Preparing for the Registered Nurse Examination: Internationally Educated Nurses
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Resource developed by: The Association of Registered Nurses of Newfoundland and Labrador

Booklets developed by: The Centre for Nursing Studies

Produced by: Professional Development and Conferencing Services, Faculty of Medicine, Memorial University of Newfoundland

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**Introduction**

The Canadian Registered Nurse Exam (CRNE) is intended to protect the public by making sure that the entry-level registered nurse possesses the competencies required to practice safely and effectively. Each provincial or territorial regulatory body for nursing in Canada (such as the Association of Registered Nurses of Newfoundland and Labrador) has a responsibility to ensure that individuals obtaining licensure in their province or territory meet an acceptable level of competence. The Association of Registered Nurses of Newfoundland and Labrador (ARNNL) requires that all applicants write the Canadian Registered Nurse Exam (CRNE) within eight months of being granted an interim license.

This guide provides information to help you prepare for your CRNE writing:

- On-line workshops
- Available publications and resources
- Links to the Canadian Nurses Association website where you will find information about the structure of the CRNE and the LeaRN readiness test
- Preparing for Exam Day

You will also find the following booklets, which have been provided by the Centre for Nursing Studies, St. John’s:

- Enhancing your Study Skills
- Multiple Choice Exam Writing Strategies (Avoiding the guess work)

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Online Workshops

Many educational institutions offer workshops for the internationally educated nurse in preparation for the CRNE. Most, however are delivered on site at a variety of campuses across Canada and, currently, none in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST) offer both an on-campus and on-line Canadian Registered Nurse Exam (CRNE) preparation workshop. The on-line non-facilitated workshop (Nursing 1645 CRN 09-3338) provides information on the organization of the CRNE, similarities and differences between nursing in the Canadian health care system and nursing in other countries, as well as practice exams for each competency category. Availability of multiple choice exam questions allows the student to self assess areas of strength and areas that need review. The student, once registered for this course, will be able to review course content and complete the practice exams as many times as they want over an eight week period. Tuition for this course (Nursing 1645 - CRN 09-3338) is currently $375.00. The workshop pre-requisite requires graduation from a registered nurse program. Registration is obtained through the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology, by e-mailing nursingconed@siast.sk.ca, by visiting www.siast.sk.ca or by calling 1-866-467-4278 (toll free) or 306-775-7020.

The SIAST (NURS 1645) review topics are:

- Preparing for the CRNE
  - Tips for Writing the CRNE Exam
  - Preparing a study schedule
  - Tips Related to CRNE Content
  - Reading a Textbook

- Breathing Exercises
- Critical Thinking
- Sample Questions

- The Roles and Functions of Nurses
  - Patient Centered Care
  - Seven Dimensions
  - Nursing Process CNA Code of Ethics

- Ethical Issues
- Legal Terms

- Interpersonal Communication
  - Blocks to Therapeutic Communication
  - Nurse-Client Relationship Skills

- Assertive, Aggressive and Passive Communication
- Elements of Professional Communication

- Canadian Health Care System
  - Health Care Reform
  - Determinants of Health
  - Health Care Services
  - Types of Health Care Agencies

- Primary Health Care
- Preventive Health Care
- Hazards
- Stress Management
• Community Nursing Practice
• Common Drugs
• Common Disease Conditions Seen in Canada
• Culture in the Canadian Health Care System
  • Faces of Diversity
  • Culturally Sensitive Nursing Care
  • Ways to Convey Cultural Sensitivity
  • Communication
• Pain Response
• Aboriginal Peoples of Canada
• Aboriginal World View
• Behaviours Related to Aboriginal Culture

The SIAST N 1645 Practice exam topics include: (278 questions in total)
• Pediatrics (29 questions)
• Obstetrics Newborn (17 questions)
• Medical-Surgical (86 questions)
• Community Health (11 questions)
• Mental Health (20 questions)
• Older Adults (5 questions)
• Interpersonal Skills (9 questions)
• Professional Practice (28 questions)
• Alterations in Health (46 questions)
• Health and Wellness (17 questions)
• Drug Review (10 questions)

Each exam provides immediate feedback along with answer rationale. Answers can be cleared and the test retaken as often as desired. Previous test scores are retained for comparison. Test results will allow the student to identify areas for further study or review.

Should you choose to register for the on-line CRNE Preparation Workshop offered by the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST), you may find the following information helpful in navigating the SIAST website for the first time.

Navigating the SIAST website (for Nursing 1645)

The following information is designed to assist the newly registered student navigate through the SIAST website in accessing the Nurs 1645 CRNE Prep workshop information. This information is current as of January 28, 2010.

