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Nursing is a dynamic profession that brings many rewards and career advancement opportunities. But to thrive in this field, it is particularly important to seek expert advice before, during, and after nursing school for tips on how to succeed in the nation's largest healthcare profession. For that reason, we reached out to hundreds of nursing professors and trained professionals for useful tips to help you achieve your goals in school and beyond.

- [Click here](#) for a list of our contributors with links to their social media profiles.
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Tips for Nursing School Success

Nursing school is a big commitment, and you must be prepared for its demands. Our experts contributed some incredibly useful tips on how to survive and succeed through nursing school. You'll undoubtedly come out ahead by following their advice.

Kristine Anne Scordo, PhD, RN, ACNP-BC, FAANP

- 1. If you don't understand something, ask.** Go to your faculty member for help. They are there to see you succeed.
- 2. Carry a small notebook with you to your clinicals.** Write down anything you see that you need to learn more about. That way you won't forget.

Kathleen F. McCue, FNP-BC, IBCLC-RLC

- 3. For success in nursing school I thought about the work being completed in very small snippets....**someone once told me to think about it like this; they'll hold up a hoop for me to jump through (i.e. a project or paper) and if you just complete that one thing and (jump through the hoop), you'll be fine....this was a lot better than thinking about everything at once and getting overwhelmed.
- 4. Study groups are a great way to cover a lot of material with different perspectives.** Divide up the material and "teach" your section. By learning material and teaching it back you will ensure you have a thorough knowledge, and by hearing from other voices you will gain insights on the material that solo studying may not have provided.

Renee Thompson, DNP, RN, CMSRN

- 5. As a new nurse, recognize that you are going to get bombarded by a lot of information your first few months. The key is to focus on the basics (the need to know) of each.** Know the policies, understand the expectations your manager has of you, and ask questions. Make sure you master the need to know (how to safely use equipment, call a code, etc.) before you start trying to learn the nice to know. Think "safety" first.

Tiffany Kelley, PhD, MBA, RN

- 6. In nursing school, the clinical rotations and practicums are the greatest opportunities to apply what you have learned in the classroom.** Additionally, these are great experiences to learn the specific area of nursing where you would like to practice once becoming a Registered Nurse (RN).

Angela Golden, DNP, FNP-C, FAANP

7. When getting ready to enter into clinicals, **find two or three references that can be on your tablet or phone for point of care information.** Having too many references to go to can really slow you down versus learning how to use a couple of really good ones, for primary care some examples are Pepid, Epocrates, UptoDate. You will find that the cost is worth it when you can access the information quickly to take care of patients.

8. School is important but you have to remember to find a bit of time for yourself. Think of this as 5 minute recharging times. Take those 5 minute breaks 4-6 times a day and meditate, take a walk or listen to your favorite music. Doing this in 5 minute time frames makes it very doable but the benefits to your decreased stress and overall health can be priceless.

Michelle Katz, LPN, MSN

9. Multitask with ease. It takes practice and the key is learning how to prioritize no matter what is thrown your way. So if you have an exam tomorrow, you need sleep and you have not eaten all day, you might want to prioritize it so you can be alert and well nourished for the exam tomorrow. I have done much better on exams that I was well rested on and felt that I did not know the material as well the night before and did worse on exams that I crammed during and got no sleep and did not eat. Being well rested is key to getting through nursing school. You need to pace yourself...most of us don't have a photographic memory and trust me, if you cram for an exam, there is a high likelihood you will not remember the material for your final. You **HAVE** to understand the material and learn out to critically think...NOT memorize.

Sharon Y. Irving, PhD, CRNP, FCCM

10. As students you are gaining the skills and knowledge to care for patients; as nurses you are perfecting those skills – together you have the power and to influence lives, use it wisely!

Sue Averill, RN

11. If you're in nursing school, focus on learning. Focus on knowledge. **Don't study just to pass a test.** As long as you pass, the grade is inconsequential. You won't be hired because you got all A's nor refused a job because you got all Cs. Integrate learning into your practice – nursing is a lifelong learning experience, lifelong growth pathway, lifelong evolution.

Sheila Grossman, PhD, APRN, FNP-BC, FAAN

12. For the tough science and nursing courses take notes from the required readings prior to class. Attend the class and ask questions that you may have had from the pre-readings if the professor does not go over the material. Audio tape the class [ask permission] if it is not already

narrated and on your course management system such as Blackboard. Merge your class notes, anything different from the power point lectures that you taped, and your pre-reading notes. Keep up with the class. Do not let yourself get behind. It also helps to have a study partner or group to share perspectives on various difficult topics in the course.

