CEN® vs TCRN® — Side-by-Side

Two BCEN® certifications: what's the same, what's different, and which fits you

By Mary Veneman BSN RN CEN

	CEN®	TCRN®
Full name	Certified Emergency Nurse	Trauma Certified Registered Nurse
Who it's for	Nurses caring for **any** emergency patient — all ages, all complaints (ED, urgent care, transport)	Nurses caring for **injured** patients anywhere on the trauma path — ED, trauma ICU/floor, flight, trauma program roles
Big-picture focus	**Breadth**: medical, cardiac, neuro, OB, psych, tox, peds, environmental, and trauma emergencies	**Depth in trauma** across the whole continuum: prevention → prehospital → resuscitation → critical care → rehab and discharge
Certifying body	BCEN	BCEN
Exam format	175 questions (150 scored + 25 unscored pretest) • 3 hours • computer-based	175 questions (150 scored + 25 unscored pretest) • 3 hours • computer-based
Passing score	**99 of 150** scored items	**96 of 150** scored items
Current content outline	Effective **July 6, 2026 • 11** content areas	Effective **November 29, 2025 • 6** content areas
Heaviest areas	Cardiovascular 18 • Respiratory 17 • Neurological 17 • Medical 15	Trunk & Pelvis 38 • Continuum of Care 36 • Head & Neck 31 • Special Populations 22
Question style	"What's the first action?" across a huge range of ED presentations; triage (ESI) and priorities	Fewer topics, more detail: injury patterns, resuscitation, complications, transfusion, tertiary survey, injury prevention
Exam fee	$285 ENA member • $380 non-member • $195 military	$285 STN member • $380 non-member • $195 military
Retest / renewal fee	$200 retest • $280 renewal	$200 retest • $280 renewal
Valid for	4 years	4 years
Recertify by CE	100 contact hours in 4 years: ≥ 75 clinical (emergency), ≥ 50 from accredited sources — or retake the exam	100 contact hours in 4 years: ≥ 75 clinical (trauma), ≥ 50 from accredited sources — or retake the exam
Reported pass rate	≈ 51% (2025)	≈ 59% (2024)
Overlap	Trauma (spread across systems), burns, triage, shock, toxicology, professional issues	Same trauma core — plus post-resuscitation care, rehab, trauma systems, and performance improvement

■ *Green rows = identical for both exams.*

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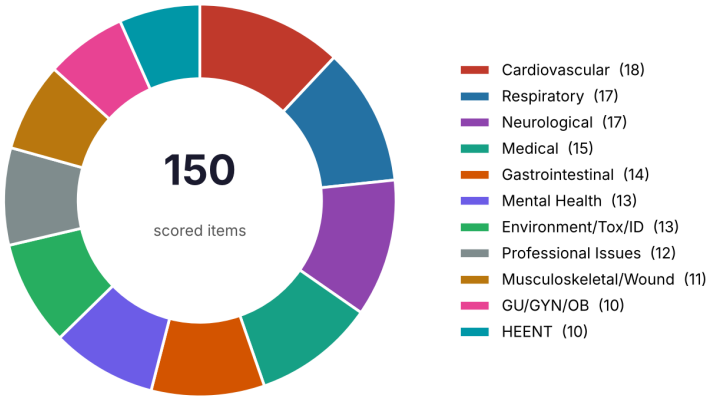
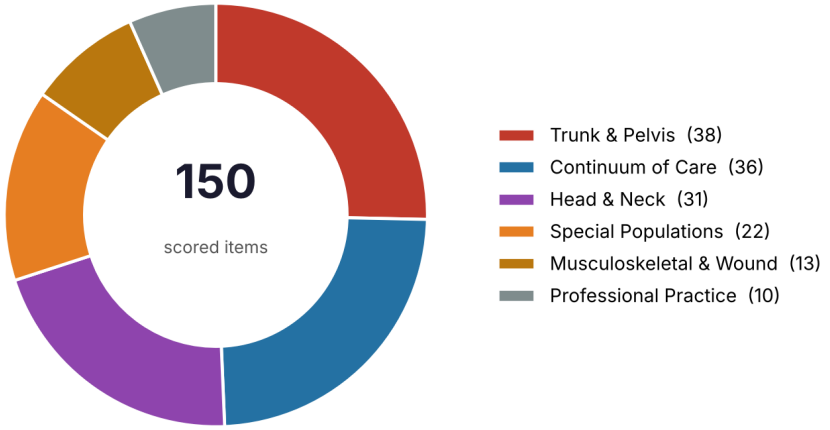
CEN® — 11 areas



TCRN® — 6 areas



Choose CEN first if you…

- Work in a general ED and see every kind of patient
- Want the most widely recognized emergency credential
- Like breadth — cardiac, neuro, OB, psych, peds, tox
- Want a strong base for a later TCRN or CPEN

Choose TCRN if you…

- Work at a trauma center, trauma ICU/floor, or in flight/transport
- Want deep trauma knowledge beyond the first hour
- Are moving toward trauma program, PI, or injury-prevention roles
- Already hold CEN — much of the trauma core carries over

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