• Log on to the SIAST website www.siast.sk.ca
• Click mySIAST on the upper right side of the page.
• Enter your assigned user name and passwords in the fields provided in the upper right corner of the page. This will open the “mySIAST” page.
• Click the “Students” tab in the upper left corner of the page. This will open the “Students” page.
• Click the “My courses” link in the middle of the page. You will see a link to the “CRNE Preparation Workshop”.

The website offers information and support for navigating the course pages. A navigation bar is located on the left side of the page. A student orientation (Intro to tools) is provided within this course site and accessible through the navigation bar. The course content can be accessed by clicking on “Course Content” within the navigation bar, and then continuing on to the “Learning Sections”. Quizzes are accessed through the “Assessments” line in the navigation bar.
Available Publications / Resources

The following publications and resources may aid in exam preparation. Memorial University of Newfoundland Bookstore may offer some titles. You can check availability at http://mun.bookware3000.ca/

- Canadian RN Exam Prep Guide – Book and CD Rom (approx. $75.00) and can be purchased through The Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) website: www.cna-aiic.ca
- Blueprint for the Canadian Registered Nurse Examination June 2010 – May 2015 (approx. $30.00) and can be purchased through The Canadian Nurses Association website: www.cna-aiic.ca
- Lippincott’s CRNE Prep Guide (approx. $65.00)
- Mosby’s Canadian CRNE Comprehensive Nursing Review (approx. $75.00)
- Information on the CRNE structure and competencies tested can be found on the Canadian Nurses Association website: www.cna-aiic.ca
- Information and documents such as the Standards for Nursing Practice can be found on the Association of Registered Nurses of Newfoundland and Labrador (ARNNL) website: www.arnnl.ca
- Canadian Nurses Association LeaRN Readiness Test – See information below

The LeaRN Readiness Test

Applicants for the CRNE can write the LeaRN Readiness Test, a practice exam. This test is not intended to be a study guide. However, it will help you assess your readiness to write the CRNE. The on-line readiness test has 100 multiple-choice questions from past CRNEs that are completely different from those you will find in the Canadian RN Exam Prep Guide. The level of difficulty and the question content type is similar to the CRNE. You will be provided an opportunity to view questions answered incorrectly along with the correct responses, with supporting rationale and references. The readiness test also provides instant overall results, as well as four sub-scores based on the CRNE competency categories. The cost of the test is approximately $42.00. To find out more information, or to purchase access to the LeaRN Readiness Test go to the Canadian Nurses Association website www.cna-aiic.ca.
Preparing for Exam Day

You will be notified of the exam time and place by e-mail three weeks before your exam.

- **Writing centres**
  - St. Johns and Corner Brook

- **Testing Accommodations** must be requested and approved in advance. You will need to contact ARNNL for the process to request an accommodation

- **ID Cards**
  - Exam writing ID cards will be provided at the writing centre
  - There will be a space for address change, but not name change

- **Exam Memo**
  - Sent to you three (3) weeks before the exam
  - Sent to the email address on the application
  - Includes time table and writing centre location

- **Preparing to write**
  - Ensure time off for exam. It is your responsibility to notify your employer of the exam date and request time off
  - Ensure you know where to find the writing location. **Arrive on time**

- **Time lines**
  - 0830 exam start time – arrive no later than 0730
  - Exam length is four (4) hours
  - No breaks are scheduled

- **Writing the exam**
  - Be on time
  - You must bring photo identification (ID)
  - Name on photo ID must match name given to ARNNL
  - You will be assigned a seat
  - Belongings must be left at front of the room
  - HB pencils only to be used – bring 2 to 3 medium soft HB pencils and an eraser
  - No calculators, or digital watches are allowed
  - Water only, no other drinks, gum or food. Only water bottles with no labels or markings are allowed
  - Clothing – wear layers, but no hoods or hats. **No hooded sweaters, jackets, hoodies are allowed**

- **Completing the exam**
  - When you arrive, you must be checked in by an invigilator before entering the exam room
  - Test taking instructions will be provided by the invigilator on the day of the exam
  - Answer sheet will be provided
  - Washrooms – You must make a request to the invigilator if you need to leave for the washroom
• **Finishing the exam**
  - Must see the invigilator before leaving the room
  - You must return all exam materials to the invigilator

• **Results**
  - Sent to candidates at mailing address on file at ARNNL
  - Results will not be given by phone
  - If successful results are sent via regular mail
  - If unsuccessful, results are sent via Registered Mail
  - If unsuccessful, Interim License becomes void and you will not be permitted to work as a graduate nurse.
  - If unsuccessful, ARNNL will also contact your employer