13. When writing a paper or developing a presentation for a course, **start early so you can obtain readings from your inter-library loan office of your library.** Meet with the reference librarian to be sure you have performed a comprehensive topic search. Make a draft outline of your paper/project prior to sitting down and actually writing or developing the paper/project. Make an appointment to go over the paper with Expert Writer at the College Writing Center. Have a friend with good grammar knowledge read your last draft of the paper/presentation prior to handing it in to the professor. *Be sure and talk with the professor prior to starting the project if you have any questions on the assignment or grading criteria.

Lynn Rew, EDD, RN, AHN-BC, FAAN

14. There are no “dumb” questions. If you are unclear about an assignment, a procedure, or an expectation, do not hesitate to ask your faculty member. We do take our responsibilities seriously and are committed to helping our students.

Kathryn Evans Kreider, DNP, APRN, FNP-BC

15. In my opinion, it is better to **finish your MSN and work as an NP for a few years before you go back for your DNP.** You will be better prepared to address healthcare challenges that face providers and our nation.

16. Some schools offer specialties or concentrations such as cardiology, orthopedics, or oncology for NP students- **do your research on your options!**

Shelley Webb, RN

17. Remember that **there are more opportunities in the nursing field than will be presented to you in your courses.** Take some time to do some research to find where you might fit best or what experiences you might need in order to work in a certain arena. If med/surg is not your thing, Neonatal ICU or research may be a better fit.

18. Take advantage of every opportunity to perform a procedure under the guidance of your instructor. There are never quite enough to go around and once you graduate, you'll be on your own.

Renée L. Davis, DNP, RN, CPNP-PC

19. Studying is important! It seems like a simple piece but you need to sit and study daily for at least 30 minutes and start on the first day of class. Every time you look at material, you build your base knowledge which helps you apply to the tougher concepts.

Gail M. Kieckhefer, PhD, PPCNP-BC, AE-C, ARNP

20. Before each clinical day at an agency, **write down one specific personal objective you want to work on that day.** It might be: take better histories about presenting symptoms or improve restraint techniques while performing invasive procedures with preschoolers, etc., Share what you wrote with your preceptor at the start of the day and let them have the sheet of paper to write helpful notes throughout the day. At the end of the day collect the paper from your preceptor and then spend 5 minutes reflecting on what gains you made in this objective.

21. Work hard to draft papers before the deadline and then if you get to a 'stick point' see if the faculty will look at a draft or meet with you for even 15 mins to advise on the stick point. Often a 15 minute meeting with a few concrete helpful edits can propel you forward in a way working 2-3 hours on your own might not have accomplished.

Joyce Fiodembo, RN

22. For student nurses who are doing their clinical rotations, one piece of advice I would give is; **find any opportunity to practice your nursing skills as much as possible.** When you begin your first job, the expectation will be that you have some basic skills. Your opportunity to learn as much as possible is during those clinical rotations.

Amy Abbott, PhD, RN

23. Many students typically form study groups with their friends. This may not be the best especially if your friends are not understanding the concepts or are not doing well in a particular course. **Stepping out of your comfort zone** and asking someone who is doing well in the course if they would consider letting you study with them can be a grade changer! You can ask an instructor if they feel comfortable suggesting someone or you may be able to determine who's doing well based on intelligent questions/classroom.

Debra Jackson, PhD, FACN

24. Have a study buddy – it's really important to have a good study buddy no matter what stage of study you are at, from undergraduate through to doctoral study.

25. Be a good colleague. Its so important we all contribute to a supportive collegiate environment, so be the colleague you want to have.

Melissa DeCapua, DNP, PMHNP-BC

26. Immerse yourself in the literature of your specialty. Order extra books off the Internet to supplement your assigned readings. Get excited about what you're doing. Whatever your specialty, consume it, absorb it, and be enthusiastic about it.

Kim Siarkowski Amer, PhD, RN

27. Always be willing to ask for help from faculty. If you are struggling or even a bit unclear on a topic, talk with your faculty member. That's what you are paying tuition for. . . the expert faculty. You are much more likely to do well if you meet with the faculty.

Elizabeth Scala, MSN/MBA, RN

28. Avoid the hard work! Really, as a nursing student, we often push ourselves to the max. While studying, preparation and persistence are all important. It's also imperative that we continue to enjoy our lives outside of nursing. Have fun. Do something silly. Play with your friends. Get a hobby. Make sure you balance the hard work in the classroom with hard play outside of your career.

Jamie Davis, RN, NRP, BA, IBCLC

29. Nursing students participating in clinical rotations should endeavor to keep an open mind. Every rotation has hidden educational opportunities outside of the planned activities and open-mindedness is key to taking advantage of those opportunities.

30. When getting started in nursing school, it is helpful to **organize group study sessions where each student is assigned a topic to master and teach back to the group.** This offers the opportunity to learn from each other and study at the same time.

