**American Board of Surgery**
**Tutorial on Computer-Based Testing**

Welcome to the American Board of Surgery tutorial on computer-based testing for examinations administered in conjunction with Pearson VUE Professional Testing Centers. This tutorial will familiarize prospective examinees with the computer skills needed to take such examinations.

The first and most important point is that computer-based examinations are easy to use, even for Diplomates who may have little computer experience. This tutorial is designed to familiarize you with the computer screens you will see during the examination and the steps necessary to respond to questions, move on to the next question, and review your responses. **In addition to this tutorial, you will be allowed ample practice on the test center computer before you begin the actual examination. The practice time will not count as part of the examination time.**

Your computer station at the examination center will include a computer screen, a mouse, and a keyboard. Responses and functions can be selected by using the mouse or the keyboard. The mouse controls the cursor (pointer) on the computer screen. You move the cursor by resting your hand on the mouse and sliding it slowly on the mouse pad with the mouse buttons facing away from you.

If you run out of room on the mouse pad, lift the mouse and move it back to the center of the mouse pad. To click a button, slide the mouse on the mouse pad until the pointer is directly over the button. Then gently press (click) and release the LEFT mouse button.
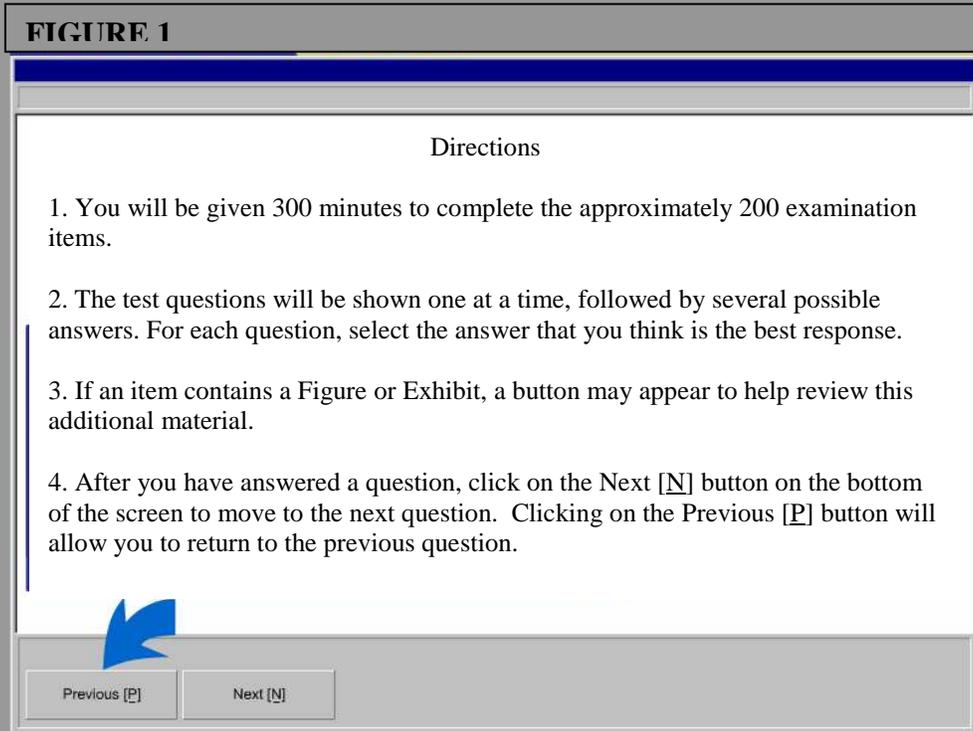
Prior to the actual examination you will be shown one or more **display screens**. These display screens do not have questions but they do have important information. The number of display screens and the type of information presented will vary by specific test, so be sure to read all of the information carefully and proceed as instructed. An example of such a screen is shown in Figure 1. Particularly note the **Previous [P]** and the **Next [N]** button in the bottom left corner of each screen. These buttons are for maneuvering back and forward, respectively. Should you wish to back up and review a screen you've already seen, select the **Previous [P]** button. It moves you back one screen. Selecting the **Next [N]** button moves you forward one screen. If the button name is grayed-out (e.g., Item 1), it indicates that the button is not available for that screen.

These (and any other buttons) can be selected by using either:

- The mouse or

- A combination of keys on your keyboard. For example, to select the **Next [N]** button, you can press the **N** key on you keypad while holding down the **Alt** key.