• **Letter and form to those who pass**
  - Initial registration forms will be sent to you
  - Return forms to ARNNL as soon as possible – before Interim License expires

• **Failures**
  - Exam can be written a maximum of three times in two years from the date of the first writing
  - Mandatory remedial process after two failures
  - Graduate nurses are not permitted to work in Newfoundland and Labrador when advised of failing the CRNE

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**Resource Booklets**

The Centre for Nursing Studies Guidance and Counselling Department has prepared two booklets for students: *Enhancing Your Study Skills* and *Multiple-Choice Exam Writing Strategies*. Both booklets are included in this guide. Permission has been obtained from the Centre for Nursing Studies for these booklets to be included, copied and distributed with acknowledgement of ownership.
Enhancing Your Study Skills

Guidance & Counselling Department
Centre for Nursing Studies

Revised 2008
Introduction

A career in the nursing profession involves lifelong learning. Nursing and medical knowledge and technology are, and will continue to, accelerate at a breathtaking rate. This places greater stress on nurses to keep up-to-date with current theory and practices.

In order to do this effectively, nurses need to develop and maintain effective knowledge acquisition skills. The beginning of a new career path is a good time to evaluate present study skills and to learn to develop more effective strategies. This workbook and study skills session is specifically designed to meet the study needs of students beginning a nursing education program.

The session begins with a “Study Skills Self-Assessment” exercise. Seven key factors involved in successful learning are examined and students plot their present study status on an assessment wheel. Thus, areas of need are identified.

Strategies to enhance four of these specific factors: “Motivation, Reading, Note Making and Time Management” are discussed in this session. Two other factors; “Exams and Critical Thinking” are discussed in separate time slots.
The Study Skills Self-Assessment Wheel

Adapted from Ellis, D. (2007)

The “Study Skills Self-Assessment Wheel” is not a test. It is simply one vehicle you can use to examine your present study habits. Using seven key factors that influence learning, this tool allows you to plot your scores in each of these key areas on the “Wheel”. Thus you will get a clear picture of your present strengths and weaknesses in the area of study.

- Carefully read the self-assessment statements contained under each of the key factors. Put a check for that statement as it applies to you in the appropriate column next to the statement (Yes, No, Sometimes).
- Add up the total number of checks for each factor and write this number by the Total section in each factor.

Using this total “YES” scores from each factor section, shade in the corresponding section on the “Study Skills Self-Assessment Wheel”. This will give you a visual picture of your present study status.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I start each school term highly motivated, but my motivation decreases as the term progresses.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Problems in other areas of my life affect my studying.</td>
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<td>3. I become easily discouraged when my first efforts to study, or to do an assignment fail.</td>
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<td>4. I’m not really sure that I want a career in nursing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. I don’t feel like I am accomplishing anything when I study.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. I envy other people who have self-discipline and willpower.</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. When I read a textbook, I feel “bogged down” and overwhelmed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. I have difficulty picking out the main ideas and important facts in my textbooks.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. I quickly forget the information I read in my textbook.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. I find myself getting bored and sleepy when I read textbooks.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. I’m a slow reader and have to read things over a couple of times in order to understand it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. I have difficulty determining what to underline in my text.</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Note Taking</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. I try to write down everything the instructor says in class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. The notes that I take on what I study are very disorganized.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. After each class I spend a lot of time re-writing my notes.</td>
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<td>4. I lose track of what I am supposed to be learning about while I am trying to write notes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. After I take notes in class, I never look at them again until test or exam time.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. When I make notes on what I am reading, I get bogged down in detail and lose track of the overall concepts being presented.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Time Management</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. There are not enough hours in the day for me to do the things I need to do.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. I have good intentions at the start of the day, but I don’t seem to get done what I intend.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Sticking to time schedules interferes with doing what I like to do.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. I procrastinate when it comes to doing course work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. I don’t actually plan my study time. I just do as much as I feel like doing each night.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Tests, assignments and papers seem to “creep” up on me.</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. I have difficulty developing and following an outline for a written assignment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. I have difficulty with sentence structure and using correct grammar.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. I am not sure what plagiarism really is.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. I’m unsure of how to use the library to gather research articles for my written assignments.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. When I write, my thoughts seem to be all jumbled and disorganized.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. I have difficulty supporting my thoughts and ideas with related articles found in the literature.</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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</table>
### Exams

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I find it difficult to locate “key words” and terms in exam questions.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I cram for exams.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I don’t have enough time to finish exams.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Most times, the things I study are not on the exams.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I don’t know how to answer multiple-choice questions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I get so nervous about upcoming exams that I can’t concentrate on studying for them.</td>
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</table>