31. Time management and prioritization are key nursing skills that start development in nursing school (if not before). It is recommended that students start using a calendar not just for nursing school events, but for planning of social, study, and work time as well.

Denise G. Link, PhD, WHNP-BC, CNE, FAAN, FAANP, FNAP

32. One that I frequently share with students is – **“Be open to learning something new every day.”** Your faculty and nursing mentors are there to help you, but they cannot do the learning for you. This is an especially difficult lesson for students that already have experienced success in a career – it is hard sometimes to be in the learner/novice role. Remember that you are in a course or program for a reason – you are there to learn new things that will help you to be successful in your chosen profession. You are not expected to know everything so become comfortable with admitting that and

seeking explanations and clarifications when you don't understand something. Accept that you will be a "student" for the rest of your professional career, so start practicing now to have an inquiring mind and excitement about learning.

Lisa Ford, RN, MSN

33. While in nursing school, resist the urge to procrastinate. One technique I used was breaking down a large paper or project into smaller sections, working on one section per day well in advance. By the time the due date arrived, I had my project complete.

Ashleigh Clarke, RN, MN, CON(C)

34. Record yourself reading notes aloud or save videos (like Khan Academy, Simple Nursing, etc...) to your phone/tablet and listen or watch while working out, waiting at the dentist, or whenever you have "down time".

Tips for New Nurses

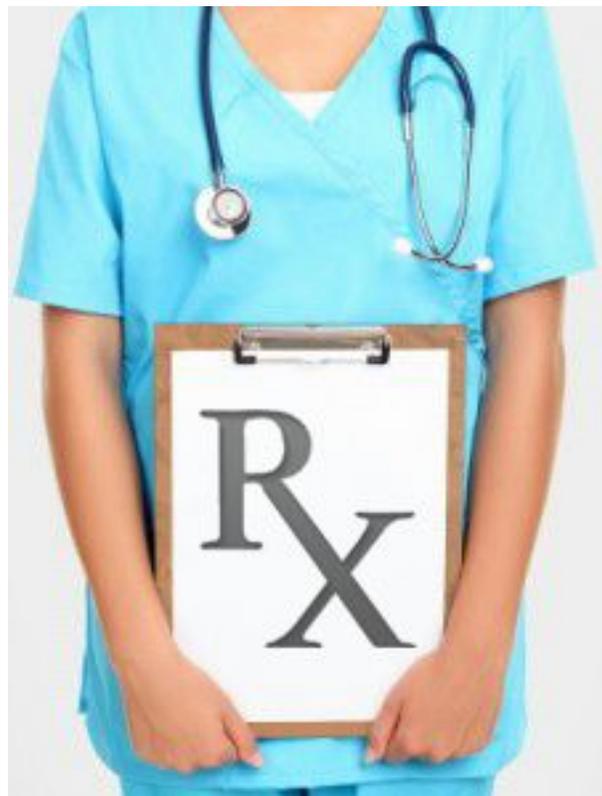
New nurses need proper support from colleagues who understand them, especially during the first years of employment. Below are a few tips from our experts to help you leverage your strengths, avoid pitfalls and missteps, and find success in the nursing workforce.

Eileen McCann, RN, MSN

35. Every moment in clinical is a learning moment, take advantage of every opportunity.

Carole Eldridge, DNP, RN, CNE, NEA-BC

36. Carefully and thoroughly read and follow all directions, whether for a school assignment, giving a medication, or administering a treatment. **If the directions aren't clear, ask for clarification.** Doing this one thing will save you a lot of time, energy, and difficulties.



37. Sweat the small stuff. Details matter a lot in nursing. Misreading a decimal point or an abbreviation can spell disaster for a patient, and not being detail-oriented will make you a poor student.

38. Listen closely and wholeheartedly to patients, colleagues, teachers, and peers. Pay careful attention to words, nuance, voice, and body language. The smallest nugget of meaning can make the difference between life and death or success and failure.

Robert Fraser, MN, RN

39. Set goals and make plans to get there. If you want something breaking it down into steps helps. Don't say you want to work in a pediatric ICU and hope that you land your first nursing job there. Explore what courses you can take, get involved with your relevant professional interest groups, volunteer at the organization you want to work with and get to know people that have worked in that area.

Meg Zweiback, RN, CPNP, MPH

40. Make sure to introduce yourself to family members when you check on hospitalized patients. When you do that they will feel involved and included in care, and they are more likely to help your patient remember your patient education!

Sylvia Silvestri, RN

41. Don't be afraid to speak up and ask questions! Doctors like teaching. Never be afraid to show interest and ask why. They will respect you for it.

Linda Baumann, PhD, RN, FAAN

42. The most meaningful feedback I received from a nurse practitioner student when I asked what she learned from me. She responded, "**It is okay to tell patients you don't know**, sometimes the best intervention is just listening, and always look up drugs you're not absolutely sure about."

