

# Study Tips by NSNA Members

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

### *I'm Going to Pencil You in*

I am entering my 4th and final semester of my ADN program. Although everyone has different ways to study, what works for me is to schedule time in my appointment book. I'll set aside three hours

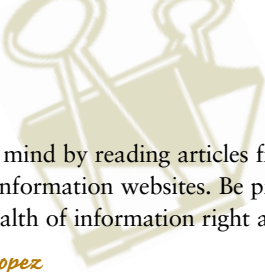
Tuesday afternoon and three hours Thursday evening and stick to my plan. I am from a large family so I like a little noise when I study. I go to Starbucks or to a local coffee shop. Sometimes I study at home or at the library. The variety seems to help.

*Phyllis Franco  
Ventura College, Ventura, CA*

### *Multiple Source Studying*

Read before class. Make a list of questions you have about anything you don't understand to ask your instructor at your next class. Learn the material by critically thinking about the information you feel is important. Keep the material fresh





in your mind by reading articles from nursing magazines or health information websites. Be proactive. The internet gives us a wealth of information right at the push of a button!

*Shelly Lopez*  
*Lee College, Baytown, TX*

*Rip it,  
Calculate it,  
Learn it!*

Instead of lugging around that 30 pound textbook, take it apart. Don't worry – it's your textbook. Keep the chapters in folders. It's much easier to carry around this way: can even take it to the gym and put it on a clipboard. You

shouldn't worry about keeping it in perfect condition unless you want to sell it back at the end of the semester.

Another tip I've found helpful: if you are weak in fluids and electrolytes or drug dose calculations, buy other books and practice with them. Set a goal to do 25 math problems every night. You can even do it while watching TV. Sometimes other books will give you a different perspective than your instructor or your primary textbook has given you. To refresh on anatomy, I bought an anatomy coloring book and it is fun and informative.

*Amy Steele*  
*Middlesex Community College, Lowell, MA*

*Visualize it!*

My secret study tip is to purchase a roll of butcher paper and create concept maps. The same day after every lecture I re-copy my notes into these concept maps and look up any information that I may have missed or am not clear about.

The butcher paper allows you to correlate certain disease processes and gives you a bigger picture of how everything is interconnected! Also a great way to help you visualize concepts during exams.

*Shauna Arslan*  
*San Francisco City College, San Francisco, CA*

*Focus  
and Fun*

The new NCLEX board games are a fun way to learn. If we have many players we each answer the question aloud so we can discuss the question, even when it's not our turn. Then, whoever's turn it is, can choose their

answer. You get points for correct answers. Whoever has the most points in the end wins. Playing it our way, we are trying to help each other get the correct answer, so it isn't very competitive.

I also have Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) so absolute quiet makes my mind wander worse than usual. I find myself doing housework, checking email and the fridge too often when I attempt to study at home. I found that having the right music, cooler temperature, and the bright lights of my favorite restaurant while sitting in my favorite corner booth, made an ideal setting for me to focus.

Walking on a treadmill while reading helps me focus. You could listen to a digital recording/CD/tape of yourself reading study material, while walking outdoors. I also listen to study CD's in the restaurant while coloring, to keep my hands and eyes busy and stay awake.

*Sue Miller*  
*Southwest Georgia Technical College, Thomasville, GA*

*Parlor  
Games*

One tip that has been extremely successful for some of our group study sessions is utilizing the white boards. We draw diagrams, pictures, and charts to review- and then turn it into games.

For example: for studying congenital heart defects we played a nursing version of the popular game Pictionary®. One person draws the heart with defect, and the first person to guess correctly becomes the next artist.

To study for pharmacology, it really helped us to act out a drug's side effects. We made flashcards with the drug, and then one person would draw the card and have to act out as many side effects as they could before someone guessed the drug.

*Christine Topinka*  
*Seattle University, Seattle, WA*

*A  
Balancing  
Act*

Listen to your body. In the past I used to devote a lot of time to studying. I would be sitting there thinking, "I've been here for two hours, my rear is killing me and I still don't feel comfortable with the material." When this happens,

get up. If you force yourself to study, you will be less likely to learn the information. Especially considering you really aren't focused on studying anyway.