### Critical Thinking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I find it difficult to say “I don’t know” or “I don’t understand” something.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Once my mind is made up, I find it difficult to change my point of view.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I believe what I read in newspapers, magazines and books.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I dislike courses in math and science.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>When solving problems, I tend to try solutions that have worked in the past versus brainstorming for new ideas or solutions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I see problems and decisions as obstacles attempting to block the pathway to success.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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</table>
**Shade in the total number of “Yes” responses in appropriate space.**
Motivation

We all have motivation... the power to move us into action. Unfortunately, we don’t always use it to our best advantage. This power of motivation involves CHOICE. We alone have the ability to decide what will move us into action and how fast and how far that movement will be.

The fact that you have been accepted into nursing school demonstrates the fact that you can, and have used this power of motivation in a very meaningful and constructive way. Your challenge now is to keep this power activated and fueled so that you will achieve your career goal.

What are some roadblocks to motivation?

- Personality: Procrastinator
  External locus of control
  Laid back: “What will be, will be”

- Attitude: Negative
  Easily discouraged
  ?? Regarding career choice
  Perceived lack of challenge
  Believe that it is something you can’t control

How can I enhance my motivation?

- The first step in assessing the cause. Ask yourself why you don’t feel motivated. Is it a personality or an attitude factor or something entirely different.
- Take control of the situation. Recognize that motivation is an internal trait and you do have power and control over it. You can choose to motivate yourself or let yourself slide.
- Be clear about what you want to accomplish and set specific goals to help you get what you want.
- Do it! Follow through on your goals/plans. Sweeten the task by giving yourself little incentives or rewards along the way.
- Examine your “self-talk”. Are you feeding yourself negative messages? Do you give up too easily? Do you see challenges as roadblocks instead of opportunities? If you answer “yes” to any or all of these questions, you may need some further help in changing to a more positive, constructive self-talk.
- Maybe there is something in the “not being motivated” message that you need to heed. Are you happy with nursing? Is it really what you want? Maybe you need to re-evaluate your career choice.

Find yourself a role model who is motivated and talk to them about their strategies... what works for them and try this out.
4-Step Study Process

Learning to study effectively and feeling confident in your knowledge base at exam time will occur if you follow the “4-Step Study Process”

1. Reading
2. Attending Lectures
3. Note Taking
4. Reviewing

Reading

Nursing school requires you to read a large volume of material in a limited amount of time. There is a possibility that you will become frustrated and overwhelmed with the task or that you will get “bogged down” in detail and miss the significant “meat” of the content you are reading. In general, most people can be categorized into two reading types: Passive and Active.

Passive Readers Read along without becoming actively involved in the reading process. They wait for the author to make connections between ideas and do nothing with the information being read. Reading in this fashion makes you sleepy, bored and causes you to forget what you have read.

Active Readers Become actively involved in the reading process. They use chapter titles, headings and subheadings to discover how the material is organized and make connections between the ideas presented. Active reading stimulates your interest and greatly facilitates remembering.

Ask yourself... What type am I?

How can I read more actively?

Research has shown that students who survey and question their textbooks, read 25% faster than those who don’t.

Surveying and Questioning are done before you attend the lecture.

Surveying

Surveying involves getting the “big picture” overview of the content before you start looking for important details.
There are two types of surveys: General and Specific

**A General survey is usually done when you get your text.**
- Take about 10 minutes and survey the entire text to determine the content arrangement and difficulty of reading materials.
- Look at the table of contents, index, glossary and visual aids.

**A Specific survey is done with a specific chapter, usually before attending the lecture on this content.**
- Read the chapter introduction, main headings, summary statements and end-of-chapter questions.
- Look at all the illustrations, tables and graphs.
- Skim over the material, looking for specific headings or summary sections. If these are not available, look at the first and last sentence of each paragraph.

This process will give you a general idea about the content and thus something to “hang your hat on” when you are in a lecture.

### Questioning

- Questioning helps you critically look at the information you are reading and to pick out the important facts and details.
- You formulate a question to correspond to the material you are reading. An easy way to do this is to turn the textbook headings and subheadings into questions (similar to the TV program, Jeopardy). For example, when reading the introductory chapter questions from the section on “Homeostasis”.

  *What is homeostasis?*
  *Why does the body need homeostasis?*
  *How does the body achieve homeostasis?*

Some students find it helpful to highlight or underline the answers to those questions in the text. The important thing is to make sure you underline/highlight only the relevant answer, not the **whole** paragraph or section.
Attending Lectures

Staying away from lectures and reading the material “on your own” is a dangerous and unproductive habit. Most instructors use their class time to teach the “meat” of their course. Their presentation style is aimed at helping you differentiate the “need to know” from the “nice to know”, thus steering you towards what will be tested. Many also use stories and examples that will help you make sense of, and remember, the information better.

