

## CPR & Emergency Cardiovascular Care

As of August 31, 2016

### General ACLS Course Questions

**Q: What is the AHA's ACLS Course?**

**A:** The AHA's ACLS Course has been updated to reflect new science in the *2015 AHA Guidelines Update for CPR and ECC*. This course builds on the foundation of lifesaving BLS skills, emphasizing the importance of continuous, high-quality CPR. This advanced course highlights the importance of high-performance team dynamics and communication, systems of care, recognition and intervention of cardiopulmonary arrest, immediate post-cardiac arrest, acute dysrhythmia, stroke, and acute coronary syndromes.

The goal of the ACLS Provider Course is to improve outcomes for adult patients of cardiac arrest and other cardiopulmonary emergencies through early recognition and interventions by high-performance teams.

**Q: What specifically is taught in the new ACLS Course?**

**A:** After successfully completing the ACLS Course, students should be able to

- Apply the BLS, Primary, and Secondary Assessments sequence for a systematic evaluation of adult patients
- Perform prompt, high-quality BLS, including prioritizing early chest compressions and integrating early automated external defibrillator (AED) use
- Recognize and perform early management of respiratory arrest
- Discuss early recognition and management of ACS and stroke, including appropriate disposition
- Recognize and perform early management of bradyarrhythmias and tachyarrhythmias that may result in cardiac arrest or complicate resuscitation outcome
- Recognize and perform early management of cardiac arrest until termination of resuscitation or transfer of care, including immediate post-cardiac arrest care
- Model effective communication as a member or leader of a high-performance team
- Evaluate resuscitative efforts during a cardiac arrest through continuous assessment of CPR quality, monitoring the patient's physiologic response, and delivering real-time feedback to the team
- Recognize the impact of team dynamics on overall team performance
- Discuss how the use of a rapid response team or medical emergency team may improve patient outcomes
- Define systems of care

**Q: What are the key differences between the 2010 Guidelines version of the ACLS Course and the 2015 Guidelines version of the ACLS Course?**

**A:** The new ACLS Course includes the following changes:

- **New Educational Design:** The ACLS Course uses a variety of teaching methods and adult learning principles in an environment that, in some cases, will mimic (simulate) or actually be a real healthcare setting (such as the back of an ambulance or an emergency department bed). From an educational perspective, the closer the simulated emergency is to a real-life case, the better the transfer of skills.

Simulation, previously referred to as mock codes, has been the fundamental educational model for ACLS for more than 20 years. Although the technology is more sophisticated and the science of simulation education continues to expand, the fundamentals remain the same. Simulation offers students the opportunity to learn and practice their cognitive and psychomotor skills before applying them to real patients. There is ample evidence from many disciplines to support the effectiveness of such simulation-based education in improving participant knowledge, skills, team performance,

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leadership, and communication. For this reason, the ACLS Course continues to incorporate this model in its design.

- **Course Flexibility:** The AHA allows ACLS Instructors to tailor the ACLS course to meet audience-specific needs. One example of course flexibility is local protocol discussions built into some of the lessons. Also, some local protocols related to CPR can be implemented into the learning stations. Use of different protocols, such as 3 cycles of 200 continuous compressions with passive oxygen insufflation and airway adjuncts, compression-only CPR in the first few minutes after arrest, and continuous chest compressions with asynchronous ventilation once every 6 seconds with the use of a bag-mask device are a few examples of optimizing chest compression fraction (CCF) and high-quality CPR.

In addition, an increased number of case scenarios for a more diverse audience and the ability to build your own scenarios further expands the flexibility to tailor the ACLS course.

