



ALTERNATE ROUTE HANDBOOK 2024

The definitive guide to navigating
The Alternate Route (Section 2068.5)
for becoming a
California Registered Veterinary Technician

Prepared by the
California Registered Veterinary Technicians Association

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ALTERNATE ROUTE HANDBOOK

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INTRODUCTION

The **California Registered Veterinary Technicians Association (CaRVTA)** is committed to helping assistants become Registered Veterinary Technicians (RVTs). This *Handbook* is specifically designed to help assistants navigate the **Alternate Route** eligibility category (Section 2068.5 of the *Veterinary Medicine Practice Act*).

The Alternate Route combines practical experience and specific educational requirements to qualify veterinary assistants to sit for the Veterinary Technician National Examination (VTNE). It is an alternate to graduation from a 2-year accredited RVT program. This *Handbook* is designed to help candidates navigate the “ad hoc” Alternate Route, meaning those candidates choosing to get the educational requirements on their own, not through a complete Alternate Route program.

The *Handbook* will help candidates understand the specifics of the requirements and offer strategies for using this eligibility category most efficiently. Each candidate using the “ad hoc” Alternate Route is responsible for managing their own education and fulfilling the requirements of the regulation.

CaRVTA makes every attempt to provide accurate information. Because laws, regulations and forms may change over time, candidates should verify the current status of the information contained in this *Handbook*. **For the most current information , go to:**
https://www.vmb.ca.gov/applicants/rvt_forms.shtml

Placing your documentation in a 3-ring binder or individual file folders by category will help keep everything organized. If you use the *Handbook* as recommended, when you have completed all the requirements, your documentation will be in the proper order. When you are ready to submit your application, photocopy all of your records before sending in the originals.

ELIGIBILITY CATEGORIES

There are currently three eligibility categories to sit for the VTNE. The Alternate Route is only one. Review all of the categories to be sure that the Alternate Route is the best fit. **RVT candidates should consider their future career plans when deciding which eligibility category to utilize.** While the Alternate Route is accepted as an eligibility category in California, some other states require graduation from an AVMA approved school in order to be certified as an RVT. Some employers require graduation from an AVMA approved school as a criterion to work as an RVT, or to be promoted to higher-level positions. Candidates should take these considerations into account when deciding that the Alternate Route is the best choice for them.

To be eligible, a candidate must meet the requirements of one of these categories:

1. Graduate from, at minimum, a two-year curriculum in veterinary technology in a college or other post-secondary institution approved by the California Veterinary Medical Board (VMB). (Generally an AVMA approved school) or complete a program or curriculum that has been deemed “equivalent” to a two-year approved program by the VMB (California approved school).
2. **Complete a combination of at least 4416 hours of directed clinical practice in no less than 24 months under the direct supervision of a California-licensed veterinarian and 300 hours (or 20 semester or 30 quarter units) of specific education. (The Alternate Route).**
3. Licensed, certified or registered as an RVT in another state and have taken an examination determined by the VMB to be equivalent to the California RVT examination and have at least 4416 hours of directed clinical practice (practical experience) in no less than 24 months under the direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian.

Other Requirements for Licensure as an RVT

In addition to meeting the requirements of one of the above eligibility categories, candidates must be:

1. At least 18 years of age
2. Fingerprinted (live scan) prior to licensure
3. Free of convictions for crimes substantially related to the practice and duties of an RVT. (Anyone who has any convictions should contact the VMB to be sure they will be eligible.)

ALTERNATE ROUTE ELIGIBILITY CATEGORY

Section 2068.5 of the California Veterinary Medicine Practice Act

Section 2068.5, the regulation known as the **Alternate Route**, contains two distinct types of requirements candidates must meet – **Education** and **Directed Clinical Practice** (Practical Experience). The actual language of the regulation can be found here: [https://govt.westlaw.com/calregs/Document/I070106D34C8211EC89E5000D3A7C4BC3?viewType=FullText&originationContext=documenttoc&transitionType=CategoryPageItem&contextData=\(sc.Default\)](https://govt.westlaw.com/calregs/Document/I070106D34C8211EC89E5000D3A7C4BC3?viewType=FullText&originationContext=documenttoc&transitionType=CategoryPageItem&contextData=(sc.Default))

Education

To be eligible under the Alternate Route, candidates must complete 300 hours (or 20 semester or 30 quarter units) of specific coursework. The courses must be at the post-secondary level, meaning beyond high school. There are a variety of venues that teach acceptable courses. Formal academic institutions like colleges or universities teach the general subjects like biology, chemistry and math. Some accredited RVT schools have special Alternate Route courses or allow Alternate Route candidates to take some of their regular classes. There are several complete Alternate Route programs offered in California. However, since Alternate Route programs are currently not accredited by the VMB, students in these programs are responsible for meeting all the requirements for attendance, documentation of course content, and instructor qualifications.

