Medical Coding Books FAQs

What do the code book acronyms stand for?

- **CPT®** – Current Procedural Terminology
- **HCPCS** – Healthcare Common Procedure Coding System
- **ICD-10-CM** – International Classification of Diseases, tenth revision, Clinical Modification
- **ICD-10-PCS** – International Classification of Diseases, tenth revision, Procedure Coding System

What are the different code books used for?

- **CPT®** codes are used to describe the procedure or treatment the patient actually received.
- **ICD-9-CM** codes are the diagnostic codes and describe the patient’s medical condition or symptoms.
- **HCPCS** codes are used to identify products, supplies and services such as ambulance services and durable medical equipment, prosthetics, orthotics and supplies (DMEPOS) when used outside a physician’s office.

For more detailed information, go [here](#).

What books do I need to code effectively?

The three core coding books mentioned above are used in physicians’ offices, hospitals, and payer organizations to perform accurate coding. The CPT® and HCPCS manuals are universal for both physicians and hospital organizations; the ICD-9 book needs to be chosen based on the type of organization where you work or plan to work. If you work for a physician office or outpatient facility, you will only need volumes 1-2 of the ICD-9-CM manual. Hospitals and payers need the ICD-9-CM, volumes 1-3. Volume 3 is a system of procedural codes and it has been adopted for inpatient procedures reported by hospitals. You may also choose to add the Procedural Coding Expert book to your set of core books. This book contains the official AMA CPT® codes and descriptions, CMS’s rules and guidelines, PQRI designation, Relative Value Units (RVUs) and other valuable features, but excludes the AMA’s rules and guidelines. The Procedural Coding Expert book is a great supplement to your AMA CPT® book.

When are the books implemented in the field?

The ICD-9-CM code books are implemented in the field every October 1 (the 2012 ICD-9-CM books started being used in the field on October 1, 2011). All other code books (including the CPT® and HCPCS Level II) are implemented in the field every January 1.

ICD-10-CM and ICD-10-PCS will be implemented in the field on October 1, 2014. More information: [ICD-10 implementation](#)

What books do I need for AACP exam(s)?

For the CPC®, CPC-H®, and CPC-P® exams you may use Physician Bundle 1, which includes the AMA CPT® Professional, HCPCS Level II, and ICD-9-CM for Physicians, Vol. 1-2 books. You may use professional or standard versions of these books as well, but remember that the expert editions of ICD-9-CM and HCPCS Level II books are the best quality and contain more supporting information for accurate coding. Also, you may use the ICD-9-CM for Hospitals, Vol. 1-3, but the third volume is not necessary for either the CPC®, CPC-H®, or CPC-P® exam.

For the CPMA® exam you may use the three core coding books, audit tools of your choice, and both CMS DGs (1995 and 1997).
For the CIC® exam you may use the CPT®, HCPCS Level II, and anatomical charts to assist in catheter selection (labeled with catheter selectivity).

For the CPC® exam you may use one reference of your choice, the OIG Compliance Program Guidance for Individual and Small Group Physician Practices, the OIG Compliance Program Guidance for Third Party Billing Companies, and the OIG Supplemental Hospital Program Guidance. These OIG references can be found here.

For all of AAPC’s specialty exams you may use the set of three code books that are in Physician Bundle 1 and one reference material of your choice. Most specialty exams also allow the use of an E/M Audit Worksheet of your choice and both CMS Documentation Guidelines (1995 and 1997). For a complete listing of approved manuals specific to your exam, click on your specialty from the list of specialty certifications, and then click on the “Approved References” tab. Although unnecessary for the specialty exams, you may use the ICD-9-CM for Hospitals, Vol. 1-3.

*Only AMA Standard or Professional versions of the CPT® book may be used during any AAPC exam.
**AAPC’s Study Guides, CPT® Assistant or other CPT® books may not be used during the exam.

You can find a full list of allowed reference materials for all AAPC exams here.

What year’s books should I use?

Since the code sets for each coding book are updated every year, it’s essential for coders to have the current year’s books to ensure accurate performance. Reporting wrong codes can lead to denied claim submissions and substantial penalization. It’s clearly very important to get an education on the annual code set updates and to obtain new code books every year.

All AAPC exams are based on the current calendar year’s code sets, so we strongly suggest you use the current year’s books. The previous calendar year’s books may be used on an exam, but you would be at obvious disadvantage doing so. The upcoming year’s books are not allowed for exam use. The exams are updated every January for the new code sets.

In other words, all exams administered in 2014 are based on the 2014 code sets and we strongly recommend using the 2014 code books. Code books from 2013 may be used on the 2014 exams, but doing so is not ideal. Code books from 2015 may not be used on 2014 exams.

Why use the expert version?

The expert version of ICD-9-CM and HCPCS Level II code books is the highest quality version and loaded with the most additional information. These books are enhanced with unique features often including additional tables and crosswalks, code alerts, icons and appendices, definitions, rules, and references. All these features help coders to eliminate costly errors and code more accurately and efficiently. The expert version is also equipped with spiral binding which makes it easier to use.

Availability & Shipping Details

The next year’s code books become available for preorder in March or April of each year. The ICD-9-CM ships in September, CPT® ships in September, and the HCPCS Level II and Procedural Coding Expert ship in December. If you opt to save on shipping when purchasing these books, your order will ship once the latest book arrives. In other words, if you select to save on shipping when you order Physician Bundle 1, which includes the AMA CPT® Professional, ICD-9-CM Expert for Physicians, Vol. 1-2, and HCPCS Level II books, your three coding books will ship in December.

Where can I find updates/errata for these books?

We have posted information and resources for the different code books here.