If you do choose to work, get a job in the hospital. I know what you are thinking, waiting tables makes more money, and it does. However, working in a hospital gives you hands on learning experience in something you may be covering in class. Example: I am not too hot on cardiac, I got a job on a cardiac ICU. I'm better at cardiac. Plus you get some awesome

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## KIWIS PL $\alpha$ Se

### *The Basics for New Student Nurses*

As a faculty member, I've noticed that many students often miss some "basics" while doing clinicals. After all, as a new student nurse, you have much to remember the first few times on the floor: you have to focus on a head-to-toe assessment, remember the pulse rate, blood pressure, and respiration rate, etc. Before you realize it, everything is a blur! Did you check the patient's ID bracelet? Provide for privacy by closing the bed curtain, and/or explain to the patient what you are going to do? Forget to check that your patient's bed was in the low position and the call bell within reach?

These are what we as instructors refer to as "the basics." Here is a great way I've found to teach students to remember the basics – the mnemonic "KIWIS PLS"

**K** – Knock on the door: this alerts the patient that you are coming in to his room.

**I** – Introduce Yourself: a common courtesy. The patient has a right to know who is giving him care.

**W** – Wash your hands and don your gloves: essential preventing the spread of communicable diseases.

**I** – Check the patient's ID bracelet. Depending on the orientation of your patient, this is also a chance to ask the patient his name for clarification purposes.

**S** – State the service that you are about to perform. The patient has a right to know what you are going to do to him, especially when it involves physical touch. Remember, the patient always has the right to refuse treatment.

**P** – Provide for Privacy. This is when you should be aware that the door is closed, and the curtain is drawn if there is someone else in the room. Additionally, if you are giving a bed bath, make sure to keep the patient adequately covered.

**L** – Check Locks. This is a safety issue. Check to make sure the IV is locked, running as per doctor's order, or wide open in the case of Continual Bladder Irrigation (CBI). Check to see that the bed is locked. When you leave your patient's room, make sure that the bed is in the lowest position and the call bell is within reach.

**S** – Bring in your supplies. Bring in all appropriate (and possibly extra) supplies into the room. Nothing makes a new nurse feel worse than having to inconvenience a patient to run and get the correct supplies.

**KIWIS PLS** is an invaluable mnemonic that is useful not only in the clinical situation, but when taking clinical lab examinations. You can bank on being graded on introducing yourself, checking you patient's ID bracelet, washing your hands, putting the bed in the low position, and making sure the call bell is within reach.

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experience for later. Yes, there is a lot you can't do because you aren't a nurse yet, but RNs who know you are a student are pretty good at getting you experience in the things you can do and allow you to watch what you can't do yourself.

Surround yourself with the positive people in class. These are the ones that improve your morale. Stay away from the "negative Nelly" people who just want to complain about how hard it is. Yes, nursing school is difficult, but you are surrounded by many people going through the same thing. Insuring they are the positive people will make it far more pleasant for you.

I hope this helps. It got me through nursing school, I graduated in May 2008. I didn't get straight A's, but I was okay with that because I understood the information. Just relax and have a good time. Before you know it, you'll be graduating as well.

Good luck!

*Melissa Dean, '08 Graduate  
Methodist College of Nursing, Peoria, IL*

*Get  
Physical!*

We'll do anything to improve our grades, right? We stay up all night, buy a bunch of help books, pay for expensive reviews, and even skip lunch for one more cram session. We get to that point where we can't even think, so we just try to concentrate even

harder, and exert more effort. We don't have time to exercise, because we think that will just make us more tired and it takes up a lot of time. Do you feel like it's working?

Well, research shows we've got it all backwards. Studies by the Society of Neuroscience suggest that "voluntary exercise can increase the number of brain cells in the hippocampus." A study by California Department of Education conducted in 2002 suggested that there was a direct link between higher test scores in math and reading and higher levels of fitness. Some students have even reported feeling more awake and alert after exercising. Ready to run a marathon for that next exam? Well, start small by taking a ten minute brisk walk every day; when you hit the books, take a ten minute break every hour to walk to the end of the street and back, the cold wind will wake you up too. In addition to good nutrition and sufficient sleep, the research is clear: better health equal better grades. ☺

*Bonnie Kluttz, NSNA Director  
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