Getting through Nursing School
How to Study for Nursing Exams leading to success on the NCLEX:
January 2017
Purpose of NURSING EXAMS

- Test knowledge of content from course objectives
- Test ability to ANALYZE & APPLY concepts learned to care for clients in various situations
- To develop a PROFESSIONAL NURSE who is SAFE when providing care
- To develop CRITICAL THINKING required to make judgments/decisions based on EVIDENCE BASED PRACTICE
- To PREPARE the student for the NCLEX and to PASS ON THE FIRST TRY
BECOME FAMILIAR WITH THE NCLEX BLUEPRINT

- Go to the Web Site for the NCLEX: The National Council State Board of Nursing: www.ncsbn.org
- PRINT out the BLUEPRINT of the NCLEX.
- FOCUS: this will help you identify the focus of your nursing school exams
Why are Nursing Exams Different?

- COMPARING STUDYING Science Courses and Nursing Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Science Courses</th>
<th>Nursing Courses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Heavy</td>
<td>Heavy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>Involves Understanding and Memorization</td>
<td>Involves Understanding and Application</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cognitive level</td>
<td>Knowledge/Understanding</td>
<td>Analysis Application</td>
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<tr>
<td>(how difficult are the questions?)</td>
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BLOOMS TAXONOMY (revised version)

- CREATING
- EVALUATING
- ANALYSING
- APPLYING
- UNDERSTANDING
- REMEMBERING
## Comparison of Cognitive Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Remember</th>
<th>Describe where Goldilocks lived</th>
<th>DEFINED - Retrieving Relevant Data: eg: Retrieving Laboratory Values</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>Summarize what Goldilocks story was all about</td>
<td>DEFINED - Constructing meaning by interpreting, classifying: Eg: Understanding how drug classifications are different</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apply</td>
<td>Construct a theory as to why Goldilocks went into the house</td>
<td>DEFINED: implementing. Eg: Applying what you learned USING a therapeutic communication technique in an appropriate situation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analyze</td>
<td>Differentiate between how Goldilocks reacted and how you would react in each story event.</td>
<td>DEFINED: analyze information Eg: Which patients you should see first based on priorities</td>
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What does this mean?

- You cannot MEMORIZE to be successful
- You need to UNDERSTAND material and be able to RECOUNT it back in your own words
- You need to be able to take what you’ve learned and APPLY to various patient situations
- You need to become familiar with HOW to answer NCLEX style questions
- HOW DO YOU DO THIS? PRACTICE PRACTICE PRACTICE!!!
HOW TO DO THIS?

- Understand what the course objectives are
- Understand the Learning Outcomes from each chapter you are assigned to read
- READ before coming to class
  - Identify questions about content
- TO GET THE MOST FROM READING:
  - Read the summary at the beginning of the chapter
  - Scan through the chapter
  - Make note of BOLDED words, charts, boxes, graphs, highlighted points
  - Outline the content using bullets of info, not full sentences
    - S&S of disorder, what to do for the patient, complications, how to detect them
  - At the top of each section FORMULATE A QUESTION
- TAKE NOTES IN CLASS:
  - Key points that instructor says
  - NOT EVERY WORD
SUCCESSFUL STUDY HABITS

- Have a calendar – correlate your life commitments with time available to study
- Identify a “study place” – free of distractions, sometimes out of the house
- Length of time: shorter/multiple times better than long individual times – include breaks
- Set Goals: identify what you want to accomplish at that study session
- Avoid Procrastination
- Do most difficult while most alert
- Healthy diet/exercise/adequate sleep
GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

- Make sure you identify ALL THE DATA IN THE QUESTION
- Try to visualize the patient situation when reading
- USE CLINICAL OBSERVATIONS ONLY IF they are identical to the THEORETICAL CONTENT.
- DO NOT USE DEVELOPMENTAL milestones from your own memory of your own children, use it from the book
- Think about the PATHOPHYSIOLOGY of the problem presented in the question
- Be able to identify how you know there is a COMPLICATION
- Think about the nursing care specific to the problem
- ALWAYS THINK THERE IS A PATIENT ASSOCIATED WITH THE QUESTION
Test Taking Strategies – AND EXAMPLE

When reading the question:
- Identify what the question is asking? Rephrase the question in your own words. Do not look at the options until you have rephrased the question.
- Look for KEY WORDS.
- RULE OUT the options. Say YES, NO, MAYBE.

QUESTION:
A client has a problem with sleeping at night. The nurse encourages the client to do which measure to best enhance nighttime sleep?
A. Drink a glass of milk
B. Eat a large bedtime snack
C. Eat a snack with spicy ingredients
D. Avoid caffeine products 1 hour before sleep
HOW TO AVOID READING INTO THE QUESTION

- What does this mean?
  - You are considering issues beyond the information presented in the question

- What to do to prevent this:
  - Identify the INGREDIENTS of a QUESTION (next slide)
  - READING the question carefully
  - Looking for STRATEGIC WORDS/STRATEGIC PHRASES
  - Identify SUBJECT OF THE QUESTION
  - Identify WHAT THE QUESTION IS ASKING
  - Use the process of elimination
  - AVOID THE “WHAT IF” SYNDROME (what if this, what if that)
INGREDIENTS OF THE QUESTION - EXAMPLE

- CASE EVENT – heart of the question, gives the information you need to think about to answer the question
- QUESTION QUERY – asks you something specific about the CASE EVENT
- OPTIONS – ANSWERS

EXAMPLE

*Case Event:* The health care provider prescribes an intravenous (IV) antibiotic to be administered in 50 ml 0.9% normal saline and to infuse in 30 minutes. The drop factor for the IV tubing is 15 gtts/ml

*Question Query:* The nurse should set the flow rate of the infusion at how many drops per minute?
MULTIPLE SELECT EXAMPLE

Think of these as TRUE OR FALSE QUESTIONS

A client who has had abdominal surgery complains of feeling as though "something gave way" in the incisional site. The nurse removes the dressing and notes the presence of a loop of bowel protruding through the incision. Which nursing interventions should the nurse take? Select all that apply.

