

Tips from Grads on preparing for the NCLEX

Relaxation Exercises: <https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/wellness/relaxation/>

Grad #1

- As for prepping for the NCLEX, I was one of the few students who did not take a KAPLAN course, but instead bought a \$5 book for my kindle that had approximately 500 NCLEX similar multiple choice questions with answers and rationales in the book.
- I started studying the day after I graduated, doing about 30 questions per night, and looking up the answers I didn't understand. Some nights I studied with my friend that also hadn't taken a KAPLAN course and we'd share our books.
- I scheduled my exam as soon as I received my eligibility letter (something I really recommend). I took my exam on June 2nd and was convinced that I had failed after it (who wasn't?). I didn't have any listening with headphones questions, or click on the diagram, but I did have plenty of select all that apply. My computer shut off after 75 questions which terrified me, but looking back I should have realized that I was getting progressively harder and harder questions because I was doing well.
- The best advice I had for studying is to study with someone, argue out your reasoning for the answer (it's amazing from what you can learn from each other), and approach the select all that apply questions with a true or false attitude with each option.

Grad #2

- I would like to recommend to the nursing students to take the NCLEX as soon as possible. I was able to take my test in June, while I still had concepts fresh in my mind.
- I did not take an expensive Kaplan course but rather I rented books through <http://www.barnesandnoble.com>. I spent two weeks going through Saunder's and answered about 2,000 practice questions from various NCLEX prep books. I dedicated between 4-8 hours a day to studying and learning the rationale behind the answers.
- I would also recommend NSSBN learning extension as a cheap online course; it has great online practice tests. <http://learningext.com/pages/home>

Grad #3

- Study method: Review books, online questions, free apps from iTunes
- Night before exam: Cut myself off at a specific point. Worked out to relieve the stress, long bath, and went to bed at a decent hour.
- Retail therapy after exam to relieve stress.
- Took exam: early July. Was able to start work under a temporary license in late June.
- Advice: You know what you know going into the exam. Don't beat yourself up with you think you got a question wrong or had no idea what it was asking.
- Give yourself time to think about the questions,. If knowing what question you're on stresses you out, the exam has a function to turn off the box that shows which question you're on.

Grad #4

- I did Hurst. While I wasn't crazy about the format/style, it did help me solidify concepts (more than just test taking tips). It also gave my prep focus. I passed the NCLEX in 75 questions.

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What I did to prepare:

- Realized that I needed to practice how to take a *test* rather than learn nursing content; you learned content in school, now you're just putting it in practice.
- Realized that what I *actually* did in clinical and work, even if exactly hospital policy, was a world of difference from what was *textbook correct*.
- Bought the \$20 Kaplan NCLEX book and used the "Decision Tree" – this is actually super helpful and I did it for every question (even those I thought I knew) on test day.
- I took the Kaplan class (the online version) because I had a job secured at UW and knew it would be mostly reimbursed and knew it couldn't hurt...looking back it really didn't help much but the \$20 Kaplan book was a life-saver and the practice with the "Decision Tree" was really good.
- Went through a ton of test-bank questions but only those that were guaranteed to be at NCLEX level or higher.
- Made a list of proper lab values to know and of the "endings" of drug classes "olols" "prils" etc.
- Only study with friends who actually help you be productive. And no facebook! Concentrate!

What you should know:

- The NCLEX sounds a lot scarier than it is. Be confident in what you've learned and how you've applied yourself over the past few years. You've earned the right to take this test and to be an amazing nurse. This is the last hurdle to accomplishing your dream. You'll be great.
- Do study and practice lots of questions, this gets your mind in the right flow for test day.
- Do NOT over-study the day before but do a little review. Go to bed early, rest, relax, and wake up refreshed!
- Do 20 practice questions the morning of before the test, this gets you sharp and in the question-answering mood!
- Go to the test and answer EVERY question like it is your LAST question. I finished in 75 this way.

The Week Before:

- Visit the test-center the day before so you know exactly where it is; even walk down into the room.
- Make sure your addresses on your driver's license and your ATT (authorization to test) match!

The Day of:

- Wear simple clothes and no jewelry (they make you take it off anyway)
- Read every question twice and pay special attention to key words "NOT" "MOST" etc
- Answer every question like it is the LAST question.
- Expect to finish in 75, but if you don't, expect to finish in 76 (and so on)
- Celebrate!

Grad #6

- I would advise students to do 1000+ practice questions. It is the best way to cover the most material and remember it. Also to not over study.

Grad #7

- Research/Preparing: Going to the info sessions and reading reviews online of different programs (ATI, KAPLAN, etc.), looked through some study books and really thought about my learning styles.
- Chose KAPLAN online course. Learn better on my own. Could go back and review. Could listen to online lectures on own time. Less cost. Need to be self-motivated! Hard to do in summer if not.
- Choosing a date. After start date at UW Hospital d/t policy. Choose for yourself, not when you're friends are doing it, but don't wait too long! It was hard waiting until August. Ended up changing it to a couple weeks earlier. I went to Europe so I started course when I got back in June, and gave myself 2 months, probably only needed 1.5 mos.
- Tips: Don't panic if you get a bad score on a practice test! Track your overall progress. Don't study day before, review big concepts, but no practice questions! Relax and do something to take your mind off of it. Try not to compare yourself and your scores to other people or talk too much about it. It will stress you out. Focus on yourself because you are the one taking the test. Set yourself daily goals/make a calendar. Balance studying and having fun, especially if you are also starting your job at the same time. Drive to the place ahead of time.
- Day of: Eat breakfast! Don't study on your way there. Don't try to learn anything new the day before. Have everything you need laid out the night before to reduce stress. Call someone you love right before who will lift your spirits (moms are always good!) Remind yourself that you passed nursing school, you have studied, and you can do it! Explain what it's like: the center, sitting in the booth, noise canceling head phones, finger printing etc. Plan something fun for after so you have something to look forward to!

Grad #8

- I would really encourage people to go through a review course. I took Kaplan and reviewed the book that they give you prior to graduation. I then took the review course and scheduled the exam for 3-4 weeks after my review course ended. I took tests and studied every day to keep my mind sharp! I highly suggest taking the exam within a month after the review course. If you schedule it for too much further out, it is easy to lose motivation. I know several people that took the Kaplan course, all of who ended up passing the exam the first time around.

Grad #9

- I took the Hurst class and would recommend that to self-motivated students. The class was 3 days and then the rest is up to the learner. It is content driven learning versus the strategy style of other courses. I studied for approximately 6 weeks after taking the Hurst class and viewed studying as my job. I worked about 20 hours a week to ensure I had the time and energy to study. I passed in 75 questions.