



AMA PRA Frequently Asked Questions for Physicians

Credit in general

1. Why do physicians need credit?

Physicians need credit to demonstrate that they have participated in CME activities and obtained CME credit to meet the requirements of state medical boards, medical specialty societies, specialty boards, hospital medical staffs, the Joint Commission, insurance groups, and others.

AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™

2. For what purposes is AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™ used?

The purposes for which *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* is used include meeting CME requirements established by hospital credentialing bodies, state medical boards, medical specialty certifying boards, medical specialty societies, Joint Commission and other organizations. *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* is the most commonly accepted form of CME credit for physicians and is also the basis for receiving the AMA Physician's Recognition Award.

3. How does a physician earn AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™?

There are three ways for physicians to earn *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*:

- a. By participating in certified activities sponsored by CME providers accredited by either the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) or an ACCME-recognized State Medical Society. Accredited CME providers ensure that activities certified for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* meet all requirements of both the AMA and their accreditor.
- b. By participating in activities recognized by the AMA as valid educational activities. Physicians receive *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* for these activities directly from the AMA. Information about qualifying activities can be found at www.ama-assn.org/go/directcredit.
- c. By participating in certain international activities recognized by the AMA. At this time the AMA has agreements with the European Union of Medical Specialists and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. Information regarding these activities can be found at www.ama-assn.org/go/internationalcme.

Physicians may claim *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™* for participation in activities not certified for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* if the activity meets certain requirements. Please refer to page 10 of the AMA PRA booklet for more information (www.ama-assn.org/go/prabooklet).

4. What types of CME activities may be certified for AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™ through an accredited CME provider?

The types of CME activities certified by accredited CME providers include the following:

- **Live activities** - CME activity that occurs at a specific time as scheduled by the accredited CME provider. Participation may be in person or remotely as is the case of teleconferences or live Internet webinars. These may be offered through a variety of delivery mechanisms; examples include, but are not limited to, national, regional or local conferences, workshops, seminars, regularly scheduled conferences, journal clubs, simulation workshops, structured learning activities presented during a committee meeting and live Internet webinars.

Accredited CME providers may also choose to award *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* to faculty for original presentation at live activities that are designated for such credit. If the providers choose not to offer faculty credit physicians may claim this credit directly from the AMA.

- **Enduring materials** – CME activities that endure over a specified time such as print, audio, video and Internet materials, such as monographs, podcasts, CD-ROMs, DVDs, archived webinars, as well as other web-based activities.
- **Journal-based CME** - CME activity in which an article, within a peer-reviewed, professional journal, is certified for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* prior to publication of the journal.
- **Test item writing** – CME activity wherein physicians learn through their contribution to the development of high stakes examinations, or certain peer-reviewed self-assessment activities, by researching, drafting and defending potential questions for examinations given by the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) or a member board of the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS), or for peer reviewed, published, self-assessment educational activities from a national medical specialty society. This must be a robust process which includes participation in a group peer review.
- **Manuscript review (for journals)** – CME activity in which a physician learns through the critical review of an assigned journal manuscript. The review must be of an original contribution for publication in a medical journal indexed by MEDLINE which requires multiple reviewers.
- **Performance improvement CME (PI CME)** – CME activity in which an accredited CME provider structures a long-term three-stage process by which a physician or group of physicians learn about specific performance measures, assess their practice using the selected performance measures, implement interventions to improve performance related to these measures over a useful interval of time, and then reassess their practice using the same performance measures. A PI CME activity may address any facet (structure, process or outcome) of a physician's practice with direct implications for patient care.
- **Internet point of care learning** - CME activity structured by an accredited CME provider in which a physician engages in self-directed, online learning on topics relevant to their clinical practice. Learning for this activity includes a reflective process in which a physician must document their clinical question, the sources consulted and the application to practice.

All activities certified for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* by an accredited CME provider must meet all requirements for one of the above learning formats as well as the AMA's core requirements for all activity formats.

5. How can a physician ensure that an activity is certified for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* by an accredited CME provider?

Physicians can ensure an activity has been certified for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* by locating the prescribed AMA Credit Designation Statement that accredited CME providers are required to use on promotional and activity materials. In 2006 the AMA asserted trademark protection on *AMA PRA* credit to help physicians ensure that the credit being designated for a particular activity is actually *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*.

Physicians can also ensure that the organization certifying the educational activity is an accredited CME provider by searching the lists of ACCME and State Medical Society accredited providers on the ACCME Web site (www.accme.org).

