

Practical Nursing Learning Skills

There is a lot more to becoming an LPN than interest and desire for a good job - there is a great deal of information to be learned and applied. Here are some approaches to *learning-to-understand-and-use* that you will find helpful during your studies.

Think like a nurse

1. *Identify context*: relate details to the big picture
2. *Represent information*: diagrams, charts, graphs, lab work, notes
3. *Infer*: draw conclusions from information or evidence
4. *Discover relationships*: how does structure affect function?
5. *Order*: rank, sequence, arrange methodically
6. *Assess*: observe, gather and evaluate data about a client
7. *Prioritize*: set goals, consider urgency, be realistic
8. *Verify*: confirm prediction or accuracy
9. *Change perspective*: alter view or significance of information
10. *Work overtime*: expect to spend 2-3 hours per day studying

Learn the core concepts

1. *Medical Terminology*: medical terms, definitions, abbreviations, and symbols
2. *Anatomy and Physiology*: systems of the human body in terms of structure, function, homeostasis, health promotion, and pathology
3. *Healing*: health promotion and prevention; nursing interventions; patient teaching
4. *Health*: the healthcare system, health promotion, healthy lifestyles, lifespan, and nutrition
5. *Human Relationships*: self-awareness, caring, helping relationships, empathy, feeling expression, self-disclosure, assertiveness, communicating with disabled persons
6. *Nursing Arts*: the nursing process; client interaction; personal care skills, assessment, and provision; responsibility and behaviour in practice
7. *Pharmacology*: the study of medicines and dosage calculations

Use your text effectively

1. *Learn to navigate your text*: spend some time getting to know how the text is structured for learning and use labeled sticky notes to mark sections
2. *First reading*: skim the chapter or section before class to get the big picture.
3. *Second reading*: in-depth learning
4. Slow down and *concentrate*
5. Pay special attention to the aspects covered in *class*
6. Use *highlighter* sparingly - no more than 3 words in a row
7. Make *margin notes* that summarize main points and concepts
8. Talk to yourself: *explain* in your own words what you have read

9. Pay attention to new *terms and concepts*
10. Know which *diagrams* to study; pay attention to the *explanations*
11. *Third reading*: scan for important diagrams, terms, definitions, and concepts to make study aids (such as a list of terms, a chart, or flash cards)

Use all your senses

1. *Eyes* to look at visuals and read
2. *Ears* to listen to your instructor and to yourself read and explain aloud
3. *Hands* to write, draw, highlight, and trace

Practice remembering instead of re-looking

1. Think about the difference between *looking* at something in front of you and *not looking at it* but being able to understand it, explain it, summarize it, or draw it. Which is expected on a test? Practice that way!
2. *Without looking* at your text, or notes, say or write a summary of important points—do this at regular intervals.
3. Photocopy *diagrams* and white out labels; make several copies and *practice* labeling. Note your mistakes and work on those.
4. When using *flashcards*, if you don't know the response, *don't* look right away - work on trying to remember. Put the cards that you don't know in a separate pile and spend time working on those until you know them. Put a tick mark on those you get right and an x on those you don't know.

Consolidate your learning

1. *Rewrite* your notes to review, fill in gaps, and consolidate learning
2. *Restructure* or *elaborate* your notes rather than simply copying them. Learn the *two-column* note system (sign up for a learning skills session or go online).
3. *Make charts*: For example, when studying a body system, make a chart with these headings: part, location, structure, function, other (pathology, target drug).
4. *Make study notes* that are simpler than your revised class notes. Staple them together and keep with you for quick *review* sessions.

Do drills and regular review

1. *Flash cards*: terms & definitions, diagrams & explanations, questions & answers
2. *Study notes*: cover up one side of two-column notes
3. *Label* diagrams until you can do it without error
4. *Verbalize* by reciting definitions, concepts, etc.

Practice answering questions

1. Learn about different *types* of exam questions (Learning Centre handout)
2. Develop your *own* questions, based on your class notes
3. Answer the *questions* at the end of each *chapter*
4. Write *practice tests* based on class notes (link below)

Identify and use resources

1. Cowichan Campus Learning Centre (Room 120): Attend a workshop, select useful handouts, request a Volunteer Tutor (purple form, hand it in at Student Affairs)
2. Make an appointment with an Education Counsellor at Student Affairs
3. Link to online information: http://cc.viu.ca/sa/academic_support.htm
4. Medical Terminology practice test (go to above link)

Student Nurse Resources: <http://www.studentnursesource.com>

Cornell Notes: http://lsc.sas.cornell.edu/LSC_Resources/cornellsystem.pdf

Learning videos: http://maclife.mcmaster.ca/academicskills/online_resources.cfm