Amy Abbott, PhD, RN

43. I have watched many students struggle to get the air bubbles out of medications that they draw up into syringes. Many try flicking the syringe with their fingers or even tapping it with a pen or pencil to move the bubbles to the top. **Instead, hold the syringe in your left hand and cross your right arm over the left and hit the top of your left forearm with the bottom of your right forearm (near the wrist).** These tiny air bubbles travel to the top of the syringe for more rapid and less painful removal!

Jamille K. Nagtalon-Ramos, MSN, CRNP, WHNP-BC, IBCLC

44. Before an interview, **research the clinic/office/hospital you are interviewing for**, and if you know who will interview you, make sure to Google them. (For more great interviewing tips from Jamille, [here's a helpful PDF](#) to help you land your dream job.)

Sean Dent, MSN, ACNP-BC, CCRN

45. Write everything down. You will forget 80 percent of what you hear.

46. Put your own mask on first. Take care of yourself before you take care of others.

Kati Kleber, BSN, RN, CCRN

47. When meeting new people (including patients and their families!) at your job, **introduce yourself with a handshake**. People remember that and it gives them a professional first impression.

Marijke Vroomen Durning, RN

48. Remember that every patient has a story. The sick or injured person in front of you, and the scared, worried family member who is with him, are not the whole person. You are seeing a small slice of them in time. They have been touched by something that is scary and uncomfortable or painful – and they have no control over what happens to them. Before this happened – and now – they have a life beyond this illness or injury. It's especially important to keep this in mind with the most difficult of people.

49. Always, always, always, make friends with the support staff. From the housekeepers to the administrative staff – they all play very important roles that support you to do your work effectively. That housekeeper who is in the patient's room every day at 8 a.m.? She may tell you that she noticed something not quite right with the patient that no one else has seen. The man who stocks the storage room shelves may be able to offer a word of comfort if you're having a particularly bad day. If you treat others, no matter what their position in work or in life, with the respect they deserve, it will be returned to you.

50. Never assume that a patient or family member understands what you mean. They may be too scared or reluctant to ask for clarification. Better to over explain than to under explain.

Keith Carlson, RN, BSN, NC-BC

51. Creating a robust network of like-minded, savvy healthcare professionals is a crucial aspect of having a long-term, satisfying nursing career. Use strategic online and face-to-face networking for the benefit of your career as a nurse.

52. From the beginning of your nursing education, you should be soaking up everything like a sponge. Be curious, and when you don't understand something, ask someone to explain it to you. You can't know everything, so continue to learn, be open to new knowledge, and understand that healthcare, medicine, and nursing are constantly evolving and changing. Be ready to pivot, change, and grow as you move through your career.

Cassie Phillips, RN

53. Don't get sucked into the bad habits of older nurses. Stick to what you learn in nursing school, it may take a little more time, but in the end you will be a better nurse because you will know more about your patients and give better report.

54. Know your pharmacology. You need to know the drugs and what they are used for, but you also need to know so much more! You need to know how to calculate weight based doses and other drug calculations. You need to know appropriate doses as well. Don't count on someone else, or the computer, to catch mistakes.

Donna J. Marvicsin, PhD, PNP-BC, CDE

55. Students and new nurses worry about getting the hands on skills just right, the "tube-ology" of the nursing profession. While these skills are very important, **the best nurses, the expert nurses, work even harder on their communication skills.** They make eye contact, they listen well, they learn to repeat what they have heard to verify that the information is correct. These skills seem so simple, but they require practice. Empathetic communication will build a trusting relationship with the patient that will allow the nurse and patient to work together on the journey back to health and wholeness.

Denise G. Link, PhD, WHNP-BC, CNE, FAAN, FAANP, FNAP

56. Once you have been in your nursing role for a year or so, start to take on student nurses in your practice area. Having students will reinforce what you have learned in your program and as a practicing nurse. The students will ask questions – you should not tell them "because we have always done it that way". You should have a solid evidence base for your practice that you can pass on to the novice. If you don't know why you are doing (or not doing) something, find out together with the student and you will both learn something. You will also pass on the idea to the student that it is ok to look something up and it is not ok to act without a rationale. *I think that those are two important keys to success in nursing- be a learner and be a mentor. This is the core of professional nursing.

Brittney Wilson, BSN, RN

57. Perfect your time management and planning skills. The difference between a great shift and a terrible shift can often boil down to how effectively you use your time.

Kathy Quan, RN, BSN

58. Sharpen your organizational skills and be mindful of time management. This is especially important for students, but even long time nurses can benefit by reviewing their organizational and time management and reworking their systems. Make lists and cross off items as they get done. Make a plan and give each task a time limit and include time to document as you go along. Always be mindful that the unexpected might happen and blow up your whole plan. But if you're skilled at this, you can quickly delegate what you can't get to and finish what you can without so much stress and drama.