Your job in a lecture is to actively listen, pay attention and select out the important bits of information. The following tips will help you do this successfully:

• Sit where there are fewer distractions and make an active effort to keep your mind from wandering and daydreaming.

• Survey and read over the material the night before, in a questioning way that will help you identify what parts of the lecture are most important. It will also help you in focusing more clearly on what is being said.

• Ask questions if there is something you don’t understand. Clarification at this point can save you time and energy in the long run, plus help keep you on track for the remainder of the class.

• Note taking: don’t attempt to write down everything the instructor says...
  • Write important words/phrases from the board or overhead
  • Make note of repetitions
  • Record the information following introductory, concluding and transition words and phrases (e.g., the following three factors...; in conclusion...; the most important...)
  • Record any obvious references made by the instructor as to the importance of a topic
  • Focus on the instructor’s level of interest or involvement in the topic. (the more excited the more importance it may have)

Note Taking

The secret of successful lecture note taking is what you do with the notes after the class. Consider the following: If you don’t do something to condense and organize your lecture notes within 24 hours after you’ve taken them, you will forget up to 80% of the lecture content.

Therefore, within 24 hours after a lecture, you need to supplement your class notes with the information in your text. The following four methods are all beneficial in helping you do this.

Remember, you have already...

• Surveyed and questioned the material the night before the lecture.
• You have taken notes in the lecture.
• Within 24 hours, go back to your text and re-read the related content. Read it so that you understand what is being said. Can you explain it in your own words?
• Identify the “meat” (key words, phrases and points). Compare this with what you had written in your lecture notes.
• Using this information, create your “Condensed” notes. Do not rewrite everything that is found in the text!
Now organize this condensed information using one of the following methods.

1. The Outline Method
   - Organizing the content according to the “Outline Method” involves using the major, minor and subheadings in your text as your main organization threads. You write your condensed notes under these headings in an outline fashion.
   - The advantage of this method is that it actively occupies your attention as you record and organize. This is especially helpful if the information was presented in a disorganized way. It has the same format as your text, but contains only the “meat”.

2. The Cornell Format
   - Organizing your material according to the “Cornell Method” requires you to create two vertical columns on your exercise page. Begin by drawing a vertical line separating the page into two columns. The left side column covers about 1/3 of the page while the right side contains 2/3 of the space.
   - In the right column, write your “condensed” notes.
   - On the left side, formulate a question that is answered by the corresponding information in the right side column, similar to the process used in the TV show Jeopardy. (“What is ...?” “What are the 3 main...?”)
   - The benefit of the system is that it arranges your notes in a “programmed text” format. You can cover up the right hand column containing the answers and test yourself by asking the questions in the left hand column.

3. Concept Mapping
   - To organize your information using a concept map, you will need a large sheet of paper or you can tape together several smaller sheets. Begin at the top of the page by writing the main topic to be covered. Arrange the remaining ideas/concepts in appropriate spaces on the page as you work your way through the text. Write your “condensed” notes under the appropriate main idea of concept. Use lines to connect related facts/ideas.
   - When possible, use pictures, diagrams or symbols to help remember the content.
   - The main benefits of concept mapping are that it provides a visual device which helps you see the “big picture” of the content being studied. It also reduces the author’s message to its essence, helps you see connections between content pieces and promotes critical thinking by helping you uncover gaps in logic.
Concept Mapping

- Visual Device
  - Big Picture
- Author's Message
  - Essence
- Connections
  - Pieces of Content
- Critical Thinking
  - Uncover Gaps
3. Note Cards  How do I use the Note Cards Method?

Organizing material using this method involves purchasing index cards, usually one card for each of the main ideas or concepts. Simply write the main idea/concept on the top of the card and copy the “condensed” notes below. You can have a batch of cards for each chapter of the text. They are also very helpful when trying to learn terminology or formulas.

One of the main benefits of this method is portability. You can carry them in your pocket or purse and use them when you find yourself with “spare” minutes during the day.

Review

- Organizing your notes under a system within 24 hours of the lecture is an excellent way to begin the review process. This helps you file away the information in your long-term memory where it can be recalled at exam time.
- Schedule a short block of time on the weekends (only has to be about 30 minutes), where you have a general review of the past weeks notes.
- Serious review begins before exams and should be scheduled into a timetable (please see section entitled Time Management)

osteoa[rthritis...

