CPT Coding Cheat Sheet for CPC Exam Prep

medicalbilling101.com · Manikandan J, CPC, CRCR · Checked 24 November 2026 · For study use. AAPC allows only the approved code books in the exam.

1. CPT Category I section map

CPT section	Code range (AAPC)	CPC questions	Focus (AAPC exam page)
Evaluation and Management (printed first)	98000-98016, 99202-99499	6	Place and level of service
Anesthesia	00100-01999, 99100-99140	4	Time, qualifying circumstances, physical status modifiers
Surgery 10000 series	10004-69990	6	Integumentary: skin, repairs, nails, breast
Surgery 20000 series		6	Musculoskeletal, head to toe
Surgery 30000 series		6	Respiratory, cardiovascular, hemic, lymphatic
Surgery 40000 series		6	Digestive system
Surgery 50000 series		6	Urinary, reproductive, maternity, endocrine
Surgery 60000 series		6	Nervous system
Radiology	70010-79999	6	Diagnostic and interventional radiology, ultrasound, nuclear medicine
Pathology and Laboratory	80047-89398	6	Panels, drug testing, chemistry, microbiology, pathology
Medicine	90281-99199, 99500-99607	6	Immunizations, dialysis, chemo administration, moderate sedation

Other parts: Category II 0001F-9007F (four numbers + F, performance tracking) · Category III 0042T-1025T (four numbers + T, temporary, emerging technology) · PLA 0001U-0613U. Ranges can shift each annual edition: confirm in your own book.

2. Rules box (check on every lookup)

- Read section, subsection and category guidelines before assigning a code.
- Read parenthetical notes under the code; they often point elsewhere.
- Add-on codes go only with a primary code (CMS NCCI add-on edits).
- Units: CMS medically unlikely edits (MUEs) limit unlikely unit counts.
- The ICD-10-CM diagnosis must support the CPT code (medical necessity).
- Resequenced codes sit beside related codes, out of number order.

3. Lookup routine

1. Find the main term in the CPT index.
2. Go to the section on the map above.
3. Read guidelines, the full code and its parenthetical notes.
4. Check modifiers: site, encounter or provider difference?
5. Match the ICD-10-CM diagnosis.

CPC exam: 100 questions, 4 hours (about 2.4 min each), 10 cases, 7 coding guideline questions; pass = at least 70 correct.

4. Modifier concepts (CMS)

Mod	Concept
59	Distinct procedural service; only when no more specific modifier fits; never on E/M
XE	Separate encounter, same date of service
XP	Separate practitioner
XS	Separate organ or structure
XU	Unusual non-overlapping service
25	Separate E/M service on the same day (CMS points E/M cases here, not 59)

NCCI code pairs: modifier indicator 0 = do not report together; 1 = only in limited cases with the right modifier and supporting documentation. A CPT modifier is two numbers, two letters, or a number and a letter.

5. Leave off your sheet

- Full CPT code descriptors (AMA copyright; they are in your book).
- Practice exam questions or answers (banned in exam books).
- Long code lists to memorize.

Sources (checked 24 Nov 2026): AAPC, What Is CPT? (aapc.com/resources/what-is-cpt, last reviewed Jan 29, 2026); AAPC, Taking the CPC and CPB exams; AMA, CPT code set overview; CMS, HCPCS; CMS, NCCI edits; CMS MLN1783722, Proper Use of Modifiers 59, XE, XP, XS and XU (April 2026). CPT is a registered trademark of the American Medical Association; no CPT code descriptors are reproduced. Modifier wording is a summary. Educational content for U.S. readers, not coding advice for a specific claim. Full guide: medicalbilling101.com/careers/study/cpt-cheat-sheet/