**Note:** The letter in parentheses on a button indicates the letter you will type while holding down the **Alt** key.

**FIGURE 1**

Directions

1. You will be given 300 minutes to complete the approximately 200 examination items.

2. The test questions will be shown one at a time, followed by several possible answers. For each question, select the answer that you think is the best response.

3. If an item contains a Figure or Exhibit, a button may appear to help review this additional material.

4. After you have answered a question, click on the Next [N] button on the bottom of the screen to move to the next question. Clicking on the Previous [P] button will allow you to return to the previous question.

Previous [P]     Next [N]

After you have reviewed the display screens but before you begin the actual examination, you will be asked to confirm that you are ready to begin. This will be in the form of a dialogue box (shown below). Clicking the **No** button will return to the previous screen. Clicking the **Yes** button will begin the examination.

**Ready to Begin Exam**

If you are ready to begin the exam, select the Yes button. Otherwise, select the No button to return to the previous screen.

Yes     No
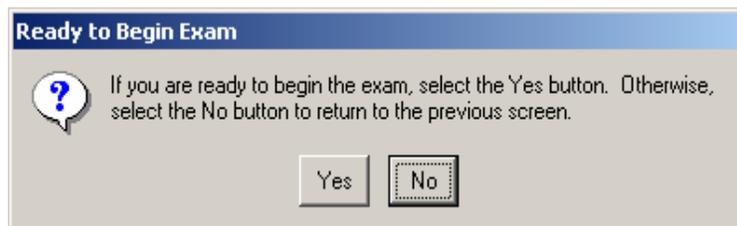
Once you begin the examination, you will then see **item screens** that contain the questions to be answered. An example of a typical item screen is shown in Figure 2.

**FIGURE 2**
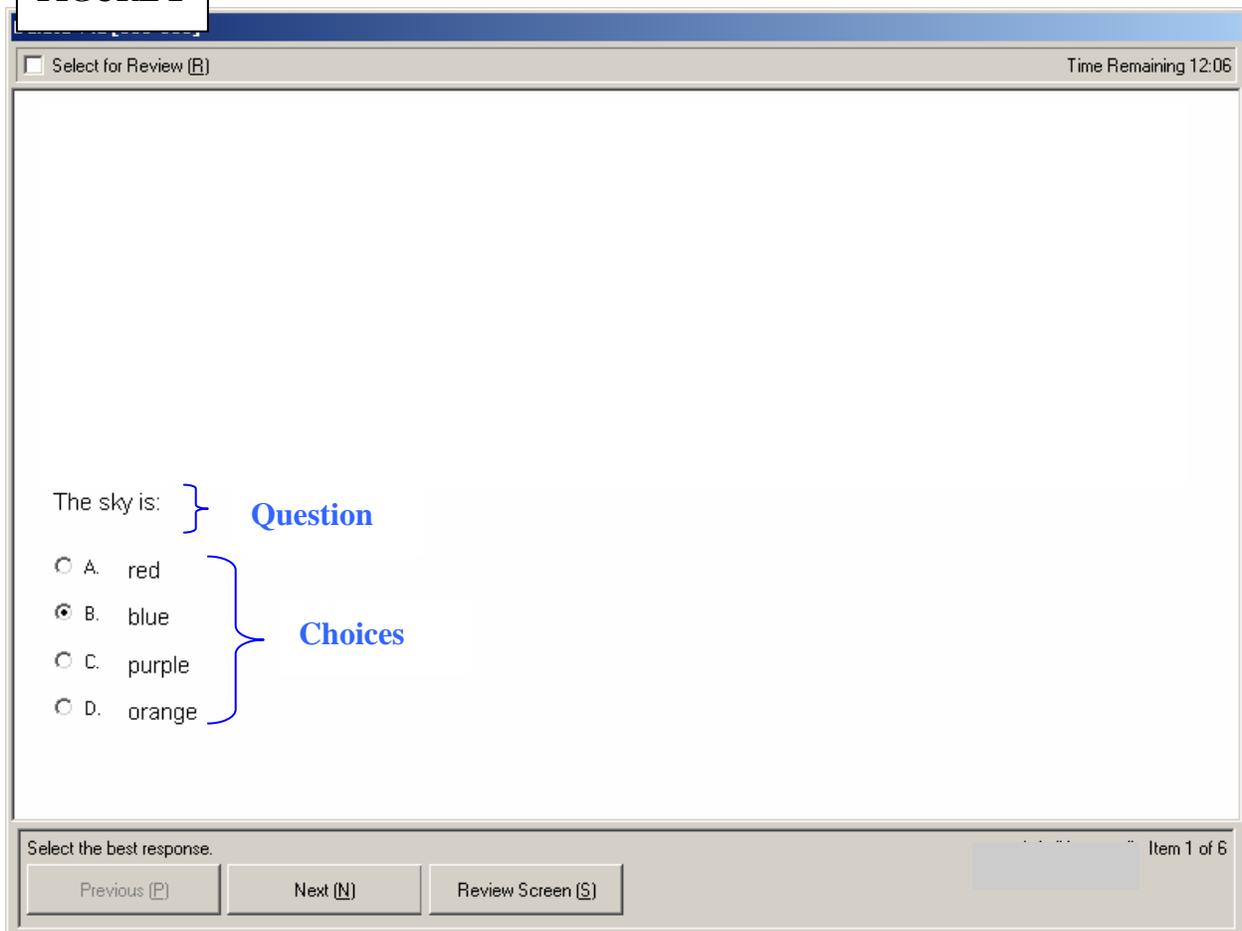
Item screens contain both the Question and the Choices. There are four (4) ways to mark your answer to a multiple-choice question. You can select an answer by:

1.  Clicking on the circle to the left of the answer.

2.  Clicking on the answer itself.

3.  Clicking on the letter (e.g., A, B, C, or D).

4.  Typing the letter on the keyboard that matches the answer.
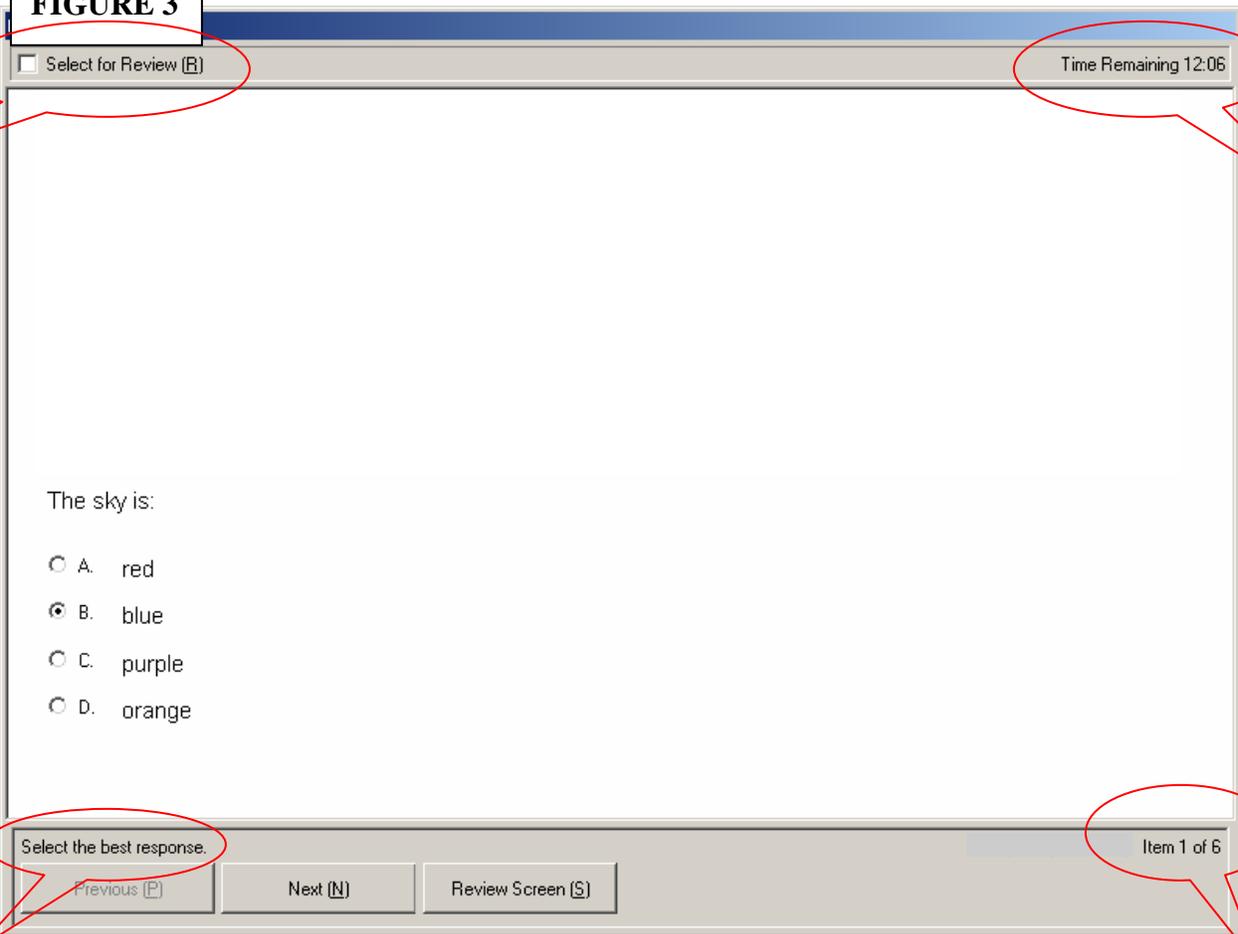
Clicking on an answer you have already chosen will remove the choice and leave it unanswered. For items where you are asked for the single best response, you are allowed only one answer. If you first select letter **A** and then select letter **B**, your first answer is removed. The last selection is the recorded answer.