6. Can a physician obtain *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* for reading articles published in a professional journal?

Yes, a physician may obtain *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* for reading a peer-reviewed article if the article has been planned as a learning activity by an accredited CME provider prior to publication. These articles must meet all AMA PRA requirements for this format, including a mechanism for physician assessment that measures achievement of meeting the purpose/objectives of the articles, and can be certified for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* by the accredited CME provider. Physicians claim this credit by achieving at least the minimum required performance level and by submitting the required documentation to the accredited CME provider.

For articles that have not been certified for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* by an accredited CME provider, physicians may claim *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™* when appropriate. Please refer to information on *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™* for more information.

7. Can a physician earn *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* for teaching at a CME activity? If so, how much credit is earned for these activities?

Yes, physicians may earn *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* for the learning that occurs in the preparation and teaching of an **original** presentation at a live activity certified for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*. There are two ways physicians may obtain this credit:

- a. The physician can apply directly to the AMA (processing fee involved – see (www.ama-assn.org/go/directcredit))
- b. The accredited CME provider may develop “learning from teaching” as a CME activity and award *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* to the faculty of their live activities if they meet all AMA PRA requirements.

To calculate the number of *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* earned as faculty:

- Physician faculty may claim credit based on a 2-to-1 ratio to presentation time. For example, faculty may be awarded 2 *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* for a one-hour presentation or 1.5 *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* for a 45-minute presentation for sessions that were designated for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*. Credit should be rounded to the nearest one-quarter credit.
- Credit may only be claimed once for an original presentation; credit may not be claimed for subsequent presentations of the same material.
- Physician faculty may not claim credit as a participant for their own presentations; however, they may claim credit for other segments they attend as a participant at a certified live activity.

For serving as faculty for other types of non-promotional educational activities, such as teaching residents, medical students, physician assistants, nurses and other healthcare providers, physicians may claim *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™*. Physicians may not claim either *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* or *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™* for serving as faculty for promotional activities.

8. How does a physician earn *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* directly from the AMA?

Physicians may earn *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* directly from the AMA for the learning that occurs in the following activities approved by the AMA Council on Medical Education:

- **Teaching in Live CME Activities** – Credit may only be claimed for preparing and presenting an original presentation at a live activity that has been certified for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* (if the physician did not claim credit from the accredited CME provider for the activity).
- **Publishing articles** - Publishing, as a lead author (first listed), a peer-reviewed article in a journal included in the MEDLINE bibliographic database.
- **Poster presentations** - Preparing a poster presentation, as the first author, which is included in the published abstracts, at an activity certified for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*.
- **Medically related advanced degrees** – Obtaining a medically related advanced degree, such as a masters in public health (not available if the academic program certified individual courses for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*).
- **American Board of Medical Specialty (ABMS) member board certification and Maintenance of Certification (MOC®)** - Successfully completing an ABMS board certification or MOC process.
- **Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) accredited education** – Successfully participating in an ACGME-accredited residency or fellowship program.

To claim the credit physicians must submit a copy of the completed application, along with the required documentation and appropriate processing fee. Complete instructions are found on the form itself.

Direct Credit Application: http://www.ama-assn.org/ama1/pub/upload/mm/455/direct_credit_app.pdf

Resident Credit Application: <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama1/pub/upload/mm/455/residentapp.pdf>

9. Can a physician get CME credit for successful participation in a residency or fellowship program?

Yes; physicians have two choices for obtaining a CME benefit for residencies and fellowships accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME):

- a. A resident/fellow can receive a standard one, two or three-year AMA Physician's Recognition Award (PRA); each year of completed training is accepted for one year of the AMA PRA (up to three years), and/or
- b. A resident/fellow can claim twenty (20) *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* per year for participating in an ACGME-accredited residency and/or fellowship program.

To obtain the PRA and/or *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* for participating in a residency/fellowship program, the physician must claim this directly from the AMA by completing the Resident Credit Application.

Resident Credit Application: <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama1/pub/upload/mm/455/residentapp.pdf>

10. Can a physician get credit for certification or maintenance of certification (MOC®) with an ABMS member specialty board?

Yes; physicians have two choices for obtaining a CME benefit for certification or MOC with an ABMS member specialty board:

- a. A physician can receive a standard three year AMA Physician's Recognition Award (PRA) for completing an ABMS member board certification process, and/or
- b. A physician can claim sixty (60) *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* for successfully completing an ABMS board certification process dated September 1, 2010 or later. Physicians can claim twenty-five (25) *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* for certifications dated prior to September 1, 2010.

