

**ABPP Oral Exam
Tips and Advice
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Caveats

- Below we list general tips and advice. None of the advice is ABPP-sanctioned and it is not protected information that we learned during our Oral Exams.
- Everybody has different styles and preferences; what works for us may not work best for you.
- Overpreparation is a good strategy to help in situations of high pressure/anxiety. If you know the information inside and out, you'll be able to talk through it even if you feel nervous.
- Some of the suggestions below may not be realistic, depending on how much time you have for studying. Our approach was to dedicate as much time as we could to studying, knowing that this time will help us with both the exam process and in our daily neuropsychological practice. But a challenge for many of us with the oral exam is anxiety, and we don't want to create any unnecessary anxiety with seemingly unrealistic expectations. If one of the suggestions below seems aspirational rather than mandatory, it probably is.

Fact Finding

- Practice handwriting an outline that is comfortable for you and covers all of the relevant areas to assess in a clinical interview.
 - Think carefully about your ideal outline based on your own style/preferences and practice it over and over.
 - Include topics that would be obvious in a real world scenario but wouldn't be obvious in the artificial fact find scenario (e.g., is there a collateral source? does the patient speak English?).
 - The outline is critical and it should be an efficient and natural process to write it out, even under pressure.
 - Use shorthand to reduce the time it takes to create the outline (e.g., "dev" instead of "developmental history") and try to get it down to <3 minutes.
- Practice fact finding multiple times with different examiners (including people you don't know well). This is key to improving skills at the fact finding process itself and to becoming comfortable with the process.
- While completing a fact find, always talk through your thought process to demonstrate your knowledge to the examiner.
- While completing a fact find, be aware of the time. Make sure to leave yourself enough time at the end to talk through summary/impressions/recommendations. In other words, work towards a balance where you're:
 - not rushing through the interview/test results portions
 - not spending excessive time in unnecessary areas
 - not simply reading/repeating information that is given to you
- When asking about a particular domain (e.g., sleep) or talking through a syndrome/topic (e.g., differential diagnosis), start broad and offer to go into more detail if necessary.
- Study functional neuroanatomy and neurological/neuropsychological syndromes (e.g., prefrontal cortex neuroanatomy, Papez circuit, Gerstmann's syndrome).
- Study areas of weakness for you (e.g., limbic encephalitis, transient global amnesia, hypothyroidism, hepatic encephalopathy) in case one of these syndromes is part of the fact finding. A good way to do this is to carefully read a chapter in a comprehensive neuropsych book (e.g., [Textbook](#) or [Boards Study Guide](#)) and/or find and read 1-2 recent and thorough review articles on the topic.
- Practice fact finding using the [casebook](#).
- Observe others going through the process (e.g., NavNeuro episodes [109](#) and [112](#)).

Practice Samples

- Learn your cases extremely well. Read the reports multiple times. Be able to succinctly present each case (in ~2-3 minutes) if asked to do so by the examiner.
- Go through each report and brainstorm for lists of all possible questions that could be asked of you. If necessary, read up on literature pertaining to the case (both central and ancillary topics). You could be asked anything about your cases, even if it's only peripherally related. You want to know the significance of all of the diseases, syndromes, medication effects, behavioral observations, test scores, etc. that could be relevant.
- Be able to defend every decision you made in the case. This includes the test battery, use of teleneuropsych (if applicable), norms, collateral interviews, impressions/conclusions, etc.
- Be able to discuss the norms for all tests used in your two batteries. This includes larger normative sets (e.g., Wechsler, Heaton) and smaller normative sets (e.g., one publication with norms for the JLO).
- Write down and/or practice providing answers to questions that you anticipate being asked so that you can answer clearly and succinctly (similar to when we prepare to present our dissertation during internship interviews).
- Ask several friends/colleagues/mentors to read your cases and grill you about them. Ask them to be as harsh and nitpicky as possible, to help you prepare for any/all questions that might be asked.
- Keep in mind that more preparation will be required for more complex cases and topics that are more outside of your wheelhouse.
- Reread your reports immediately before the exam so the details are fresh in your mind.

Ethics and Professional Practice

- This is the most straightforward aspect of the oral exam, but still requires preparation.
- Read the APA ethics code multiple times. Think through the General Principles and the Ethical Standards and how they might relate to real world practice in neuropsychology (this could include generating and thinking through mini ethical vignettes in your mind as you're studying).
- Create ~1-page ethical vignettes (littered with ethical infractions) for study partners and have them generate vignettes for you. (Also use the [BRAIN](#) vignettes for this purpose.) Then practice going through the unfamiliar vignettes cold and talking through each ethical infraction as you go.
- Read through the ASPPB Code of Conduct and general HIPAA guidelines.
- Read through laws in your state that relate to neuropsychology.
- Be prepared to talk through general questions about your career. Think about your answers to typical interview questions (e.g., future goals, strengths and weaknesses) and how you remain current with research and developments in the field. Be prepared to discuss important big picture issues in neuropsychology (e.g., cultural neuropsych, issues around norms, where the field is going in the future).
- Be prepared to discuss an ethical dilemma you've faced and how you responded, as well as your general ethical decision-making process (consider reading the Oxford Ethical Decision Making [book](#) on the topic).