59. Some people will argue with me, but I always **try to get the "worst" or dreaded tasks done first to get them out of the way and then have time to enjoy some of my other tasks** without those dreaded ones hanging over me. Some people say to do them last and enjoy your whole day first. I worry too much about the things I'm procrastinating and tend to make it all seem so much worse if i don't just get it over with.

Beth Boynton, RN, MS

60. Respect yourself and your colleagues in your similarities and differences. This is the opposite of horizontal violence.

61. Develop your skills in giving and receiving constructive feedback with an open mind and heart any chance you get. They will contribute beyond measure to safe, quality care, healthy workplace cultures, and long-term rewarding professional nursing practice.

Sue Averill, RN

62. Realize that your career will span decades. Medicine will change. Best practices will change. But kindness, caring and compassion never change. It IS your job to bathe and hand hold and toilet and care for each and every patient as you'd wish someone to care for your most beloved. We will all be in the position of patient someday – **Be the nurse you want to take care of YOU!**

63. Never forget – You are a patient advocate. You speak on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves. You fight for your patient. You are not The Messenger. You are not an extension of The Doctor. You are the voice and strength of your patient. Patient Advocate is your #1 role.

Lisa Ford, RN, MSN

64. In your first nursing job, **be humble and be willing to be flexible.** Resist the urge to ‘one up’ your preceptor. Your willingness to help the team will be appreciated and won’t soon be forgotten by peers and management.

65. In your first nursing job, don’t be afraid to take notes! **Write things down, make checklists, devise your own shift sheet** to help you organize tasks.

Dianne Morrison-Beedy, PhD, RN, WHNP-BC, FNAP, FAANP, FAAN

66. Find a mentor! **Don’t be afraid to ask someone even those who are leaders in your field.** Oftentimes, they are most agreeable to do so.

67. If your supervisor or faculty member asks you to **step out of your comfort zone with what you know and to try something different – take the leap!** Oftentimes it is those opportunities that allow us to develop a different career trajectory.

Tips for Passing Certification Exams

The NCLEX-RN is the examination that registered nurses are required to pass in order to obtain a nursing license in the United States. For additional certifications, nurses must also complete and pass all required exams. Our experts know what it takes to ensure top performance on these exams.

Just check out their tips below for test-taking success!



Kim Siarkowski Amer, PhD, RN

68. When studying for an exam and especially NCLEX, **do practice questions on the topics that you like the LEAST.** That way the last hours or days of studying will be the least stressful.

Tiffany Kelley, PhD, MBA, RN

69. Form a strategic approach to studying for your NCLEX or other certification exams.

Understand the expectations and test criteria. Review essential material and practice test questions until confident with your performance.

Kristine Anne Scordo, PhD, RN, ACNP-BC, FAANP

70. Keep your textbooks till you have taken your NCLEX or certification examination. Don't be so quick to sell them.

Kati Kleber, BSN, RN, CCRN

71. When studying, **make sure you are doing it with a purpose and a plan** and not just aimlessly reading the assigned pages. Try to understand concepts, explain them to others, type out your notes, etc.

Joanne M. Pohl, PhD, ANP-BC, FAAN, FAANP

72. When planning to take your NP certification exam **plan ahead and give yourself time to study.**

Taking a tried and true review course is critical as well. I used the Fitzgerald Health course and found it to not only prepare me exceptionally well for the exam but is a most useful tool for practice.

Sheila Grossman, PhD, APRN, FNP-BC, FAAN

73. Tip for Passing Certification Exam – **Set time aside five days/week to study.** Think of this time as a job – something you have to do without interruptions. Use every certification preparation exam book and online questions available for your specialty. Start at least two months ahead of the exam appointment just reviewing the content sections. Once you feel you have some confidence in knowing your content begin taking a timed, online, practice exam at least 5 times/week. Go over the instructions for starting the certifications exam step by step. (These will be in your preparation book on your lap top.)

Lorry Schoenly, PhD, RN, CCHP-RN

74. Locate the exam blueprint and do a self evaluation using a scale of 1-5 as to your knowledge in each of the content areas of the exam.

75. Evaluate the time you have to study. Consider your best study time based on your own biorhythms. Some may get up an hour early each day and study while others are asleep. Others

may study late at night. Some study over lunch break or after dinner while the family watches TV. Determine how many hours a week you have to study.

76. Create a study calendar based on the date of the exam and working backwards setting up content themes for each week. Use your self-evaluation to determine which content needs more study time.

77. Find a study buddy and hold each other accountable for working the plan. Consider regular meet-ups to practice review questions together.

78. Find the exam location before the day of the exam. Plan out how long it will take to get there in traffic and where you will park.