- **Mandatory Precourse Self-Assessment:** Before attending the ACLS Course, students must complete the mandatory precourse self-assessment located on the ACLS Student Website. They must achieve a score of 70% or higher, and they have unlimited chances to pass the precourse self-assessment. Students must print their completion certificate and bring it to their ACLS class.
- **Case Scenarios:** For the learning stations in the new ACLS Course, the AHA has added many new and diverse case-based scenarios within three settings (prehospital, emergency department, and in-hospital). New scenarios are rated by difficulty from 1 to 3, with 3 indicating the most difficult scenario. Instructors should use the scenario rating to match with the students' background, experience, and scope of practice. Also experienced Instructors may use the template and directions provided to create their own scenarios relevant to their students.
- **New Lesson Plans:** The AHA's 2016 Instructor materials include Lesson Plans (as opposed to Lesson Maps), which have been completely redesigned to better meet the needs of AHA Instructors.
- **New Videos:** New videos have been added to the ACLS Course DVD, including megacode videos for prehospital and in-hospital settings, 4 new algorithm videos, and a new "Coping with Death" video.
- **New Learning Stations:** New learning stations have been added, including, Immediate Post-Cardiac Arrest Care, optional Intraosseous Access, and optional Coping with Death.
- **ACLS Provider Manual:** The *ACLS Provider Manual* has been updated to include the revised systematic approach in part 4, which is consistent with PALS; a change in the flow of the cases in part 5 (removed CPR and AED case, which is now in the supplemental materials, added new post-cardiac arrest care case, and combined stable and unstable tachycardia case, cardiac arrest case – VF/pVT, asystole, and PEA); and new illustrations and ECGs.
- **ACLS Instructor Manual:** The new *ACLS Instructor Manual* now contains universal content for BLS, ACLS, and PALS.
- **Course Exam:** As part of new education methodologies, the AHA has adopted an open resource policy for course exams. Also, the ACLS Course exam is now 50 questions, including new scenario-based exam questions that challenge students to evaluate real-life situations and use critical-thinking skills to show mastery of course content.

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**Q: What is the format for the ACLS Instructor-led Course?**

A: In the ACLS Course, cognitive and psychomotor skills will be learned through small-group teaching, case scenario practice on a manikin as Team Leader and team members (i.e., hands-on learning), and use of large- or small group short video presentations with Instructor-student interaction (i.e., engage students in discussion). The course is designed to give students the opportunity to practice and demonstrate proficiency in the following skills used in resuscitation:

- Systematic approach
- High-quality BLS
- Airway management
- Rhythm recognition
- Defibrillation
- Intravenous (IV)/intraosseous (IO) access (information only)
- Use of medications
- Cardioversion
- Transcutaneous pacing
- Team dynamics

Students will practice the application of these and other skills in simulated cases and will practice both Team Leader and team member roles.

**Q: Is there an ACLS Update Course?**

A: Yes.

**Q: Does ACLS offer continuing education (CE)?**

A: Yes. The following CE is available for the ACLS Provider and the ACLS Update Courses:

**ACLS Provider Course Accreditation Statement:**

**Continuing Education Accreditation – Emergency Medical Services**

This continuing education activity is approved by the American Heart Association, an organization accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Prehospital Continuing Education (CAPCE), for 9.75 Advanced CEHs, activity number 16-AMHA-F2-0309.

**ACLS Update Course Accreditation Statement:**

**Continuing Education Accreditation – Emergency Medical Services**

This continuing education activity is approved by the American Heart Association, an organization accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Prehospital Continuing Education (CAPCE), for 4.75 Advanced CEHs, activity number 16-AMHA-F2-0310.

## 2016 ACLS Delivery Formats

**Q: What delivery formats will the AHA offer for the ACLS Course?**

A: Three different course formats will be available to accommodate the learning needs of individual students and offer flexibility for Instructors. All formats have the same learning objectives and offer the same course completion card.

Course formats include:

- Instructor-led training – **now available**

This option is led by an AHA Instructor in a classroom setting. Instructors deliver courses designed to include both the cognitive portion of training and the psychomotor component of thorough skills practice and testing.