- 1. Contact the surgeon.
- 2. Instruct the client to remain in bed quietly resting.
- 3. Prepare the client for wound closure.
- 4. Document the findings and actions taken.
- 5. Place a sterile saline dressing and ice packs over the wound.
- 6. Place the client in a supine position without a pillow under the head.
STRATEGIC WORDS/PHRASES

• EXAMPLES - Means there is only one correct option
  early sign
  Late sign
  Goal has been achieved
  Goal has not been fully met
  Has not met the outcome criteria
  Adequately tolerating
  Unable to tolerate
  Avoid
  Needs additional instructions
  Lacks understanding
PRIORITY SETTING QUESTIONS - EXAMPLE

GROUPING #1: Airway, Breathing, Circulation
GROUPING #2: Infection, Environmental Safety
GROUPING #3: Pain, Teaching, Psychosocial

EXAMPLE -
Order the following:
__Pt needing instructions on colostomy care
__Pt crying because of new cancer diagnosis
__Pt trying to get out of bed when disoriented
__Pt who has a fever of 102 degrees F
__Pt with a BP of 80/40
STRATEGIC WORD/PHRASES that indicate the Need to Prioritize

EXAMPLES of STRATEGIC WORDS indicating all options are CORRECT – necessary to prioritize to select the correct option

- Best
- First
- Initial
- Immediately
- Most likely/ least likely
- Most appropriate/least appropriate
- Highest/lowest priority
- At lowest risk/highest risk
- Best understanding
TEST TAKING STRATEGIES: positive or negative event query TEACHING

- POSITIVE EVENT QUERY: what indicates that the patient understands the teaching provided was effective?
  - 3 wrong answers, 1 correct answer

- NEGATIVE EVENT QUERY: what indicates the patient needs additional instruction?
  - 3 right answers, 1 wrong answer
The nurse instructs a client taking a potassium-retaining diuretic about foods high in potassium that need to be avoided. The nurse determines that the client needs further instruction if the client states that which food is high in potassium?

1. Kiwi
2. Celery
3. Oranges
4. Dried Fruit
QUESTIONS INVOLVING STEPS OF NURSING PROCESS

- Followed in order
  - Assessment (data collection) – first step
  - Evaluation – last step
- EXCEPTION to the rule:
  - IF THE SITUATION IS LIFE-THREATENING EMERGENCY
    - There may be an intervention as the first action
COMPARABLE OR ALIKE
DEFINITION AND EXAMPLE

DEFINITION: multiple choice questions have only one answer that is correct. If you notice that options appear similar (comparable/alike) with regard to context, ELIMINATE THEM.

EXAMPLE:
The nurse assesses a client's surgical incision for signs of infection. Which finding by the nurse would be interpreted as a normal finding at the surgical site?

- 1. Red, hard skin
- 2. Serous drainage
- 3. Purulent drainage
- 4. Warm, tender skin
CLOSED ENDED WORDS

- Generally if an option has a closed ended word, IT IS INCORRECT
- GENERALLY if an option has an open ended word it may be CORRECT
- CLOSED ENDED WORDS:
  - All, always, cannot, every, must, never, none, not, only, will not
- OPEN ENDED WORDS:
  - Generally, may, possibly, usually
EXAMPLE OF CLOSED ENDED WORDS

- **Case Event:** The nurse is providing dietary instructions to a client about a low fat diet.

- **Question query:** The nurse should make which statement to the client?

  1. “Never use butter for cooking.”
  2. “Drink fluids only if they are fat free.”
  3. “Eat foods that have less than 1% fat content only.”
  4. “Read the labels on food items to determine the fat content.”
UMBERELLA OPTION

- Umbrella option is a GENERAL STATEMENT that may incorporate the content of the other options within it
  - When answering a question – note more than one option appears correct THINK UMBRELLA OPTION
In a telephone call from the emergency medical services, the nurse in the emergency department is told that several victims who survived a plane crash and suffering from cold exposure will be transported to the hospital. What is the initial nursing action by the emergency department nurse?

1. Call the nursing supervisor to activate the agency disaster plan
2. Supply the trauma rooms with bottles of sterile water and normal saline
3. Call the intensive care unit to request that nurses be sent to the emergency department
4. Call the laundry department to request as many warm blankets as possible for the emergency department
Oxygen by nasal cannula at 4L/minute is prescribed for a hospitalized client. The nurse should perform which actions in the care of the client? SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.

1. Humidify the oxygen
2. Apply water soluble lubricant to the nares
3. Instruct the client to breathe through the nose only
4. Instruct the client and family about the purpose of oxygen
5. Increase the oxygen flow if the client complains of dryness in the nares
EXCELLENT RESOURCE


HERE’S THE PRICE AND WHERE TO GET IT:
- You can purchase it at the following sources:
  - Google Play for $19.22
  - Barnes and Noble for $17.59
  - Evolve Elsevier for $27.96
  - Textbooks.com for $19.85
  - Amazon for $22.52