It is important to note that, in contrast to the display screens, item screens contain the following additional information and instructions:

- Item Prompt
- Item Information
- Time Remaining
- Select for Review

The location of each of these, along with a description of its function, is also shown in Figure 3.

3

**FIGURE 3**

Time Remaining 12:06

The sky is:

○ A.  red
◉ B.  blue
○ C.  purple
○ D.  orange

Select the best response.

Item 1 of 6

Previous (P)    Next (N)    Review Screen (S)

*Item Prompt* – This provides directions about how to answer the question. For most items it will be the single best response.

*Item Information* – As you navigate through an examination, you can pace yourself by referring to the item information. Item information includes the current item number and the total number of items.

*Time Remaining* – At any point in the examination you can see how much time you have remaining. In the example in Figure 3, the time remaining is 12 minutes and 6 seconds. When no time remains the screen will automatically go blank and the examination will end. It is important for you to periodically check the time remaining.

> ***Select for Review*** – Use this box to mark a question you may want to return to later. If you select an item for review, it will be flagged so you can easily identify it. Review of items must be done during the testing time. You can select items for review whether you have answered them or not. To mark an item for review:
>
> - Use the mouse to move the pointer to the square box and then LEFT click the mouse button.
>
> - Or use the keyboard by holding down the **Alt** key and type the letter **R**.
>
> A check mark will appear in the box when it has been selected. If you wish to uncheck your selection, click on the box again and the check mark will disappear.

Additional information on using the review function is given below.

Some items may not fit on the screen. For these items, a gray scroll bar will appear along the right side and/or the bottom of the screen. To reveal the rest of the question, either use the mouse to click the scroll bar(s) down or to the right or click the arrows associated with the scroll bars. You can also use the keyboard by pressing **Page Down** or **Page Up** or by pressing the arrow keys. (Note: If your mouse contains a mouse wheel it will not be activated).

If you attempt to answer a question without scrolling to the bottom of a screen, a user prompt will appear to remind you to review the entire question and choices before indicating an answer. To close this user prompt, click on the **OK** button and then scroll down the page to review the remainder of the item. Be sure to read all the information carefully and then proceed to the next item.

You can review selected items at any time by selecting the **Review [S]** button at any time. This button is to the right of the Next [N] button (as shown in Figure 2). This will produce an Item Review Screen (Figure 4). This screen identifies unanswered items as "**Incomplete**." In the example shown, the examination has just begun and all items are marked as incomplete (also, note the scroll bar at the bottom). When an item has been answered, it will be displayed as "**Complete**."

The check boxes next to each item indicate those that were selected for review from the item screen. In the example shown, item #8, #20, and #40 had been selected for review.

Also note the three (3) buttons on the bottom left of the item review screen. These buttons function as follows:

- **Review All [A]** – selects all items in the examination.

- **Review Incomplete [I]** – moves you through each item that is incomplete.

- **Review Selected [V]** – moves you through each selected item.

You can also double-click on any item on the item review screen to go to that item within the examination.