A form of arthritis, occurring mainly in older persons, that is characterised by chronic degeneration of the cartilage of the joints. Pain generally described as a sharp ache, or a burning sensation in the muscles and tendons.


**Time Management**

“You cannot management time, you can only manage yourself with respect to time.”

(Harold Taylor)

Time is an equal opportunity resource. Regardless of gender, race or size, we all have the same amount of time, 24 hours in a day, 168 hours in a week. What you do with that time, and how you manage it, is a matter of individual choice. Some people manage their time very efficiently and get everything done, while others never seem to have enough time to accomplish anything. What makes the difference?

**What Factors Affect Time Management?**

**Brain Dominance**

Left-brain dominant people approach time with logic and orderliness. Their thinking structures time by minutes and hours. They organize their study time by setting priorities, identifying goals and using schedules and lists to help them achieve their goals. The study “danger” for these people is overwork and burnout.

Right-brain dominant people tend to resist rules and schedules. They tend to look at studying as a “whole” and resist breaking it down into specific pieces or goals. They like to complete things in their own way and time frame, thus avoiding the use of lists and schedules. They are creative and flexible in their thinking. The big study “danger” for them is procrastination.

**Biorhythms**

People have different biorhythms that affect their energy during the day and in different seasons. For example, some people are “early birds” and are most lively and energetic in the morning. Others are “night owls” and find their energy peaks occur in mid-afternoon and evenings.

**Deficit of Time Management Skills**

Sometimes, for whatever reason, some people have never had to worry about managing their time. Therefore, they have never felt the need to develop specific skills in this area. However, the demands of juggling nursing school, home and work, make time management skills a necessity.
How Can I Enhance My Time Management Skills?

Time management is a very individualized process. You know what your school, work and home demand are. You are also the best person to determine your strengths and limitations in this area. This section will provide you with some guidelines and direction to help you develop a personalized time management plan.

Self-assessment

Begin by assessing how you are currently spending your time. The weekly self-assessment sheet in Appendix A of this section will help you do this. Write down everything you do for a week. Be as specific as you can. At the end of this period you will have a very comprehensive idea of where your time is going. How much of your activities are constructive and productive? How much time are you wasting?

Assess your behaviour and compare it to the biorhythms and brain dominance descriptions. Do you see yourself in any of these patterns? If so, how is it going to impact on the way your organize and use your study time?

Develop a long-term, “Big Picture” plan

Using the schedule found in Appendix B of this section, write in all your major responsibilities for the entire term. Include due dates for academic things like term papers, assignments, lab reports, tests and exams. Include any times you are booked to work (if you have a job), plus any other event that will take up some of your time during this term. Post this somewhere handy and refer to it when you develop your short-term “weekly” schedule.

Develop a short-term “Weekly” plan

A sample schedule to complete this task for evening study is found in Appendix C of this section. This is the crux of time management. It helps you to make valuable use of your time, yet helps to ensure you maintain a healthy “work/play” balance in your lives. The following suggestions will help you complete this task.

1. Schedule in fixed blocks of time first. Class and work time are usually inflexible and determined in advance, so pencil these in first.

2. Include time for fun and relaxation. The key to time management is **Balance**!

3. Examine your course load to determine which courses will require the most time. Factor in course related activities, such as assignments, term papers, lab reports, clinical preparations and library research. The standard advice is to allow 2 hours of study time for each hour you spend in class. If you are taking 15 credit hours, spend at least 30 hours per week studying.

4. Limit each study block to approximately an hour if possible. Pencil in the harder courses in time slots where you have the most energy. (Remember your biorhythms).

5. Some people say it is good to rotate study block content. For example, study A&P the first hour, then switch to Nursing Fundamentals. This may not work for all people...remember to individualize your schedule. The most important thing is that you spend time on all subjects. You may need to spend more time on one subject than another, but take care not to neglect any of your courses.
6. Have specific goals for each study block. For example, from 7-8 pm: “Read page 1-20 in A&P and write notes on this content.” You may have to readjust these goals as you go along, depending on how difficult the content is.

7. Avoid marathon study sessions. After each study block, take a short break (10 minutes). Take a walk, get a snack or do something active to clear your head and refocus before you begin another study block.

8. Capture spare moments of time. There may be short periods of time during the day when you have not scheduled in anything. These would be useful for small study tasks (especially if you have things written on index cards that you need to memorize). Use these if possible. It all adds up.

9. The last few weeks before exams should reflect a study schedule that includes review sessions for all courses.

10. The weekends are a good time to schedule in “catch-up” activities for courses and to review what was done the previous week.