Tips for Nursing Career Fulfillment

Nursing can be a very rewarding career, but it demands hard work and dedication. In order to stay current with nursing practices and to maintain a healthy job/life balance, our experts offered useful tips and resources to help nurses stay impassioned about their work.

Lisa Bonsall, MSN, RN, CRNP

79. Take the lead to inspire teamwork – pitch in and help your colleagues. Perhaps others will follow your lead!

Robert Fraser, MN, RN

80. Relationships matter. Be supportive and collaborative to everyone you meet and work with. You never know when you will work with classmates, faculty or your preceptors in the future. They may help you get future jobs, and more importantly they are humans and you never know what they are going through. Offer to help them, without the expectations you will get something back, that is how you develop relationships.

Annette Tersigni, RN

81. Remember Your ABCs! When feeling stressed, Breathe. Deeply. Breathe way down into your belly. This will give you a pause, and increase circulation to your brain to help you to handle the task at hand.

Beth Boynton, RN, MS

82. In addition to complying with any required continuing education, **make a commitment to lifelong learning in an area of your own special interest.** This will help you sustain your enthusiasm for a long-term, rewarding career.

Sue Averill, RN

83. No matter how stressed or overworked you feel, **incorporate volunteering into your nursing career from the start.** For your first mission, find an organization that will support and guide you for a successful experience. Once you've done one, you'll be hooked! Volunteering is the cure for burnout for those on the tail end of a nursing career. You'll learn about yourself, other people and cultures and ways of life, and you'll make friends for life. You'll come home a better person, a kinder nurse and gentler spirit. You will more easily relate to your patients, especially those from other countries and will be in a better position to understand their unique needs and points of view.

Robert Fraser, MN, RN

84. Always be learning. There are lots of ways to do learning on the go. Check out great nursing and medical podcasts like ERNursePro, which you can listen to while you are driving or doing your shopping. I find it makes cleaning the house a lot more enjoyable as I get more out of it. I also highly recommend the Career Tools podcast (at manager-tools.com).

Dianne Morrison-Beedy, PhD, RN, WHNP-BC, FNAP, FAANP, FAAN

85. Plan for the long term. Your career will likely take many paths (that's what is so wonderful about nursing). Know that you may have to start continuing education or additional degrees earlier than you may have thought. Be open to that possibility.

Meg Zweiback, RN, CPNP, MPH

86. As we increasingly value the expertise of nurses to manage complex medical care with equipment, instrumentation, and digital monitoring, we sometimes forget how much we bring to patients when we provide comfort and connection. As nurses, we own what I call "a license to touch". **Holding a patient's hand, stroking a brow, patting a back, are a part of our role and we should not underestimate that therapeutic connection when we show we care.**

Emily Scott, RN

87. Volunteer your skills in an under-served area (whether in the US or the developing world). It will inspire you in your day job as well as make the world a little better.

AnneMarie Batten, RN

88. All team members will bring individual strengths and weaknesses. We are most effective when we are respectful of each other. **It is important to recognize that our differences are an opportunity for growth and knowledge exchange.**

89. It is important to recognize the significant risk of compassion fatigue and burnout within the nursing profession. **Finding a way to maintain a healthy work and life balance is essential.**

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Self-Care Tips for Nurses

One of the most important responsibilities of a nurse is taking care of patients. However, nurses must also focus on taking care of themselves. Self-care is essential in achieving life balance and career satisfaction. Here you have some tips to help you find that balance.

Kathryn Evans Kreider, DNP, APRN, FNP-BC

90. Take care of yourself during your NP program. If you stop exercising, don't eat well and don't get enough rest, you will perform poorly and have a terrible experience. Take time to make sure your body and mind are in balance.

Kim Siarkowski Amer, PhD, RN

91. Always take care of yourself. Exercise, eat healthy meals, and figure out the best way to decrease stress. Surround yourself with positive people who support you. Shed negative people who aren't willing to be supportive.

Cassie Phillips, RN

92. Nursing school is rough and is not the time for major life changes. Don't buy a house, get married, have a baby or anything else major. Nursing school takes up most of your time and you shouldn't have to worry about working more to make payments or pay for daycare.

Marijke Vroomen Durning, RN

93. Don't skimp on the quality of your shoes, no matter what. Your feet will carry you through miles of walking and standing over the years of working. It may seem hard to put out the money for a good quality pair of shoes when cheaper ones are available, but it's a false savings if you end up with sore feet every day, even when you're not at work.

LeAnn Thieman, CSP, CPAE

94. Care for yourself as attentively as you do your patients. Nurture your own body, mind and spirit every day. (You can't just wait for weekends to catch up!) We cannot deliver what we don't have inside.

95. What is the #1 priority in your life? Priority is not what we speak it to be, but how we spend our time. If you truly live your priority, your calendar will show it.

