



# Study Tips by NSNA Members

Over the summer, NSNA asked its members to share study and wellness tips that helped them through nursing school. Following are some of the highlights from the many submissions we received. Thank you to everyone who submitted! Good luck in your studying!

## Marathon Madness

I read, read, read, and read some more.

I find it useful to read the chapters first along with the notes from class and any handouts from the professor. After I finish a section, I test myself with NCLEX type

questions from review books. I then plan what my study buddy and I call a “marathon” day in which we meet and study from about 9:00 am until around 10pm. We sometimes do this for two days in a row. But we make sure that before we actually meet up to study we’ve read and studied on our own. We don’t meet up to teach the other. We meet up to review and to test each other. It works really well for us.

*Analuz Camacho  
Borough of Manhattan  
Community College  
New York, NY*

## Portable Classroom

I find hand made flash cards (ring bound) to be valuable assets. They are like a portable classroom. I can take them out at the soccer field, dojo, gymnastics, and anywhere else my hectic kid’s schedule brings me. I also find it best to study with a friend; we tend to make up

silly songs and sayings to help us remember the more difficult things. Study has to become a part of your day.

*Dawn Luddy  
Naugatuck Valley Community College  
Waterbury, CT*

## Smell to Success

How many times have you been somewhere and were suddenly aware of an aroma in the air that took you back to some past experience? Smells trigger memories. In an effort to use this principle to my advantage in nursing

school, I often burn a scented candle while I study. After I put my notes down, I pour some of the melted wax from the candle onto a saucer and allow it to dry. Once it has dried, I put the wax in a resealable bag and take it to my exam. During the exam I periodically sniff the wax to trigger the release of the information I studied while burning the candle. Some of my classmates laughed at me in the beginning, but since I received the University

Scholar Award, Superior Performance Award, Outstanding Student Award, and finished with the highest G.P.A. in my class no one laughs now.

*J.R. McLain  
University of West Alabama  
Ira D. Pruitt Division of Nursing  
Livingston, AL*

## Teaching and Testing

I just completed my first semester of nursing school. As with my previous courses, I write a mind map of each chapter in the texts assigned. I also read books beyond what is assigned for further comprehension, and research answers on the internet. I

study alone as well as in a small group. I find that studying alone and pretending I am a teacher, then studying with a group gives me the most complete chance of understanding the topics at hand.

*Roger McCormick  
Palm Beach Community College  
Lake Worth, FL*

## Aye-Aye Sir!

**Holistic studying**, as I define it, supports both the person and the task at hand. It centers less on a rigid format - as the demands of school and life frequently change in less than predictable ways - and more on a flexible application around five familiar

concepts: Assess, Identify, Assist, Implement, Evaluate (AI-AIE, or “aye-aye” for a short, goofy mnemonic).

1. **Assess** – Assess what your immediate short-term priorities are in your personal and academic life, respectively. (For example, exhaustion = personal; case study due Friday = academic)

2. **Identify** – Identify what you need to address the baseline\* of both goals.

(Exhaustion = A three hour nap if the case study is due tomorrow, a good night’s sleep if days away. Case study = 4 hours work-time, notes, coffee, laptop, best focus spot.)

3. **Assist** – Request assistance should it be needed or preferred.

(Exhaustion = Ask roommate/ spouse to keep the place quiet as you sleep. Case study = group work if allowed.)

4. **Implement** – Implement your plan to address priorities at baseline with the necessary assistance. Plan extra time to review and improve your work.

(Exhaustion = sleep/nap for appropriate length. Case study = wake up, go to focus spot, coffee in hand, and work.)

5. **Evaluate** – Evaluate your progress. Pay attention to how you feel, temporarily move past roadblock areas in the assignment; take a 5 minute breather, etc.

\*I use the term ‘baseline’ because I tend to attempt overachievement. While I believe this to be a favorable trait, it can at times overwhelm me and become counter-productive. By establishing a baseline, you identify what simply needs to be completed, and once that is finished, you can go back and improve the final product. This technique thus incorporates a self-review, and is often the time when I catch my mistakes.

Hope this helps!

*Matthew Schnupp  
Case Western Reserve University -  
Francis Payne Bolton School of Nursing  
Cleveland, OH*

## Helpful Distractions

If I get up from studying to see friends, or to go online for five minutes, it distracts me for a while and I often get back to my little study room refreshed. These breaks help me come back and rephrase the material I've been studying. My study tip is to get up

every 30 mins and lose your self for 5 minutes. If you can come back and rephrase or dictate what you where studying, you're on your way to a successful exam!