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- Blended learning – **coming soon**  
Blended learning uses online technology not only to supplement but also to transform and improve the learning process. Successful blended learning can reach students with varying learning styles and in different environments. It is a combination of eLearning, in which a student completes part of the course in a self-directed manner, and a hands-on session.
  - Blending learning: A combination of eLearning, in which a student completes part of the course in a self-directed manner, and a hands-on session with an Instructor or on a voice-assisted manikin (if their institution uses this option).
- Resuscitation Quality Improvement™ (RQI™) – **coming summer/early fall 2016**  
A unique ECC program designed specifically for training actively employed healthcare providers in clinical environments. Unlike the Instructor-led and/or blended course, the RQI program is a maintenance-of-competence platform designed for site-specific adoptions.

### ACLS Target Audience

**Q: Who is the intended audience for the ACLS Course?**

**A:** The ACLS Course is designed for healthcare professionals who either direct or participate in the management of cardiopulmonary arrest or other cardiovascular emergencies. This includes personnel in emergency response, emergency medicine, intensive care, and critical care units such as physicians, nurses, and paramedics, as well as others who need an ACLS course completion card for job or other requirements.

**Q: What are the prerequisites for taking the ACLS Course?**

**A:** Providers who take ACLS Course must be proficient in the following:

- Performing high-quality BLS skills through the use of the *2015 AHA Guidelines Update for CPR and ECC*
- Reading and interpreting electrocardiograms (ECGs)
- Understanding ACLS drugs
- Bag-mask ventilations

**Q: What resources are available to help prepare students for the ACLS Course?**

**A:** The ACLS Student Website ([www.heart.org/eccstudent](http://www.heart.org/eccstudent)) contains the following self-assessment resources:

- Mandatory Precourse Self-Assessment
- ACLS Supplementary Information
- High-Quality BLS video
- Acute Coronary Syndromes video
- Stroke video
- Airway Management video

### Precourse Self-Assessment

**Q: What is the ACLS Precourse Self-Assessment?**

**A:** The Precourse Self-Assessment is an online tool that evaluates a student's knowledge in 3 sections: rhythm recognition, pharmacology, and practical application. Students complete the assessment *before the course* to help evaluate their proficiency and determine the need for additional review and practice before the course. All students must complete the Precourse Self-Assessment and achieve a score of at least 70% before taking the ACLS Course. Students must print their successful completion certificate and bring it with them to class.

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**Q: Why is the ACLS Precourse Self-assessment required?**

A: Students need to make sure they are prepared for the ACLS course to minimize the risk of failing the course. Market research indicated a significantly favorable response from instructors on making the precourse self-assessment mandatory. The need for a mandatory precourse has increased in recent years due to more non-traditional students taking ACLS.

**Q: Will there be a printed version of the ACLS Precourse Self-Assessment? If not, why not?**

A: No. The online tool cannot be duplicated in a printed format since it measures knowledge gaps based on how students answer questions as they move through the assessment. A written version would not be able to adequately assess knowledge.

### Course Materials

**Q: What materials are available for the ACLS Instructor-led Course?**

A: Materials for the AHA's ACLS Instructor-led training course are currently available through the AHA's Distributors. Materials include:

*Student Materials:*

15-1005	ACLS Provider Manual
15-1007	ACLS Pocket Reference Card Set
15-3100	ACLS Provider Manual eBook
15-3109	ACLS Digital Pocket Reference Card Set

*Instructor Materials*

15-1004	ACLS DVD Set
15-1003	ACLS Instructor Manual
15-3101	ACLS Instructor Manual eBook
15-1006	ACLS Instructor Package

*Cards*

15-1803	ACLS Provider Card (3-card sheet)
15-3000	ACLS Provider eCard
15-1802	ACLS Instructor Card (3-card sheet)

*Supplemental*

15-1042	ACLS Poster Set
15-1008	ACLS Emergency Crash Cart Cards
15-1043	Suspected Stroke Algorithm/Prehospital Stroke Scale Card

**Q: Why are there 2 DVD Sets included in the ACLS Instructor Package?**

A: The Instructor package includes 2 DVD Sets to provide more flexibility for Instructors in the way the course is run. Each set includes the ACLS Provider DVD and the HeartCode ACLS DVD.

