

Student Study Guide



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Year 1: Foundations & Core Concepts

Goal: Build strong knowledge of anatomy, physiology, and basic medical principles.

Sample Questions:

1. What is the difference between intracellular and extracellular fluid, and why does it matter clinically?
2. What are the primary functions of the liver in dogs and cats?
3. Why is homeostasis important, and how does disease disrupt it?
4. What factors influence drug absorption and distribution in small animals?
5. What is the normal canine vs feline heart rate, and why do they differ?

Clinical Thinking Prompts:

1. Why is understanding normal anatomy and physiology essential before learning diagnostics?
2. How does stress impact vital signs in a clinical setting?



Year 2: Systems, Disease, and Diagnostics

Goal: Connect pathology to clinical signs and begin diagnostic reasoning.

Sample Questions:

1. A dog presents with polyuria and polydipsia. What are your top differentials?
2. What is the difference between pre-renal, renal, and post-renal azotemia?
3. How does inflammation differ from infection?
4. When would you recommend radiographs vs ultrasound in a GP setting?

NAVLE-Style Scenario:

1. A middle-aged dog presents with vomiting, lethargy, and abdominal pain. Bloodwork shows elevated lipase and amylase.
2. What is the most likely diagnosis?
3. What are appropriate initial GP-level treatments?



Year 3: Clinical Application & Case Management

Goal: Apply knowledge in real-world cases and practice communication skills.

Sample Questions:

1. A cat presents for weight loss and increased appetite. What diagnostics do you recommend first?
2. How do you prioritize diagnostics when a client has financial constraints?
3. What are common causes of acute vomiting vs chronic vomiting in dogs?
4. How do you approach a new puppy visit from a preventive care standpoint?

Communication & Ethics Prompts:

1. How do you explain a treatment plan to a client with no medical background?
2. How do you handle a situation where a client declines a recommended diagnostic?



Year 4: Practice Readiness & NAVLE-Level Thinking

Goal: Transition from student to practice-ready veterinarian.

Sample Questions:

1. A dog presents with pale mucous membranes and tachycardia. What are your top differentials?
2. A cat has inappropriate urination. What medical causes must you rule out before assuming behavior?
3. What are common post-op complications following a spay or neuter?

Practice Readiness Prompts:

1. What does a typical GP day look like?
2. How do you manage time and case flow in a busy or growing clinic?
3. What makes a strong doctor–technician partnership?



NAVLE Prep

This section provides strategies to help you think like a veterinarian and approach questions confidently.

Tips for Approaching NAVLE Questions

1. Identify the species

- Many questions rely on species-specific physiology, disease prevalence, and normal values.
- Ask yourself: "Is this a dog, cat, horse, cow, or exotic species?" — this will often narrow the answer options immediately.

2. Determine the most likely diagnosis — not every possibility

- NAVLE questions are designed to test clinical reasoning, not your memory of every rare condition.
- Focus on the most common or likely cause based on age, species, and presenting signs.

3. Select the best next step — not all options

- Many questions include multiple reasonable options. The key is to choose the most appropriate immediate action, whether diagnostic, therapeutic, or preventative.
- Ask yourself: "What would a general practice veterinarian do first?"

4. Categorize the question: emergency, diagnostic, or management

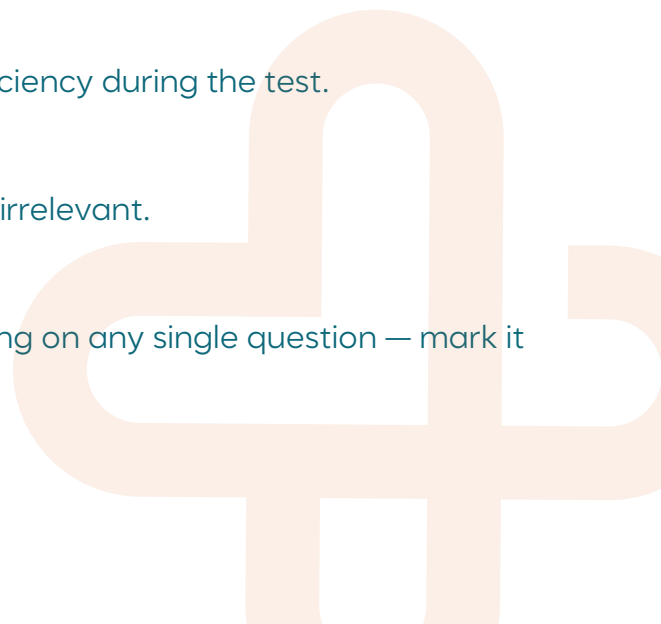
- Quickly identify if the patient needs immediate stabilization, further testing, or long-term management.
- This helps narrow answer choices and improves efficiency during the test.

5. Eliminate obviously wrong answers

- Cross out answers that are clearly inappropriate or irrelevant.