You will also be able to review items when you reach the last item in the examination, by selecting the **Next [N]** button will move you to the review screen. Note: Selecting an item for review has no effect on your score unless you did not answer the question.
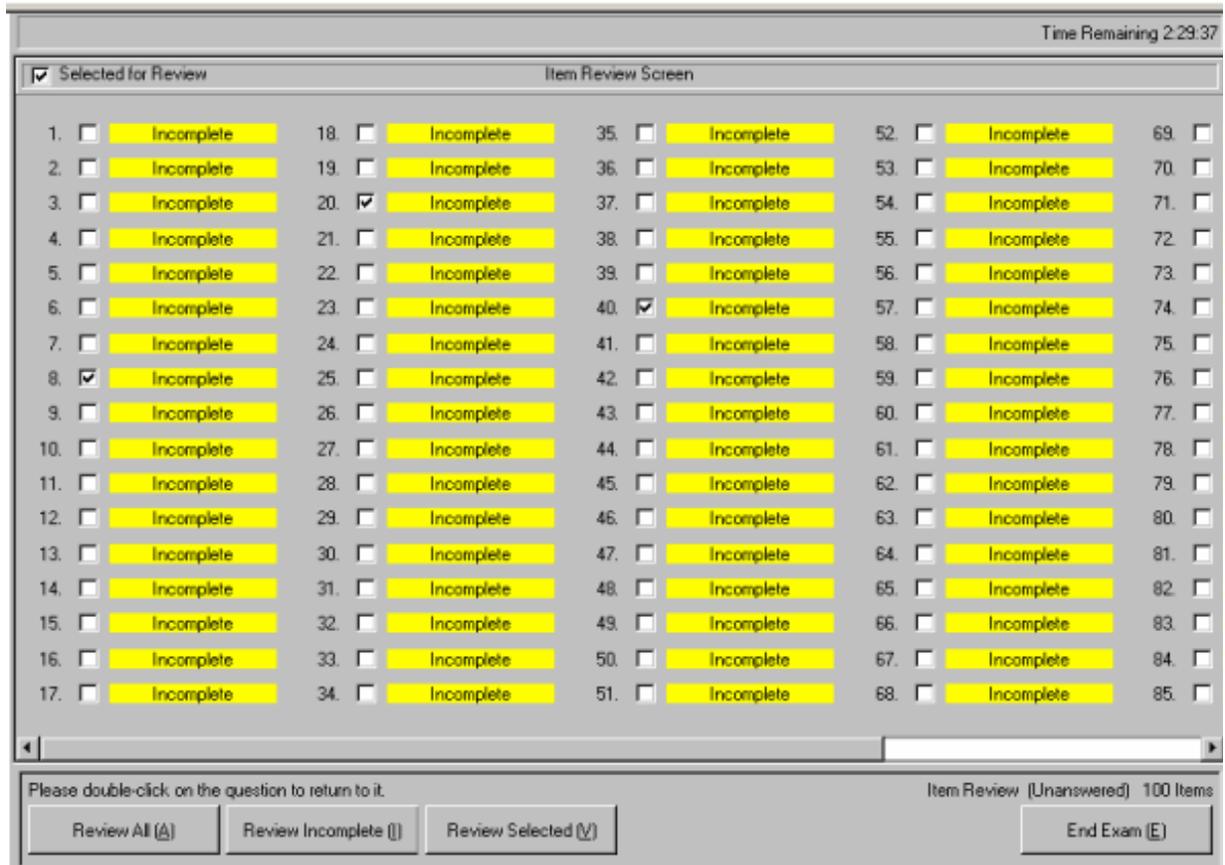


Also note the bottom right of the item review screen. The button there may be either an **End Exam [E]** (shown) or an **End Review [E]** button. Clicking on the End Exam [E] may end the examination and you may no longer go back and review or alter your responses. Again, **be sure to read all screen instructions carefully**.

Before the examination closes, you will be asked to confirm your desire to end the examination with a dialogue box shown below:
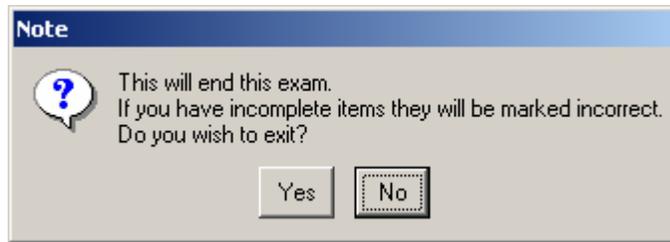
Clicking on the End Review [E] button (versus the End Exam [E] button) may take you back to the examination.

After you have completed the examination you will be asked to complete a survey of your experience with the examination. This survey takes no longer than10 minutes and is not part of the examination time. The survey is voluntary and will not affect your score. However, the Board would greatly appreciate your feedback.

**The Board hopes this tutorial has been helpful. Remember you will be given all necessary instructions and ample practice time at the test center prior to beginning your examination.**

Thank you and good luck!