Candidates may also take courses at veterinary conferences, individual seminars, *interactive* distance learning webinars, or any other venue that provides the required content and is taught by qualified instructors. A DVM or RVT in your practice can design courses specifically for you. The course(s) should contain required content, be at least 1 hour and have a Course Description and a Certificate of Attendance to meet the requirements. *Interactive* is defined as having a live instructor who is available to answer questions during the course. Having an exam at the end of the course is *not* sufficient to deem the course interactive.

Candidates must be able to document attendance by supplying either an **official transcript** or a **Certificate of Attendance** (see samples in the **Appendix**). Candidates must also be able to supply documentation of course content either with an **official course description, syllabus or handout** that describes the material taught. In addition, candidates must be able to provide **documentation that the instructor’s qualifications meet the requirements** of the regulation.

As of January 1, 2024, RVT specific courses are no longer required to have been completed no more than 5 years prior to applying for the RVT examination. They may have been completed at any time. General subjects such as math or biology, may also have been completed at any time prior to applying.

Directed Clinical Practice

The directed clinical practice (practical experience) required by the Alternate Route must be documented through the **Task List** (see Appendix). The list contains a series of job skills that the candidate must acquire. The list must be signed by the supervising veterinarian(s), who must be licensed in California. Candidates may make copies of the list to be signed by more than one veterinarian. **The directed clinical practice (practical experience) just like the education, no longer must have been completed no more than 5 years prior to applying for the examination and may have been completed at any time.**

NAVIGATING THE ALTERNATE ROUTE

Every individual comes into the process with a different background. The Alternate Route's educational requirements are purposely flexible to allow each candidate to tailor their educational experience to their own needs. Everyone must meet the 300 hour requirement, and have at least one course in each of the specific areas. However, each candidate can decide just how many courses to take in each subject area, depending on their own background. For example, an assistant who has been cleaning teeth for several years under the supervision of a veterinary dentist may decide to take only one course in dental prophylaxis. An assistant who has never cleaned teeth may choose to take several courses on that subject.

Candidates may use a combination of college classes and veterinary seminars to meet the requirements. To convert college units to hours, use the following formula:

1 semester unit = 15 hours

1 quarter unit = 10 hours

The RVT job specific courses are listed in Sec. 2068.5 (a) (1)-(5). These subjects are: 1) dental prophylaxis and extraction; 2) anesthesia induction, instrumentation and monitoring; 3) surgical nursing and assisting, including instrumentation, suturing techniques, and application of casts and splints; 4) radiology and radiation safety; 5) diseases and nursing of animals, including zoonotic diseases and emergency veterinary care.

Sec 2068.5 (b) lists subject matter that may be included in the RVT job specific courses detailed in (a), or obtained as separate courses. These subjects are 1) chemistry; 2) mathematics; 3) biology; 4) microbiology; 5) anatomy and physiology; 6) medical terminology. If these subjects are obtained as separate courses, they may be completed at any time prior to applying for the RVT examination. **In order to get credit for these subjects when they are included in RVT job specific courses, the candidate must supply documentation that the material was included in the course.** For example, an outline, description or syllabus of a course in fluid therapy may state that it includes the chemistry of fluids. A course in animal nursing may state that it includes medical terminology or mathematical formulas for determining drug concentrations or dilutions.

When using a course to satisfy more than one requirement, the hours may be applied only once. For example, if using a one-hour course in nursing to satisfy the requirements for animal nursing and math, you may write the same course in the block for Diseases & Animal

Nursing and Math, but you can use the one-hour in only one block. If it is a two-hour course, you may put one hour in one block and one hour in the other block.

The Alternate Route has been determined to be equivalent to a 2-year accredited RVT program. Candidates must remember when designing their own educational programs, that they will be responsible for acquiring all of the knowledge necessary to become entry level RVTs, as well as providing all of the required documentation.