6. Time management

- NAVLE is timed, so pace yourself. Don't spend too long on any single question — mark it and return if needed.



Sample NAVLE Questions

Question 1:

A 6-year-old dog presents with coughing and exercise intolerance. Radiographs show an enlarged cardiac silhouette.

Most appropriate next diagnostic step:

- A. CBC
- B. Fecal exam
- C. Echocardiogram ✓
- D. Urinalysis

Explanation: The primary concern is heart disease, not infection or kidney disease. Echocardiogram is the best next step to evaluate cardiac structure and function.

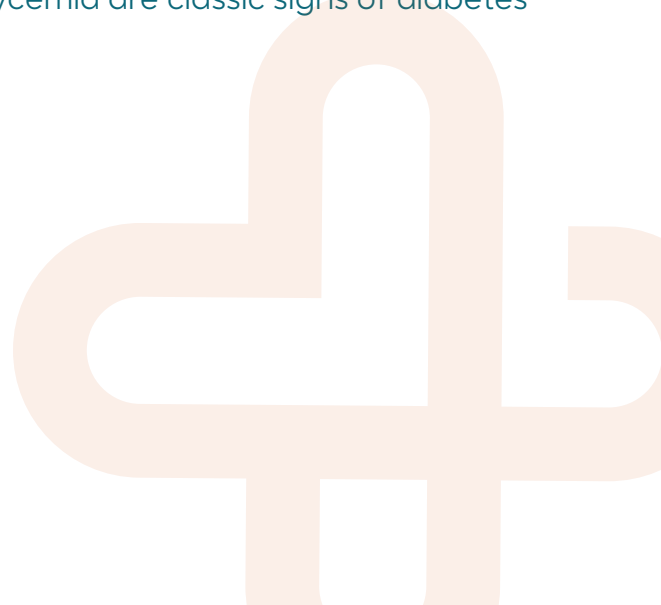
Question 2:

A 4-year-old cat presents with increased thirst, urination, and weight loss. Bloodwork shows hyperglycemia.

Most likely diagnosis:

- A. Hyperthyroidism
- B. Diabetes mellitus ✓
- C. Chronic kidney disease
- D. Cushing's disease

Explanation: Polyuria, polydipsia, weight loss, and hyperglycemia are classic signs of diabetes mellitus in cats.



Sample NAVLE Questions

Question 3:

A dog presents with acute vomiting and abdominal pain. Lab results indicate elevated pancreatic enzymes.

Best immediate management step:

- A. Administer IV fluids ✓
- B. Start antibiotics
- C. Perform an endoscopy
- D. Discharge with diet changes

Explanation: Acute pancreatitis requires supportive care first, primarily IV fluids and pain management.



Study Skills & Success Tips

1. Study by system, not memorization

- Break down learning into organ systems (cardiovascular, renal, gastrointestinal, etc.) rather than trying to memorize facts randomly.
- Connect anatomy, physiology, pathology, and pharmacology within each system to see the "big picture."
- This approach improves clinical reasoning and makes NAVLE questions easier to tackle.

2. Use case-based learning for deeper understanding

- Apply your knowledge to real-world scenarios rather than just reviewing notes.
- Work through clinical cases, practice diagnosing, and propose treatment plans.
- Discuss cases with classmates, mentors, or online forums (like VIN) to see different approaches.

3. Focus on bread-and-butter GP cases

- Prioritize the most common cases you will see in small-animal general practice: skin infections, ear infections, vomiting/diarrhea, lameness, wellness exams, and preventive care.
- Mastering these cases builds confidence for both clinical rotations and NAVLE-style reasoning.
- Understanding these core cases first allows you to approach rarer cases more effectively.

4. Make the most of externships

- Treat externships as hands-on learning laboratories. Ask questions, observe procedures, and take notes.
- See how GP veterinarians make decisions in real time — this reinforces both practical skills and NAVLE concepts.
- Actively participate in patient care, client communication, and clinic workflow whenever possible.

Study Skills & Success Tips

Additional Tips for Success

- Set a consistent study schedule: short, focused sessions are better than cramming.
- Teach what you learn: explaining concepts to a peer helps cement your understanding.
- Reflect on clinical experiences: after each rotation or case, note what went well and what could be improved.
- Balance study and wellness: good sleep, exercise, and breaks enhance retention and reduce burnout.



Trusted NAVLE & Veterinary Resources

Resource	Description info	Link
AAVSB	Official NAVLE test blueprints and licensing info	https://www.aavsb.org
VetPrep	Online NAVLE prep platform with question banks and mock exams	https://vetprep.com
Zuku Review	NAVLE study tools including flashcards and practice questions	https://zukureview.com
VIN	Veterinary Information Network — cases, forums, resources	https://www.vin.com
VetCandy	Provides a free 12 week NAVLE prep course to all clinical year DVM students	https://www.myvetcandy.com/prep-1
International Council for Veterinary Assessment	The official site for NAVLE support and registration	https://www.icva.net/navle/