Jennifer Elder, PhD, RN, FAAN

96. Remember that nursing can be emotionally draining so make sure you plan time for engaging in activities that replenish you spiritually and emotionally. Don't forget to have some fun!

Michelle Katz, LPN, MSN

97. Take care of your own health (mental, physical, or even if you have a chronic illness like asthma etc). A "good provider" leads by example...in most cases. You hear it all the time before taking off on a flight to be sure you attach the oxygen mask onto yourself, before you assist others. There is a good reason for that. When you are in school, use that time to **figure out how your body reacts to stress and be sure to learn how to take care of your own health** through what you have learned....this way when you get into the profession, you can actually suggest a possible solution that worked for you by saying, "This is what I have tried and it worked for me!"

Elizabeth Scala, MSN/MBA, RN

98. Stay true to yourself. In a profession of wisdom, expertise and knowledge a new nurse can be highly susceptible to outside influence. While these advisers and guides often have our best interests at heart, we can only do the right thing for ourselves and our career. Continue to tap into the inner guidance that will truly move us towards the most meaningful and fulfilling career. Keep in touch with the nurse within so that you can fully enjoy your professional career.

99. Take yourself less seriously. Who is often the most critical judge? We are! We beat ourselves up for not getting the grade. We put ourselves down for making the mistake. These types of behaviors lead to guilt, self-doubt and poor nursing practice. The very best way to prepare yourself for your profession is to invite laughter into your life. Be gentle with yourself. We all make mistakes and often these are the very best ways we learn. Learn to laugh at yourself... and smile from time-to-time.

Theresa Brown, RN

100. You can't take care of others if you don't take care of yourself first. We hear this all the time and I used to think I was super nurse and therefore that this didn't apply to me. Over time, though, I learned that none of us are superhuman. Eat well, get some exercise, sleep as much as you can, and be kind to yourself—you and your patients will be better as a result.

Emily Scott, RN

101. Take care of yourself so that you can take care of others. Take your breaks, get the amount of sleep you deserve, and carve out time to do the things you love so that you don't burn out – you can only be strong for others if you nurture yourself first.

Bonus Tips from the Experts

Our contributors submitted so many incredible tips, a bonus section was added to provide our readers with even more sage advice.



**Kristine Anne Scordo, PhD, RN,
ACNP-BC, FAANP**

- **Be the 2 year old—ask why!** Why are you prescribing that medication, why are you ordering that test, why, why why. You will learn a lot.

Sue Averill, RN

- You will have days where you're on top of the world and everything goes wonderfully. You'll have dark days where you're tired and nothing goes right. You'll have fantastic coworkers and bosses ... and some who aren't at all. **But the attitude you bring to your work each shift is for your patients.** Your coworkers, bosses, and life events support you in so far as you give wonderful compassionate care. If they don't, leave them at the door and go solo.

Ashleigh Clarke, RN, MN, CON(C)

- There are a lot of **great podcasts available that cover a variety of nursing/healthcare topics**, these are great to stay up to date on issues or publications.

Kathryn Evans Kreider, DNP, APRN, FNP-BC

- **Know what kind of learner you are before you enroll in an online program.** You must be organized and highly self-motivated to succeed in a distance-based or online program.
- **Make sure your life priorities are lined up before you start graduate school.** You need social support from family and friends to help make this happen. Unlike undergraduate school, life gets more complicated as you get older so ensure that you are able to spend the time required to succeed.
- If you are enrolled in a distance or online program, **look for programs that require some on-campus experiences.** You need some interaction with faculty and the opportunity to practice hands-on skills in order to obtain the skills that you need to function as a competent NP.
- If you are interested in research, **look at the various faculty profiles** to see what kind of research experience is within the school and what types of research studies are ongoing.
- **Look for NP programs that align with your interests!** Each program has slightly different curriculum with different options for specialties and concentrations. Some schools are more research focused. Do some digging into the program and the faculty before you apply.
- **Look for an NP program where the faculty are active in practice.** This will make for a richer, more engaging experience.

LeAnn Thieman, CSP, CPAE

- **Care for your body daily:** Eat right, exercise at least 15 minutes a day, and turn off technology and electricity to sleep 7-8 hours a night (or day!)
- **Always tell the truth.** Make sure every word out of your mouth is 100% true. Honesty IS the best policy.
- **Seek a mentor at every age.** Learn from the wisest and the best.

Michelle Katz, LPN, MSN

- **Breathe and breathe often is my saying.** Nursing school and the profession is very stressful. If you are having a bad day take the time to breathe. There is nothing worse than pushing through when you are angry or upset...if you do, you might create errors which is not healthy for you and the patient. Always give yourself a time out (ask a fellow nurse to cover for you for a minute or two while you gain your composure) and smile from within when you come back. It will make the biggest difference.