**Study Environment**

An organized study environment not only helps you save time when you are looking for things, it also plays an important psychological role in studying. It helps set the tone as a place to study. Thus, when you go to that area, your mind automatically switches into a study mode. It also helps give the message that you are in control and have a definite plan of action.

**Be assertive in protecting your study time**

Depending on your environment, there may be a variety of things interrupting your study time. Telephone calls or people knocking at your door can easily interfere with your study flow and momentum. Be assertive in saying no, or putting up signs for study hours. Remember, you may be the one losing out in the end.

**Conclusion**

Hopefully, this session has given you some guidance and direction in improving your study habits.

Separate small group sessions to discuss Exam Writing and Critical Thinking topics will be offered in the near future. These sessions will be advertised in advance, so please sign up in the designated time slots if you wish to attend.
Never Give Up!
Ellis (2007)

Some people keep going even when they get stuck or fail again. To such people belong the world. Consider the hapless politician who compiled this record:

Failed in business 1831
Defeated for legislature 1832
Second failure in business 1833
Suffered a nervous breakdown 1836
Defeated for speaker 1838
Defeated for elect 1840
Defeated for congress 1843
Defeated for senate 1855
Defeated for vice president 1856
Defeated for senate 1858
Elected president 1860

Who was the fool who kept on going in spite of so many failures?

American President: Abraham Lincoln
Appendix A

Weekly Self-Assessment Worksheet

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## Appendix C

Weekly Evening Planner

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Resources


Web-Based:

Memorial University of Newfoundland  www.mun.ca/counselling/home/

University of Minnesota-Duluth  www.d.umn.edu/student/loon/acad/strat

University of Victoria  www.coun.uvic.ca/

York University  www.yorku.ca/cdc

www.mindquestacademy.org
Multiple-Choice Exam Writing Strategies
(Avoiding the guess work)

Guidance & Counselling Department
Centre for Nursing Studies

Revised June 2008
Multiple-Choice Exam Writing Strategies
(Avoiding the guess work)

Guidance & Counselling Department
Centre for Nursing Studies

Revised June 2008
Introduction

Prior to working as a professional nurse, you must pass a registration or licensing exam. These exams consist mainly of multiple-choice (MC) questions. Consequently, schools of nursing often use MC exams as one method to evaluate student progress.

Students often underestimate the complexity of MC questions. These questions require distinction between correct and nearly correct statements. MC exam questions often require more than recognition of textbook material. These distinctions require higher-order thinking.

It is important for you to understand the dynamics of these questions so that you can demonstrate your cognitive competency (that you know enough to provide safe, effective care).

The goals of this session are to:

1. Identify the two main structured components of multiple-choice questions.
2. Describe the five step test-taking strategy to use when answering multiple-choice exam questions.
3. Compare the levels of thinking processes assessed in multiple-choice questions.
4. Discuss learning strategies for each of the levels of thinking processes presented.
5. Practice answering a variety of multiple-choice questions.
Structural Components of Multiple-Choice Options

The entire multiple-choice question is called an **item**.

Each item consists of 2 parts: a **stem** and the **options**

![Diagram showing the structural components of a multiple-choice item: Item, Stem, Options]

**Stem**

The purpose of the stem is to present a problem in a clear and concise manner. The stem contains all the details needed to answer the question. The stem may be presented as a question or an incomplete sentence that becomes complete when it is combined with one of the options.

**Options**

These are all the possible answers offered within the item. The best response option is the **correct answer**. The other options are incorrect. These are called the **distracters**.

5-Step Process

1. **Cover the Options**
2. **Read Stem**
3. **Pick out key words**
4. **Picture answer in your head**
5. **Uncover**
6. **Match**
Levels of Thinking Processes

The nursing regulatory bodies have identified three levels of thinking processes involved in providing safe, effective patient care. The multiple-choice exams consist of items from each of these levels, thus ensuring that you are a safe practitioner. The three levels of thinking measured are:

1. Knowledge - Comprehension
2. Application
3. Critical Thinking

Level 1: Knowledge - Comprehension

Knowledge - Comprehension items test your ability to remember/recall information learned and to understand its meaning. These items measure your knowledge of the basic information that forms the foundation of your nursing practice.

Some examples of this information are:
- Facts/Definitions/Terminology
- Categories/Classifications/Sequences
- Principles/Theories
- Trends/Generalizations

The Knowledge - Comprehension level of thinking also requires you to understand the significance of these facts and information. Responding to these items may test your ability to translate, interpret and determine the implications of the new information you have studied.

