontic Assistants, and Dental Sedation Assistants - Dental Board of California: https://www.dbc.ca.gov/licensees/dental_auxiliaries.shtml

Free practice questions for this exam: www.everyexamprep.com/exams/ca-rda/practice-test