To obtain credit for ABMS certification, the physician must apply directly to the AMA by completing (1) the AMA PRA online or written application to receive the AMA PRA or (2) the Direct Credit Application to receive a credit certificate. Physicians are responsible for ensuring that their board is a member-board of the ABMS (www.abms.org). Complete instructions, including substantiating documentation requirements and processing fees, are found on the forms.

AMA PRA Online Application: <https://extapps.ama-assn.org/login/id/PRA?url=https://pra.ama-assn.org:443/PRAWeb>

AMA PRA Written Application: <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama1/pub/upload/mm/455/praapplication.pdf>

Direct Credit Application: : <http://www.ama-assn.org/resources/doc/cme/direct-credit-application.pdf>

International CME Activities

11. How can physicians earn *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* for attending international conferences?

Physicians may earn *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* for international conferences in the following circumstances:

- a. The CME activity is sponsored by a CME provider accredited by the ACCME or an ACCME-recognized state medical society and certified for AMA PRA credit.
- b. The CME activity is recognized through the AMA's International Conference Recognition Program. A list of the upcoming approved conferences can be found on the AMA website (www.ama-assn.org/go/internationalcme).
- c. The CME activity (live or e-learning) is approved by the European Union of Medical Specialists' (UEMS) European Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (EACCME) for ECMEC credit, and posted in the EACCME section of the UEMS website. Physicians can apply to the AMA to have this credit converted to *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* (www.ama-assn.org/go/internationalcme).
- d. The live CME activity is certified for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* by a CME provider accredited by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada.

Physicians attending international CME activities that do not fall into one of the above categories may self-claim and document *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™* for their participation provided the activity meets the definition of CME, complies with the relevant AMA ethical opinions, is not promotional in nature, and is relevant to the physician's practice. See the section on *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™* for more information.

12. If physicians attend a conference in Europe and receive a certificate for EACCME ECMEC credit, how do they convert this to *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*?

In order to convert EACCME ECMEC credit to *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*, the physician must apply to the AMA for conversion of ECMEC credit to *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* by downloading the Application for EACCME Credit Conversion (www.ama-assn.org/go/internationalcme) and submitting (1) the completed application, (2) a copy of the EACCME ECMEC credit certificate and (3) the appropriate processing fee by fax, mail or email. A certificate of *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* will be emailed within four weeks. For other specific questions, please contact cme@ama-assn.org.

In order to have the credit converted, the activity must appear on the list of approved activities posted in the EACCME section of the UEMS Web site (www.eaccme.eu).

AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™

13. What is *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™*?

AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™ is CME credit which is self-designated and claimed by individual physicians for participation in activities not certified for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* that:

- Comply with the AMA definition of CME; and
- Comply with the relevant AMA ethical opinions; at the time of this writing this includes 8.061 "Gifts to Physicians from Industry" and 9.011 "Continuing Medical Education," and
- Are not promotional; and
- A physician finds to be a worthwhile learning experience related to his/her practice.

Examples of learning activities that might meet the requirements for *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™* include, but are not limited to:

- Participating in activities that have not been certified for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*
- Teaching residents, medical students or other health professionals
- Unstructured online searching and learning (i.e., not Internet PoC)
- Reading authoritative medical literature
- Consultation with peers and medical experts
- Small group discussions
- Self assessment activities
- Medical writing
- Preceptorship participation
- Research
- Peer review and quality assurance participation

A physician must individually assess the educational value for each learning experience in which he or she participates to determine if it is appropriate to claim *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™*.

14. Does the AMA or accredited CME providers issue certificates for participation in activities that may qualify for *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™*?

Physicians are not issued certificates which state they have been awarded *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™*. This credit is self-claimed and self-documented by physicians.

The physician should self-claim credit for appropriate *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™* activities and document the activity title or description, subject or content area, date(s) of participation and number of credits claimed. Physicians may not claim *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™* for an activity for which the physician has claimed *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*. Each physician is responsible for maintaining a record of their *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™*.

As with live activities, physicians should claim credit based on their participation time with 60 minutes of participation equal to one (1) *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™*; this credit is claimed in 15 minute or 0.25 credit increments, and physicians must round to the nearest quarter hour.

CME Requirements

15. What are the CME requirements for medical licensing?

CME requirements for licensure and relicensure vary depending on the jurisdiction. Sixty-two (62) state and US territory medical boards (both allopathic and osteopathic) now have mandatory CME requirements for license renewal. Forty-two (42) states and territories will accept a current AMA PRA certificate or an AMA approved AMA PRA application as documentation of meeting the CME requirements. Physicians can find the 2012 State licensure and relicensing requirements on the AMA Web site, but should contact the appropriate state medical board to get the most recent information on state CME requirements and the required reporting mechanism.