CERTIFICATES OF ATTENDANCE

Colleges and other formal academic institutions provide **official transcripts** that document attendance. Many seminars also provide **Certificates of Attendance**. However, since some seminars do not provide certificates, candidates using the Alternate Route should be prepared to provide their own. There are sample certificates in the *Appendix* that may be duplicated as needed and taken to seminars for the speaker/moderator to sign. *A candidate will not receive credit for a class without a Certificate of Attendance or a transcript.*

DOCUMENTATION OF COURSE CONTENT

Candidates should save course descriptions, course outlines and/or syllabi to document course content and instructor qualifications. The burden is on the candidate to prove that the course they attended actually contained the required material and was taught by a qualified instructor. **When supplying verification of course content with the application, include, in addition to the cover page which shows the course title, only those pages from the syllabus that are necessary to prove a particular subject was covered.** Highlight the words in the document that apply, like “dental prophylaxis” or “anesthesia induction”. **Do not include the entire course notes.** If the syllabus was provided on cd, print out the relevant pages. You must include the *official* documentation given to you by the course provider, whether it is a course description, outline or pages from a syllabus. Outlines, descriptions or notes created by the candidate will **not** be accepted.

TASK LIST

The practical experience requirement of the Alternate Route is intended to be a learning experience. To document the acquisition of certain skills during the “directed clinical practice”, the VMB provides a **Task List** to be checked off by the candidate’s supervisor(s). A copy of the Task List can be found in the *Appendix*. Have the supervising veterinarian check off each skill as it is acquired. Copy the Task List as needed for use by different supervisors. Store the Task Lists in the *Handbook* binder or folders, so when you are ready to apply for the examination, all of the documentation will be in one place. Be sure that you have completed all of the required hours within 5 years of applying for the examination.

POSTSECONDARY ACADEMIC COURSE REQUIREMENT CHECKLIST

Candidates must fill out the **Postsecondary Academic Course Requirements Checklist** to document completion of each of the course requirements. **Do not create your own spreadsheet.** You must use the **official Checklist** to fill in the courses. Duplicate the form as many times as needed to fill in all the courses in each subject area, using only as many sheets as necessary.

Remember that while one course may satisfy more than one academic requirement, the course *hours* may be used only once.

USING THE HANDBOOK

This *Handbook* has been designed to help you organize all of the documentation you will need in order to apply for the RVT examination(s) using the Alternate Route. In order for your application to be accepted, the staff at the VMB will look for proof that you have completed all of the required courses and that the courses were taught by qualified instructors. **The documentation you provide must show that the required content is included. Lack of documentation will cause your application to be delayed or rejected.**

Fill out the **Checklist** provided in the *Appendix* as you complete each course. Place the documentation – Certificates of Attendance or Transcripts plus Course Descriptions, Outlines or Syllabi behind the appropriate dividers or in the appropriate folders. If a course satisfies more than one requirement, photocopy the documentation and place a copy in each section. Be sure that you have at least one Certificate of Attendance and one Course Description for each subject area. **Remember, while you can get credit for fulfilling more than one required subject area with one course, you can only claim the *hours* spent in that course *once*.**

If you use this *Handbook* as recommended, when you have finished all of the required education and practical experience, your **Course Checklist & Task List** should be complete and you should have all the documentation you require for your application. Taking the time to properly organize your materials in a 3-ring binder or folders will greatly facilitate the application process. However, when you are ready to apply, remove the materials, copy them and mail them in with your completed application. Be sure to keep a copy.

When completing your application, be sure to include all of the required documentation, including a copy of your Live Scan Fingerprint.

LICENSING EXAMINATION

Unlike other applicants, **Alternate Route candidates must apply to the VMB first, before applying for the Veterinary Technician Licensing Examination (VTNE)**. To apply to the VMB, go to the BreEZe site. Be sure to complete the application before entering the Live Scan information. You can go to BreEZe here:

https://www.breeze.ca.gov/datamart/mainMenu.do;jsessionid=XCPdMtigIZAhSwFurKSG1ja9jfJUa_WIcsQeYiSQ.vo-20-hlnm9

Once the application is accepted by the VMB, the AAVSB will be informed of the candidate's eligibility. The VTNE is offered on computer 3 times per year in 1-month testing windows. The testing windows are March/April, July/August and November/December. Applications are accepted year round, but they must be received by the AAVSB at least 1 month prior to the first date of the testing window in order to be eligible for that window. Applications that arrive later will be applied to the next testing window. For more info on the VTNE, go to:

<https://aavsb.org/vtne-overview/>

APPENDIX

Included in the **Appendix** are documents that will help you prepare for the RVT licensing examinations. These documents are current as of the date of the publication of the *Handbook*. For the most current versions of the VMB documents, go to www.vmb.ca.gov. For the most current versions of the VTNE documents, go to the AAVSB web site, www.aavsb.org.