Debra Jackson, PhD, FACN

- **Never be too shy or embarrassed to ask for help** if you do not know what to do in a situation. Remember, no one knows everything and we all need help sometimes.
- **Build a strong professional network.** This is invaluable in so many ways and is an important aspect of professional resilience.

Dianne Morrison-Beedy, PhD, RN, WHNP-BC, FNAP, FAANP, FAAN

- Learn to give back. **Mentor someone new to your area.** You can learn a lot by having to teach someone who doesn't know what you know.

Sean Dent, MSN, ACNP-BC, CCRN

- **What you do not keep in your head, you will keep in your feet.**
- When you want to run: **Stop, walk and listen.** If you hurry, you will make a mistake.

Sharon Y Irving, PhD, CRNP, FCCM

- Once you find your passion, you will never “work” a day in your career as a nurse!

Lisa Ford, RN, MSN

- **Join a professional nursing organization such as ANA (American Nurses Association)** or one that is geared toward your specialty. It is money well-spent and keeps you abreast of evidence-based practice.

Kathy Quan, RN, BSN

- **Be a sponge and absorb as much knowledge as your mentors and preceptors can convey.** Remember all the tricks and tips they give you as you just might need them someday! And when you have a chance, share them with others. Let's work together and not bully or eat the young!

Dr. Kathleen F. McCue, FNP-BC, IBCLC-RLC

- **GET SMART! Look around the app store on your smart phone for applications that will make your job easier.** Find an app that converts weights from metric to standard (or back), which is invaluable when calculating dosages for medication.
- **Every day is a school day.** Remember that everyone around you was new at one time. Don't pretend to know more than you do! As a student you want to learn everything, and it's more important to know your limitations instead of making a mistake because you are afraid to say “I don't know.”

Kati Kleber, BSN, RN, CCRN

- **Try to do all of your errands and planning on your days off**, so when you're working you only have to worry about working, eating, and sleeping!

Cassie Phillips, RN

- **You never know what area you will love.** When I was in nursing school all I wanted to do was be a Labor and Delivery nurse, and I hated pediatrics because I thought it was all snotty nosed kids or kids dying of cancer. Today, I have had the pleasure of working in both specialties, and while I like labor and delivery, pediatrics is where my heart is. If you would have told me this when I was in nursing school I would have said you were crazy.
- Speaking of not counting on a computer, make sure you know how to **write nurses notes and chart when the computers are down because it does, and will, happen frequently.**

Keith Carlson, RN, BSN, NC-BC

- **Use LinkedIn as a source of networking and connecting with other professionals.** LinkedIn is the largest online network of professionals in almost any profession or industry imaginable; use it strategically to build alliances and relationships with key players within nursing and healthcare, as well as in related professions and industries.

Lisa Bonsall, MSN, RN, CRNP

- **A successful assessment requires critical thinking.** Think "how does this finding fit in with the big picture?"
- Believe in yourself and your instincts, but **always listen to the patient.**

Joyce Fiodembo, RN

- **Never assume anything, always ask when in doubt.** There have been incidents where a student thought a Foley catheter was a feeding tube. Never assume, and don't hope and pray it is what you think. Prayer will not change the Foley into a Peg tube, so ask and never fear or get tired of asking.

AnneMarie Batten, RN

- **It is helpful to identify a method of self care that will allow time for you to detach and feel rejuvenated.** Remember to maintain a holistic approach to your person health

and wellness. If we do not look after ourselves we will not be able to effectively help others.

LeAnn Thieman, CSP, CPAE

- **If you make a mistake, admit it.** Don't hide it. Seek help and learn from it. Integrity is everything.

Kati Kleber, BSN, RN, CCRN

- **Invest in an extra set of scrubs, socks, underwear, and a back up pair of shoes** and have those in your locker or the trunk of your car – you never know when you will need them!

Renee Thompson, DNP, RN, CMSRN

- Give yourself permission NOT to know everything. Don't be afraid to admit when you don't know something. In a supportive environment, your preceptor, manager, educator, clinician, experienced nurses, etc. will be there to help you move through the layers so that you can become a knowledgeable, competent, caring, and compassionate professional nurse.

Shelley Webb, RN

- **Be mindful of what you share on social media even while you are in school.** Employers are watching. Do concentrate on having a professional and updated LinkedIn profile.

Tiffany Kelley, PhD, MBA, RN

- **Make sure that you have your tools for success ready each day.** Every day will be different but with the right tools and collaborative team members, you can manage any patient situation.
- Becoming a nurse is one of the most rewarding experiences. **When becoming a nurse you learn how to care for other people who are in need of your expertise to improve, maintain, and/or stabilize their health conditions.** This expertise will become essential while working in your health care organization as well as in your day to day life.