



Strategies to Stop or Redirect Questionable or Prohibited Conversations

You hear someone talking about specific exam content. Let's walk through some scenarios to learn five ways to stop and/or redirect. **Note** that while we aim to be specific, we cannot predict every possible scenario, so this list is not inclusive of all red flags needing action.



Your peers are talking about preparing for their exam. They begin to discuss specifics beyond the published exam content outline. They may or may not mention something seen when testing or that they heard from someone else.

Context is important here. For example, ethical review course instructors will use the exam content outline to write their own original practice questions or offer a deep dive into textbook-based subject matter.

YOUR FIRST OPTION IS TO SIMPLY ASK FOR A PAUSE.

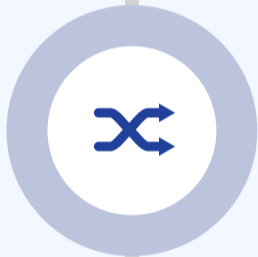
Just as operating room nurses can call a time-out for patient safety, feel empowered to **call a time-out** on the conversation. Share your opinion that the discussion feels very specific. Bring others into the pause. Ask where they heard this information. Ask if they are aware of PNCB exam ethics. Direct them to the **PNCB toolkit** which gives examples of prohibited discussions and outlines consequences.

Red flags in conversations include phrases like:

- This question was on my exam.
- I was surprised this topic was on the exam.
- Be sure to remember XYZ for [specific topic].
- I heard this from a recent tester.
- I wrote down what I heard from other testers.
- Do you want to see a document we're all sharing with what we remembered?

Any red flags mean a full stop to the conversation. Tell those discussing the content that they must stop. At this point, you are ethically obligated to report this experience to PNCB. You can choose between calling or emailing PNCB or using the anonymous **tip reporting form**. You can additionally recount the incident to a supervisor, clinical educator, or faculty member.

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You recently tested and passed. You felt confident in your study plan and presented your plan during a hospital review course. Colleagues look to you for advice and mentoring. One of them asks what questions you remember or if something specific was on your exam.

REDIRECT AND EDUCATE PEERS. MAKE SURE EXAM ETHICS IS A TALKING POINT.

- The **content outline** is the essential resource as they prepare. Point colleagues to it if asked about specific exam topics. Ask them if they've reviewed the content outline, line by line, to identify their personal knowledge gaps. Suggest that they look up all topics areas, and especially areas of weakness, in a textbook on PNCB's reference list. They can also consider completing CE on those topics.
- Ask what they have done to prepare beyond the content outline. Compare notes on **study practices and habits**. Are they using smart goals? What practice tests and review materials have they used? Have they sought out or initiated a study group?
- If red flags arise, pause the conversation and refer to **PNCB's toolkit** to help them stay on the right side of exam ethics.
- If problem conversation continues, use the firmer tactics below.

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A questionable or flagrant conversation does pause and redirect appropriately... then starts again. Or perhaps the conversation is fast-paced and difficult to de-escalate. You feel very certain the conversation is unethical.

ASK FOR A PAUSE. INFORM THOSE INVOLVED ABOUT THE BIGGER IMPLICATIONS OF EXAM ETHICS VIOLATIONS.

Possible talking points include:

- Exam ethics violations have a big impact. A certification board can stop an exam nationwide for everyone.
- This is against what we stand for as nurses.
- Ethics violations like this can hurt our profession (or specialty).
- This kind of discussion can jeopardize our future certification chances.
- **For advanced practice:** Passing this exam allows us to diagnose and treat children. To practice safely for our future patients, we can't earn certification unethically.

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There may be times you don't feel comfortable speaking up. Maybe the person talking is a supervisor or person with influence. In this scenario, you may need to remove yourself from the situation unfolding, but you still have a responsibility to act.

YOU MUST STILL REPORT THE INCIDENT.

You can call or email PNCB or use the anonymous **tip reporting form**. You can report the incident to a supervisor, clinical educator, or faculty member too.