### Course Length

**Q: How long is the ACLS Course?**

A: The ACLS Provider Course is approximately 15 hours and 20 minutes with breaks and lunch.

**Q: Why is the 2015 Guidelines ACLS Provider Course longer than the 2010 Guidelines version?**

A: The ACLS Course is slightly longer due new learning stations and additional time needed for certain learning stations such as bradycardia and tachycardia.

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### Teaching the New ACLS ILT Course

**Q: Who can teach the new ACLT Instructor-led Course?**

**A:** The new ACLS Course may be taught by AHA ACLS Instructors who have completed their 2015 Guidelines Instructor Update for ACLS and have received and reviewed their new ACLS Course Instructor materials.

**Q: What resources are available to help Instructors understand the new ACLS Course and materials?**

**A:** The AHA developed the ACLS Product & Course Orientation (P&CO) to help ACLS Instructors understand the new, 2016 ACLS Course design and teaching strategies, and to quickly get up to speed on the latest and most important updates to the ACLS Course materials. This orientation will be available free of charge to Instructors through the [AHA Instructor Network](#).

The P&CO provides ACLS Instructors

- Information about new course materials, course curriculum updates, and how the changes impact the way you will teach the ACLS Course
- Details, clarification, and direction on various course formats
- Specifics about new ACLS course materials
- Steps to incorporate new updates into various course settings

While all ACLS Instructors are strongly encouraged to complete the P&CO before teaching the new course, it is not required. Viewing the P&CO is most helpful to if Instructors have new course materials in-hand while viewing.

NOTE: The P&CO provides different and separate updates from the 2015 AHA Guidelines Instructor Update Course for ACLS.

### 2016 ACLS Exam

**Q: What are key changes to the new ACLS Exam?**

**A:** Please note the following new features of the 2016 ACLS Exam:

- New exams include scenario-based questions, which challenge students to evaluate real-life situations and use critical-thinking skills to show mastery of course content.
- Based on feedback from the AHA Training Network, exams now include both the traditional Answer Key (with page numbers for referencing correct answers) and an Annotated Answer Key. The Annotated Answer Key provides rationale for the correct answers to the exam questions, along with the highlighted correct answer and page numbers for reference.
- Beginning with the launch of new courses updated to reflect 2015 Guidelines science and education, as part of new education methodologies, the AHA has adopted an open-resource policy for exams. This policy is described in the *BLS Instructor Manual*. This is another critical reason why Instructors should not administer new exams until they have received new BLS Instructor materials.

**Below is the specific language from the AHA's *ACLS Instructor Manual* about open resource exams:**

“As part of the new education methodologies, the AHA has adopted an open-resource policy for exams administered online through an eLearning course and in a classroom-based course.

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*Open resource* means that students may use resources for reference while completing the exam. Resources could include the Provider Manual either in printed form or as an eBook on personal devices, any notes the student took during the provider course, the ECC Handbook, the *2015 AHA Guidelines Update for CPR and ECC*, posters, etc. Open resource does not mean open discussion with other students or the Instructor."

**Q: Where do ACLS Instructors obtain the new ACLS Exam?**

A: ACLS Instructors must obtain the new ACLS Exam (versions A and B) from their AHA TC Coordinator.

NOTE: The AHA distributes exams only to AHA TCCs of record. The AHA's exam policies are outlined in the AHA Program Administration Manual, located on the [AHA Instructor Network](#) (under Additional Tools). Exam policies can be found on page 25 of the US version and page 24 of the International version.

### 2016 ACLS Instructor Course

**Q: Is there a new ACLS Instructor Course? How should new ACLS Instructor Courses be conducted?**

A: The AHA is currently developing ACLS Instructor Course Interim Materials to aid in providing quality and consistency in ACLS Instructor training. Interim materials are to be used as a guide for TC Faculty conducting Instructor courses.

Once available, the ACLS Instructor Course Interim Materials will be located on the [AHA Instructor Network](#) in the Training Centers section under TC Faculty.