

# NCLEX Tips & Tricks



## 1. Know The NCLEX Content

1. Safe and Effective Care Environment
  1. Management of Care (15-21%% of the test)
  2. Safety and Infection Control (10-16% of the test)
2. Health Promotion and Maintenance (6-12%% of the test)
3. Psychosocial Integrity (6-12%% of the test)
4. Physiological Integrity
  1. Basic Care and Comfort (6-12%% of the test)
  2. Pharmacological and Parenteral Therapies (13-19% of the test)
  3. Reduction of Risk Potential (9-15% of the test)
  4. Physiological Adaptation (11-17% of the test)

Based on this outline, many students spend more time studying the categories that are going to be featured more heavily in the exam. But it is important not to overlook categories that seem smaller. Several wrong questions in the same category will impact your overall score. Students should not attempt to prioritize just a few categories for studying, as they will be less likely to pass. The NCLEX is a measure of how well-rounded a student nurse is in their knowledge of the different types of nursing care and communication.

## 2. Make A Study Plan

Ideally, your total study time is a few hours a day for several weeks. However, how much time you spend on each section ultimately depends on how many weeks you have before your scheduled NCLEX exam. Students should also make an ongoing note of areas of weakness and spend more time studying in these areas. Once you've **identified an area of weakness**, you can revisit notes from school or utilize online resources to review the subject. Then, you can continue to take practice questions in that category until you've achieved mastery. By building your own practice exams using [free question bank](#). Closer to the exam date, students should take at least one practice exam that mimics the NCLEX in its variety of content and length. The NCLEX utilizes adaptive testing practices, just like what you'll find in our computerized adaptive testing, or CAT, [practice NCLEX test option](#). Nursingeducation.org is one of the few sources of adaptive practice tests for NCLEX.

## 3. Familiarize Yourself With Question Types

- Multiple Choice – Most of the questions will be presented in a basic multiple-choice format, with a stem and four possible choices. Only one choice is the BEST response.
- Multiple Response – Similar to a multiple-choice item, this type of question requires you to select ALL of the correct responses.
- Charts & Graphs – These types of questions are similar to multiple choice, but you must use the information displayed in the chart or graph to select the correct response.
- Drug Calculation – These items may require you to perform calculations to determine the correct response. Be sure to review drug calculations!
- Ordered Response – In this question, ALL of the responses are correct, but you must arrange them in the appropriate order.
- Graphic Test – This item is similar to a multiple choice question, except that all of the answer choices are pictures, requiring you to select the BEST response.

It's also important to note other details about NCLEX questions. For example, keywords like first, most, best, immediately, increased, and decreased will be bolded. At this time, the NCLEX names drugs by generic name only (not brand name). Questions that ask a student to calculate the answer will indicate if the answer should be rounded to the nearest whole number or if one or two decimal places should be used.

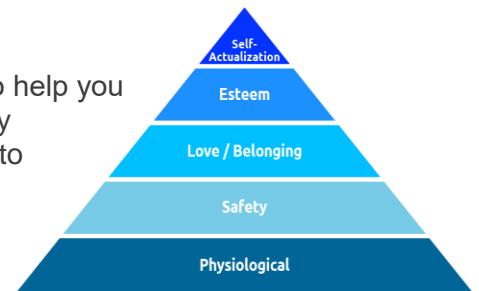
## **4. Remember to Use the Nursing Process**

Remember that you should use the nursing process— the five core areas of nursing— as you read the questions and determine your best response. The steps of the nursing process will be included in many questions in one form or another. For your review:

- Assess the needs of the patient.
- Develop a nursing diagnosis based on those needs.
- Develop the plan of care with the patient and family.
- Implement the plan of care.
- Evaluate and revise the plan of care based on the evaluation.

## **5. Utilize Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs**

While studying for the NCLEX-RN, review Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to help you prioritize the care of the patient in each question. Remember this hierarchy indicates that you should address the most basic needs before you move to any "higher" needs. For example, physiological needs must always be addressed before safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization needs. As a refresher, the hierarchy is displayed below.



## **6. Rest the Day Before the NCLEX Exam**

Give your mind and body a break by taking the day before the exam off.

## **7. Be Early and Stay Calm on the Day of Your NCLEX Exam**

When you register for the exam, you will select a testing center in your area. On the day of the test, dress in layers for comfort in case the testing center is too cold or warm. Arrive at the testing center well before your scheduled exam time with your photo identification and entry ticket. Arriving early will allow you to mentally prepare yourself for the exam. All test takers will be required to answer at least 85 questions. The maximum number of questions on the test is 150.

### **Five More Quick Tips for Taking the NCLEX**

1. **Don't overthink the questions.**  
The NCLEX exam is a test of entry-level knowledge necessary to be a nurse. Therefore, it is important not to look for hidden meaning in the questions. The questions will test your basic knowledge or your ability to use critical thinking skills. Read the questions carefully, but don't overthink them.
2. **Look for "trigger" words.**  
Pay attention to trigger words that may help you exclude certain responses. A response that has "always" or "never" in the response is probably incorrect. Be careful to look for the word "not" in the question. This should be a clue to you to look for the incorrect answer.
3. **Eliminate wrong answers immediately.**  
Exclude the responses that you know are wrong. If you can immediately exclude even one of the responses, you are much more likely to get the question correct.
4. **Don't dwell on any single question.**  
If you get stuck on a question, allow yourself up to two minutes to think about it, then select an answer. Move on to the next question. No need to spend time agonizing over any single question, when you can prove your knowledge on the next one.
5. **Remember to breathe.**  
If you feel yourself becoming anxious or overwhelmed, stop and take three to five slow, deep breaths. Visualize a calm image and imagine yourself gently relaxing. Breathing evenly and calmly will oxygenate your blood, help clear your mind, and ease the anxiety.

**Good luck!**