*Jorge Anderson, SNA President  
South Texas Community College  
McAllen, TX*

## This looks familiar!

I am always trying to find new ways to increase efficiency during my study time (which seems to be every waking moment I'm not in class or attending clinicals). I tape my lectures and then I listen to them while typing them out at home. This gives

me a second opportunity to listen to the lecture. I think about it again as I type it, and then I have it available for review later.

*Marti Krechnyak  
Maric College  
San Diego, CA*

## Chart Topper!

After the lecture (or before the exam, depending on how much time I have) I will make a chart with one column containing questions and the second column with answers. I find this is quicker and more efficient than flashcards. It is also helpful in

study groups because you can go through and ask direct questions.

*Nicole Matchett  
University of South Florida  
Tampa, FL*

## Technology Tricks

I bought a digital recorder to record lectures. For \$39 I got one that records in MP3 format, and I could download my lectures to my computer. I would transfer everything to my iPod to listen to during workouts or just whenever.

This also made it convenient

to burn CDs and share the lectures with friends. It's the best \$39 I've spent!

*Shannon Trujillo  
Luna Community College  
Las Vegas, NM*

Here's what helped me survive my 1st semester of nursing school this year:

Rather than record my professor's lectures like many of my classmates, I would type up my lecture notes and then record them myself onto my recorder. Then, on my drive to and from class (25 minutes each way), I would listen to my notes. This was like reviewing the material three times because I would have to: 1) type up the notes; 2) dictate my notes onto my voice recorder; 3) listen to them while I was driving. I especially liked the ability to study while driving! I guess if I was athletic or had time to work out, I would be listening to my notes on the treadmill as well.

*Adina Jaitly  
San Diego State University  
School of Nursing  
San Diego, CA*

## Healthy and Happening!

The study technique that I have utilized throughout my nursing program involves taking my nursing material to the gym and reading my lecture notes on the elliptical machines. This way I achieve two goals at the same time:

the elliptical allows me to work up a sweat, and I can read efficiently without getting dizzy. I always leave the gym feeling refreshed, healthier, and smarter! I also study with a friend a few days before each test. My friend and I constantly challenge each other by asking questions and reiterating facts that we thought were emphasized during lecture. Knowing that you will meet with someone that expects you to 'know your stuff' is a great motivation to read ahead and know the material.

*Lisa Elliott*  
Saddleback College Nursing Student  
Mission Viejo, CA

## I'll Take Pharma for \$500....

To study for pharmacology, some of us at Thomas Jefferson University set up a "Jeopardy" type game to study our drugs. We set up the drug categories on 3" by 5" cards on a big desk and then have a pile of cards with all of the drug names

and had to place them under the right category. It really helped. A lot of us even got 100s!

*Erica DePalma*  
Thomas Jefferson University  
College of Health Professions  
Philadelphia, PA

## Three Times a Charm!

I was able to make it through this semester by rewriting and organizing all of my notes as soon as lecture was over. I used three different colors. One for the teachers' notes, one for the notes I took in class, and one for the areas I didn't

understand. The next day I would ask the teacher if I had any problems with what was taught the day before. I went from a very low grade to the high 80s low 90s. It definitely helped!

*Suzanne Simpson*  
Mountainside Hospital  
School of Nursing  
Montclair, NJ

## Anytime, Anywhere

I carried my books and notes everywhere I went. I would study during any free moment, including at night after the kids were asleep. I also attended at least one study group before a test to look at the material from a different perspective. Many

times question would be brought up that I hadn't thought about. It's a good way to view material that you've learned from someone else's point of view.

*Esperanza Ramos*  
Reseda, CA

## Alternate Care Plan

The best method of studying for any test for me was to make a clinical prep sheet (mini care plan for those who don't use this format) for every disease process we were tested on. I filled in the values for all the labs (what we'd

draw, what result we'd expect), the top 5-10 nursing diagnoses, clinical manifestations and common complications, 10-15 interventions for each diagnosis, common medications (including the top three interventions and all side effects/adverse effects), and other common collaborative orders (like x-rays, PT/OT, etc) that may be anticipated from the physician. I made sure I took this information directly from our lecture handouts and text books so I knew that what I was studying was correct.

The actual act of looking all that up and writing it out is in itself very beneficial for increasing recall of the information but the completed sheets also make excellent quick-reference pages. It also helped me specifically because I have a degree of photographic memory, so I can often look up or close my eyes and visualize exactly where I put certain data on the actual pages. I also have short-term memory issues from a childhood bike riding accident, and having all the top info on a single sheet made last minute cramming easy. That's where my photographic memory comes in handy, too!

*Maighen E. H. MacGabhann, EMT-P*  
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