

Nursing School Guide

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HOW TO PASS YOUR MED SURG EXAMS

Hey there, friend!

There's a lot of nursing school rumors floating around out there about how to study, how to pass your exams, and what to focus on.

And unfortunately, most of them are totally wrong and will leave you feeling stressed and burned out.

Thankfully, there's a better way to study. And I'm walking you through it in this checklist!

All my best, Christina

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WHAT TO FOCUS YOUR TIME ON (STEP-BY-STEP)



STEP 1: Learn the pathophysiology first

Learning the pathophysiology of each disorder should be your number one priority.

This is the foundation that everything else you need to learn is built off of.

So you need this foundation of knowing the pathophysiology FIRST, before you can go and learn everything else that you need to learn.

The pathophysiology of a disorder is just what is happening inside the body that is not normal. So you'll need to learn the process that's happening inside the body as the disorder takes place.

STEP 2: Focus on the 3 main topics for each disorder

There are 3 primary things that you need to know about for each disorder, along with the pathophysiology, and those are:

1. The common signs and symptoms
2. What you need to assess for
3. The nursing interventions you will do (including patient education)

If you look at your nursing school exams, those are the 3 main things you are tested on: the signs and symptoms, the assessment for the disorder, and the nursing interventions that need to happen for that disorder.

You're not often tested on the actual pathophysiology of the disorder; you're mostly tested on these 3 things. But learning the pathophysiology is crucial to understanding these other 3 components.

STEP 3: Study efficiently

Make sure that when you sit down to study, you are refreshed, you're rested, you've got your coffee with you and your water, and you're ready to go.

There are the 3 main ways I recommend you study:

If you're a  visual learner...

Write or draw out all of the concepts.

I like to write and re-write my notes over and over again, as well as create concept maps and diagrams.

I'm more of a visual and auditory learner, so those 2 things really help me out.

And if you need a review on how to create concept maps, make sure you check out this video (<https://youtu.be/Hxc-xyCsMvI>).

That video will walk you through exactly how to create concept maps. Plus, I add in some really great questions to ask to help you critically think. So either way, make sure you check out that video.

If you're an  auditory learner...


Talk concepts out to yourself so that you can hear it.

Talk about the concepts out loud as if you're teaching them to yourself.

You can also create songs to help you remember it, or go through mnemonics.

All of those are really good study tips for auditory learners.

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If you're more of a  do-er and kinesthetic learner...

Use the skills lab and go through some patient situations.

Grab your nursing bestie and run through case scenarios together.

Ask each other questions that will get you thinking more critically about the disorder.

This hands-on experience will really help it all sink in your mind.

DEEPEN YOUR CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS



The key to choosing the correct answer on your med surg exams is to practice your critical thinking skills ahead of time.

The last thing you want to do is get to your exam and have them give you a case scenario question that you can't figure out.

Instead, the more you can critically think about the concepts beforehand, the better off you'll be when your exam rolls around.

And to help you out with this, I created a simple 3-part framework to walk you through how to critically think about the topics you're learning about.

It's called the DRC Critical Thinking Model.

Let's walk through it:

D: Description/Definition

This is the high-level part where you'll just describe what the topic is that you're learning about.

- What is it?
- What is it that you need to know about?
- What's the description of it?

R: Reason/Rationale

This is the WHY behind the topic. You'll write out WHY it happens and WHY it matters. This is the reasoning behind it.

And most often, this step will be related to the pathophysiology. So if you're studying a particular disorder and are writing out why it happens, this is where you'll dive into the pathophysiology of what's happening with the disorder.

C: Connection

This is really where your critical thinking skills will shine! You'll connect the topic to everything else you're learning about in nursing school.

This is the HOW: how does this topic connect to everything else. This is where it really all starts to come together.

Think about how this topic connects to other topics. How does this topic impact other things?

Think through the signs and symptoms, nursing assessments, and nursing interventions. What medications, treatments or patient education might be needed?

Using these questions will help you think through the concepts more critically and be much more prepared for your exams!