Study Strategies for Level 1 Knowledge - Comprehension

- Mnemonics (alphabet cues, acronyms, acrostics)
- Index/Flash cards
- Repetition
- Asking **How** or **Why** questions
  Why is this information useful/important?
  (e.g., you are taught to use soap when bathing your patients. Ask yourself why.)
- Study in small groups. This is helpful because it facilitates sharing of impressions, opinions and examples.
Examples of Knowledge - Comprehensive question

What is the basic unit of structure and function in the human body?

When clarifying is used in therapeutic communication with the patient, the nurse is:
   a. Verifying what the patient implied.
   b. Paraphrasing what the patient has shared.
   c. Reflecting the emotional tone of the communication.
   d. Summarizing the patient’s verbal and non-verbal messages.

Level 2: Application

Responding to application items requires you to take the information you have learned and apply it to a new, concrete, practical situation. It involves applying:

- Rules/Principles
- Methods/Nursing Theories/Concepts when providing care for your patients

Helpful study strategies include:

- Relating new information to what you already know
  For example, when you are studying body mechanics, apply these principles to your everyday activities such as picking up and carrying heavy books or groceries. When learning range-of-motion exercises, practice these with your body.

- Recognizing commonalities
  A commonality exists when two different situations require the application of the same principle. For example, the principle of gravity (a force that draws all mass in the earth’s sphere to the center of the earth) applies to many nursing situations, including:
  - Where you would position a urine collection bag
  - The position you would hang an IV bag
  - Where you would position the foot of the bed for a patient with swelling (edema) of the feet and legs

Examples of Application items

The client becomes extremely anxious after the physician tells him that additional tests will be required to help determine the source of his problem. The most appropriate action of the nurse would be to:
   a. Inform the client that the doctor knows best
   b. Encourage the client to verbalize his feelings
   c. Tell the client that there is nothing to worry about
   d. Leave the room until the client’s anxiety decreases
Multiple Choice Exam Writing Strategies

Which of the following actions by the nurse would support the patient’s right to privacy?
   a. Leaving the crying patient alone
   b. Providing information about patient care
   c. Addressing a patient by his/her last name
   d. Pulling a curtain around when interviewing the patient

Level 3: Critical Thinking

Responding to critical thinking items requires you to interpret a variety of data, to deal with abstractions, to differentiate and to solve nursing problems (e.g., identify priorities of care, evaluate the effectiveness of nursing actions.) This is the highest level of thinking and assesses your ability to analyze, synthesize and evaluate.

Helpful study strategies include:
   • Focusing on recognizing differences in material
   • Using case study analysis in small group discussions
   • Using a “what if?” type of question approach

Example of Critical Thinking Item

A patient who is undergoing cancer chemotherapy says to the nurse, “This no way to live.” Which of the following responses uses the reflective technique?
   a. “What are you saying?”
   b. “Life is not worth living.”
   c. “You sound discouraged today.”
   d. “Tell me more about what you are thinking.”

General Guidelines for Multiple-Choice Exams

• Begin studying early. Multiple-choice exams tend to cover a broad range of material and focus on detail. Learn a little bit every day and allow time for a final review.
• Practice writing multiple-choice questions related to this course content. Questions can often be found in related textbooks, lab manuals, CD’s and even on websites.
• Before beginning the exam, relax by taking a few deep breathes and talk positively to yourself. Fill out your answer card ensuring that the number on the card corresponds with the number on the exam paper.
• Use the 5-Step Process for all questions! (Cover options, read stem, picture in head, uncover, match)
  • Remember to watch for those key words and phrases such as only, best, first.
  • Ensure you understand what is being asked in the stem by rephrasing the question in your own words.
• The results of changing the answers to questions is controversial. Sometimes you may find that you suddenly remember the right answer, and if so, an answer change is appropriate. However, changing exam answers may not be a good idea if you are making the change simply on “guess work”. Research has shown that in many cases, the first answer that pops to mind is often the correct one. Trust your intuition.
• If you don’t know the answer, don’t waste time on the question. Put a question mark in the margin and move on. Return to the marked item when you have completed the exam.
• If you do poorly in an exam, be sure to see your instructor as soon as possible after receiving your mark to discuss why this has happened. There are many reasons for failing an exam and this type of feedback will help you identify the cause of your failure. For example; did you read the question wrong, make careless errors, didn’t know the material, run out of time or become overly anxious?

Resources


Web Resources

1. The University of Calgary’s Test-Taking Advice: Especially for the Multiple-Choice Challenged
   www.ucalgary.ca/counselling/academicsuccess
2. The University of Toronto’s Suggestions for Coping with Multiple-Choice Questions
   www.asc.utoronto.ca
3. The University of Guelph’s Suggestions for Multiple-Choice Exams
   www.lib.uoguelph.ca/assistance/learning_services/undergraduates/publications.cfm