

Taking the NCLEX Exam

To become licensed as an RN, you will need to take the NCLEX following graduation from the BSN program. For information about the location of testing centers, how and when to register for the exam, the NCLEX Candidate Bulletin, and other requirements, see the NCLEX Candidate Web site:

<http://www.pearsonvue.com/nclex/>

After graduation, the School of Nursing communicates with the Washington State Nursing Care Quality Assurance Commission (NCQAC, i.e. State Board) to inform it that a student has completed requirements for the BSN degree. The student will then receive either a card or an e-mail from the NCQAC noting eligibility to take the NCLEX; this will take about a month to receive. Instructions and phone numbers for scheduling an appointment to take the NCLEX will be included on the back of the card or in the e-mail. **The University of Washington BSN code is 29-578.**

The NCLEX can be taken at one of the following test-taking centers:

Renton, WA

Oaksdale Center Building E
1300 S. W. 7th Street, Suite 113
Renton, WA 98055

Spokane, WA

Mullan Centre
1410 North Mullan, Suite 203
Spokane, WA 99206

Yakima, WA

1701 Creekside Loop, Suite 110
Yakima, WA 98902

Most students explore a number of NCLEX preparation resources

(<http://www.umsl.edu/services/scampus/NCLEXwebprep.html>) and take an intensive NCLEX preparation/review course prior to taking the exam. In addition to your formal preparations, you may also wish to access an NCLEX Self-Assessment module at <http://www.testprepreview.com/modules/nclex.htm>.

Over the years, we have polled graduating students for their NCLEX study strategies. Below are some test preparation suggestions from students who succeeded on their first try at the exam.

"I started doing practice questions (in study mode) from Saunders during summer quarter when I had time. I spent the two weeks prior to my exam reading the Saunders review book and doing all the questions in the book. I also had the Saunders Q & A book for additional questions. I read the Kaplan Strategy book and did some Lippincott questions. In all, I did over 5000 practice questions. I passed the NCLEX in 75 questions, but was sure I had failed when I was done.

The questions were much more difficult than anything I had seen in my review. In retrospect, I have realized this is how the test is designed. If you are answering questions correctly it just gets more difficult. The reality is (with the 15 experimental test questions that don't count) you can miss a whole lot of questions and still pass. So prepare to feel surprised by the difficulty of the questions, take your time and do the best you can on each question and trust that if you have spent time preparing you will do just fine. Good luck!"

"I would recommend Saunders and Kaplan as review material. I spent a couple of hours a day (not every day, mind you) for about three weeks reviewing material. Saunders is great for material and practice questions, and Kaplan is great for strategy. I would recommend looking at questions in another book, such as Lippincott, just to get comfortable with another style of questions, because Saunders can get a bit predictable after three weeks. I really took my time on my exam (an hour and a half with the tutorial) and it shut off at 75 questions. My advice is to go through tons of practice questions and REVIEW THE ANSWERS. I learned more from what I got wrong on those questions than by reading the summary info in each of the Saunders chapters.

Also, people should not plan on the exam shutting off at 75 questions, because if it doesn't shut off, you begin to doubt yourself. The best way to do this is to take practice exams that are at least 100 questions, so you know you have the mental stamina to get through. Other than that, it is a horrible exam but you will eventually get through it."

"I studied somewhat over summer quarter, but because I was so busy trying to get my practicum hours in during 8 1/2 weeks, I didn't really focus on NCLEX until summer quarter ended.

After school was over, I studied on my own, approximately 3 hours a day for about 3 weeks and used both the Lippincott and National Nurses Association review books. The most helpful part was answering a LOT of sample questions - probably 100 a day, and then going back through the answers and studying what I missed. I learned more info this way than reading chapters or studying otherwise. The last few days before my test appointment I did sample exams online...these were available in the CDs that came with my books, and I believe some of my classmates signed up for a week with Mosby's.

Bottom line, you're studying for two reasons, first to learn nursing knowledge, but a lot of this you've already covered in school.

Second, you're literally training to get in shape to answer a barrage of NCLEX-type questions so that even if you have no idea what the answer is...you have a feel for how to go about tackling the question.

In the end, my exam shut off at 75 questions, so I guess my preparation scheme worked out. No doubt though, it tests a minute fraction of what you know, but the whole process is kind of like being run through a blender!"

One student contacted Academic Services to inform us that s/he did not pass on the first attempt. This individual felt that they "pushed myself and took it before I was really ready." They added, "After some reflection and regrouping, I figured out a study plan and took a KAPLAN course" and passed on the second attempt.

"I reviewed using the Saunders book and a Kaplan strategies book. I reviewed a lot on my own as well I met up with other MEPN students for company and to discuss sections. It was helpful to practice NCLEX style questions. The Kaplan strategies book was useful in answering the Maslow Hierarchy of needs questions. The Saunders book had a CD-rom that you can practice questioned mixed together or a specific area. I think I studied for three weeks. It worked; I took my 75 questions and was done."

"I took the Kaplan course with about six others. The content review and question bank was good. However, in general I think it was quite pricey for what I got out of it."

"I mostly used a practice CD that came with a Saunders review book."

"I used the Saunders review book and the CD-ROM that came with it. I used the quiz generator on the CD periodically starting in June. I made it about half way through the book between the end of classes in August and my exam on Sept 19."

"I bought the Saunders Comprehensive NCLEX review book and spent a couple of weeks with it. I found this to be sufficient for the exam."