2012 State CME Requirements for license renewal:
<http://www.ama-assn.org/ama1/pub/upload/mm/40/table16.pdf>

Documentation of credit earned

16. How are CME credits tracked for physicians?

There is no centralized tracking of AMA PRA credits. Each accredited CME provider is required to keep records of *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* claimed by physicians who participate in their activities for six years from the date of completion of the activity. Because credits may be obtained from a variety of accredited CME providers, physicians should maintain a record of their CME credits from all sources.

AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™ is not awarded by accredited CME providers or by the AMA. Physicians self-designate and document participation in activities that may qualify for *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™*. Physicians should keep in mind the credit requirements of various entities when deciding how long to keep records of their CME activities. Licensing boards, medical specialty certifying boards, hospital medical staff and other may have different reporting requirements.

17. What documentation does a physician receive for participating in a certified CME activity provided by an accredited CME provider? How long must providers maintain participation records?

Accredited CME providers are required to make available documentation of credits claimed by physicians at their request, but there is no requirement for a specific type of documentation to be used. Many accredited CME providers will issue a credit certificate at the completion of an activity, or provide a transcript of CME credits claimed over a period of time. Whatever form it takes, the documentation provided should include: physician's name, name of the accredited CME provider, title of activity, learning format of the activity, location of activity (if applicable), date(s) of live activity or date that physician completed the activity, and number of *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* awarded.

These records of *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* claimed by physician participants must be maintained by the accredited CME provider for a minimum of six years from the date the activity was completed. Some providers place a limit on the amount of time you have to claim your credit after completing the activity, but once the credit is claimed the records must be kept for six years from the date of the activity.

CME Activities

18. Is there a central database of CME activities that are being offered by accredited CME providers?

There is no centralized listing of all certified CME activities. The AMA maintains a list of the certified CME activities that are directly sponsored by the AMA as an accredited CME provider. These AMA sponsored CME opportunities may be found on the AMA Web site (www.ama-assn.org/go/cme).

Another way to identify potential CME activities would be to contact specialty societies, medical schools and area hospitals that are accredited CME providers to inquire about CME opportunities. The ACCME maintains a list of accredited CME providers on its Web site (www.accme.org).

19. How do physicians identify legitimate *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* activities?

Physicians can identify legitimate *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* activities by making certain the activity is certified by an accredited CME provider. *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* may only be awarded by the AMA or by organizations accredited by either the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) or an ACCME-recognized state medical society (SMS). Visit the ACCME Web site (www.accme.org) for a list of the approximately 2,200 accredited CME providers.

Accredited CME providers are required to have two statements on their promotional materials, one of which will state the source of their accreditation (ACCME or SMS). The other is the AMA Credit Designation Statement, which states the maximum number of *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* for which the activity has been certified:

The [name of accredited CME provider] designates this [learning format] for a maximum of [number of credits] *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™*. Physicians should claim only the credit commensurate with the extent of their participation in the activity.

To help physicians identify legitimate *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* activities, the AMA requires accredited CME providers to trademark the credit phrase ("*AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*"). If credit is not indicated in this manner, physicians should question whether the activity is in fact eligible for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*.

Physicians should be aware that some non-accredited organizations advertise "Category 1 Credits" or "CME's offered" but these may not be the same as "*AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™*."

AMA Physician's Recognition Award (PRA)

20. What is the Physician's Recognition Award?

The AMA Physician's Recognition Award (PRA) is an award issued by the AMA to physicians who have met certain CME requirements. It recognizes physicians who have demonstrated their commitment to staying current with advances in medicine by participating in CME activities.

The AMA PRA may be applied for online, or a PDF version of the application may be completed and submitted by mail, fax, or scanned and sent as an email attachment.

AMA PRA Online Application: <https://extapps.ama-assn.org/login/id/PRA?url=https://pra.ama-assn.org:443/PRAWeb>

AMA PRA PDF Application: <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama1/pub/upload/mm/455/praapplication.pdf>

21. Can other types of credit be used when applying for the AMA PRA?

For the purpose of obtaining an AMA PRA physician may submit credits earned within the following CME systems on a one-to-one basis for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*:

- American Academy of Family Physicians' prescribed credit
- American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists' formal learning cognates