



TIP SHEET

NCLEX Success for the New Graduate

Congratulations! You have made it through the hard part; nursing school. Now it's time to tie up the loose ends of your NCLEX prep and be assured you will conquer the exam on your first attempt.

1. Take a short break to enjoy your graduation

There is no benefit to beginning your NCLEX prep the night after graduation. You can take time for a deep breath and a pat on the back. Give yourself at least a week, maybe two to enjoy your accomplishment of finishing nursing school.

2. Think about Thinking

NCLEX success is more than memorizing content. Focus on applying critical thinking as your foundation.

Critical thinking hinges on understanding “why” and linking that understanding to previous learning and applying it to nursing practice.

Use critical thinking to:

- Assess your NCLEX prep needs.
- Understand content in practice question rationales.
- Monitor progress for readiness.

3. Commit to Lifestyle Practices that Support Thinking and Learning

Now is the time to take seriously the things that will improve your ability to think, focus, learn, remember, and retrieve learned content.

- Get enough sleep (8 hours a night is the goal!)
- Eat a healthy diet; limit processed foods, sugary foods, caffeine, and alcohol, and include healthy brain foods like fish, beans, nuts, and greens.
- Get physical activity. This helps your brain and your mood.
- Give your brain rest using a practice that works for you; meditation, mindfulness, yoga, journaling are some examples.
- Limit your work schedule. If at all possible, consider NCLEX prep your full time job for now.
- Set aside focused time for practice tests and studying

4. Keep a positive attitude

You made it through nursing school and you have all of the tools you need for success. Now is not the time to let negative thoughts destroy your ability to focus and learn.

Set a mantra and repeat it before each study session. “I can do this!”

5. Commit to a Study Plan Based on Your Needs

Creating a study plan and sticking to it will boost positive thinking and keep you on track for success. Identify your needs based on your readiness test and NCLEX practice test performance.

Do you have evidence of knowledge gaps that you will need to address? Do you know if you make test taking strategies errors like misreading questions or losing focus?

Scoring well below benchmark suggests you have knowledge gaps.

Addressing knowledge gaps is time consuming and requires committed focused time segments.

Practicing questions and reading rationale is a passive approach to learning that will not address knowledge gaps. Carve out uninterrupted study time to focus on learning and understanding content. When addressing knowledge gaps

- Hand write study notes. Writing notes by hand enhances learning.
- Quiz yourself on study notes to reinforce the learning.
- Continue practice tests and watch scores increase as knowledge gaps are addressed.
- Don't rely on luck. The NCLEX computerized format will find your weak areas. It's not like playing the lottery. You have to know, and understand, NCLEX passing level content.

Scoring inconsistently or just near but not above benchmark suggests strategy errors.

Identify strategy errors by taking a practice test as if it were your NCLEX then reviewing the results. Strategy errors contribute to missed questions despite knowing and understanding the question content. These can be related to misreading questions, missing keywords in questions, rushing through questions, or losing focus during testing.

- Read each question carefully. Identify keywords. Look at every answer.
- Improve your focus.
 - Set aside longer periods of time for practice tests.
 - Take all practice tests without interruptions.
 - Develop lifestyle habits to improve focus (i.e. STOP the scroll!).

7. Pick ONE good NCLEX prep resource, use it, and trust it.

The product you used in nursing school should have ample resources for your prep. You don't need to purchase another product. There is no value, only confusion, in using multiple resources.

However, by the time they finish nursing school some students are DONE with the product they used in school. They may have had frustrating experiences not meeting the benchmark on tests, or maybe had burdensome test remediation requirements in nursing school. In addition, learning styles are unique. Some students just don't connect with the format or layout of the product and get frustrated using it.

Attitude influences learning. If you can't shake your bad attitude about the product you may consider purchasing something else. However, if finances are limited and the product itself works for you, you just don't like it, try adjusting your attitude. Try saying "I'm on the home stretch and I can say goodbye to this!"

If your practice test scores are not improving, don't blame the product. Use critical thinking to identify problem areas. Review every question on every practice test. Are knowledge gaps continuing to be a problem? If so, revisit your strategy for learning and understanding content.

7. Use the NCLEX Prep Resource to Determine Your Readiness

Reviewing a few questions here and there will not support learning and understanding.

Take every practice test as if it were NCLEX. Know the benchmark for readiness for the product.

Review overall results in each NCLEX Client Needs Category to be sure you are above benchmark for every Category. If a Category is not at passing level, create practice tests composed of questions just in that Category.

Schedule your NCLEX when practice test scores are consistently above the benchmark in every Client Needs Category.

8. Use reliable resources for help

Sadly, most nursing school graduates find themselves on their own after graduation to navigate NCLEX prep. You will find abundant advice from others however, what worked for one person may not work for you.

With over a decade of experience, I've developed a method for supporting NCLEX success. Many clients achieve success after just one session, while others prefer a two-session approach: one for planning and another for performance review and assurance of readiness.

Visit [NCLEXRx.com](https://www.nclexrx.com) to schedule a coaching consultation. It may be the best investment you make toward reaching your goal of becoming a nurse.