1. RVT Job Tasks:

Animal Health Care Tasks for RVTs:

[https://govt.westlaw.com/calregs/Document/I066D52534C8211EC89E5000D3A7C4BC3?viewType=FullText&originationContext=documenttoc&transitionType=CategoryPageItem&contextData=\(sc.Default\)](https://govt.westlaw.com/calregs/Document/I066D52534C8211EC89E5000D3A7C4BC3?viewType=FullText&originationContext=documenttoc&transitionType=CategoryPageItem&contextData=(sc.Default))

Emergency Animal Care:

[https://govt.westlaw.com/calregs/Document/I071726E34C8211EC89E5000D3A7C4BC3?viewType=FullText&originationContext=documenttoc&transitionType=CategoryPageItem&contextData=\(sc.Default\)](https://govt.westlaw.com/calregs/Document/I071726E34C8211EC89E5000D3A7C4BC3?viewType=FullText&originationContext=documenttoc&transitionType=CategoryPageItem&contextData=(sc.Default))

Other Services an RVT May Perform

- Treatments on animals impounded by a state, county, city or city & county agency pursuant to the direct order, written order, or telephonic order of a California licensed veterinarian. (Sec. 4840 (b))
- Apply for registration from the federal Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) that authorizes the direct purchase of sodium pentobarbital for the performance of euthanasia without the supervision or authorization of a licensed veterinarian when the RVT is an employee of an animal shelter or humane society. (Secs. 4827 (c) & 4840 (c))

2. Alternate Route Regulation – Section 2068.5 of the *California Veterinary Medicine Practice Act*:

[https://govt.westlaw.com/calregs/Document/I070106D34C8211EC89E5000D3A7C4BC3?viewType=FullText&originationContext=documenttoc&transitionType=CategoryPageItem&contextData=\(sc.Default\)](https://govt.westlaw.com/calregs/Document/I070106D34C8211EC89E5000D3A7C4BC3?viewType=FullText&originationContext=documenttoc&transitionType=CategoryPageItem&contextData=(sc.Default))

3. Task List – Proof of Experience: https://vmb.ca.gov/applicants/rvt_tasklist.pdf

4. Post Secondary Academic Course Requirement Checklist: https://vmb.ca.gov/applicants/rvt_checklist.pdf

5. VTNE Documents: <https://www.aavsb.org/vtne-overview>

6. Certificates of Attendance

Single lecture format
Multiple lecture format

7. California Veterinary Medicine Practice Act

The California Veterinary Medicine Practice Act contains the laws and regulations governing the practice of veterinary medicine in California. It can be found here:

[https://govt.westlaw.com/calregs/Browse/Home/California/CaliforniaCodeofRegulations?guid=I051033504C8211EC89E5000D3A7C4BC3&originationContext=documenttoc&transitionType=Default&contextData=\(sc.Default\)](https://govt.westlaw.com/calregs/Browse/Home/California/CaliforniaCodeofRegulations?guid=I051033504C8211EC89E5000D3A7C4BC3&originationContext=documenttoc&transitionType=Default&contextData=(sc.Default))

A copy of the *Practice Act* may be purchased from: LexisNexis: 1-800-424-4200,
www.lexisnexis.com:

CERTIFICATE of ATTENDANCE

When signed by the speaker/moderator below, this certifies that

_____ attended the lecture specified.
Attendee

Topic: _____

Speaker: _____

Location: _____

Date: _____

Contact Hours: _____

Signed: _____ or _____
Speaker Moderator

Name: _____

***Retain this Certificate along with appropriate course content
documentation.***

CERTIFICATE of ATTENDANCE

When signed by the speaker/moderator below, this certifies that the person named below attended the lecture(s) specified.

Attendee: _____

Program Title: _____

Location: _____

Date	Topic	Speaker	Hours	Signed

Retain this Certificate along with appropriate course content documentation.