"I did not take a formal review class. Rather, I purchased some study books and checked others out from the public library. I studied with classmates probably no more than 10% of the time; I studied alone mostly. I used a Kaplan guide for test tips, and used Lippincott and Saunders for content. The content books really didn't include much about infection control or delegation and since these questions composed much of my NCLEX test... it was kind of frustrating!"

"I did the Kaplan prep course, which was 4 weeks long. ZERO studying prior to Kaplan. I had 9 more days before my test date. I did not do the full Kaplan package in terms of practice questions (I think the whole thing is close to 5,000 questions and I did close to 2,000 practice questions-all very helpful for strategy and content review... I passed with 76 questions. "

"I bought Kaplan's *NCLEX-RN Exam 2005-2006 Edition* (about \$35, a strategy book) and Saunder's *Comprehensive Review for the NCLEX-RN Examination* with CD questions. I studied these intensely for about ten straight days. I also had some drug flashcards from Kaplan, but only skimmed those the night before.

The strategy book helped me a lot more with the exam than anything else. It really took knowing how to analyze each question and figure out what was being asked. In my opinion, I was over prepared on the fact recall and spent way too much time on questions from the Saunder's book.

I think many of us (me included) got way too stressed out about the whole thing, and for months ahead of time. Not sure how it got so hyped up. Between you and me, I didn't think the test was that hard, but I also realize that not everyone in our group felt that way. If the next MEPN group makes one improvement over our NCLEX preparation process may it be that their anxiety is way less."

"I studied on my own for about 2.5-3 weeks (5 days a week) for about 5 hours each day using the Saunders book. I felt sufficiently prepared for the test."

"I (along with 7 or 8 of us) took a Kaplan test prep course for the length of 1 month (8 sessions). It came with a review book, online study center, and class sessions to go over questions with an instructor. What I found most useful were the video-streamed review of content lectures and reading/studying the text. There were also online sessions going over questions and explaining how to answer them, which was equivalent to going to the class sessions. Before I took the NCLEX, I went over the several practice tests that Kaplan prepared - which was very similar to the actual exam so no surprises (others were surprised at some types of questions - but of course did fine).

I thought that it was very helpful, but you'll have to ask others... there were differing opinions about it (though not everyone went over the content lectures as I had). It turned out that the first question I got on my NCLEX was exactly the same as one of the questions on my Kaplan practice tests, which gave me a huge confidence booster. Spent maybe a little over 2 hours for the exam, finishing in 75 questions... I felt good about it too.

I was concerned about one thing: A good portion of the exam was delegation questions (i.e. what pts to assign to LPNs, float nurse, CNAs) and which patient to see first (most critical)... I have to say that in the program, I felt like I didn't have very good exposure to

delegation principles (in class or clinical) and practice w/ prioritization. We had a little bit of practice in prioritization in the exams of Med/Surg I, but less so in Med/Surg II (exam questions were less similar to those on the NCLEX – I suggest an update for test questions in that course).”

“I used the NCLEX Lippincott question and answer book and CD which was included. That is all I used to study with besides what we learned in each of our classes. I did around 200 questions per day until I completed all 5000 or so questions and then I took the exam.”

“I used Sanders NCLEX preparation book. It has excellent interactive Comprehensive Review questions on CD. I also started with Lippincott but gave up (the questions were not sophisticated enough and the rationale was not clearly explained). I took a one month break before taking the exam. This was very helpful. When I came back I spent approximately one month studying for the NCLEX. Please tell them that they should sleep well the night before the exam - absolutely no studying on night before. Never randomly guess during the exam (even if they’re running out of time). NCLEX is CAT exam but it’s not percentage based and they could ruin all their prior achievement by randomly guessing. Generally they should go for the exam when they ‘feel ready.’ No rush.”

“I didn't want to spend the money on courses, so several of us quizzed each other with questions from several of the books. The Kaplan and Saunders books turned out to be the best ones for us.

Also, the online Mosby quiz helped boost confidence. It is an online quiz software, and it’s closest to the testing format of the actual test.”

“I used both the Saunders and Kaplan books. I read the strategy sections entirely, and then I mostly tested myself on the Saunders CD. I ‘crammed’ for about a week, studying about 8 or 9 hours a day and did fine on the NCLEX.

I made myself a schedule of each and EVERY topic covered in the huge Saunder's blue book and did all questions in the book. I also went through hundreds of questions on the CD that came with the book. Especially important was the chapter on the strategy behind the test. It was just as important as the content. You need to know how to approach the questions logically, not how you would personally face a clinical situation. Instead, you have to think of priorities (according to the NCLEX people and study materials, hierarchy of needs, etc). If in doubt, choose patient safety! Also, I probably spent three weeks studying a few hours each day, and passed at 75 questions. Get the Saunder's book for sure! I don't think you need anything else.”

“I studied for the NCLEX entirely on my own. I used three study guide books:

1. Saunders Comprehensive Review for the NCLEX-RN Examination by Linda Anne Silvestri
2. Kaplan NCLEX-RN Exam, 2007 Edition with CD-ROM (Kaplan Nclex-Rn Exam) by Kaplan
3. NCLEX-RN Made Incredibly Easy! - Q&A book by Springhouse

I skimmed through each book and did almost all of the practice questions. I started studying about 3 weeks before the exam and I passed with 75 questions. My only regret is that I let myself STRESS-OUT way too much. Also, don't be surprised if you feel like you failed after you finish the test. Almost all of us thought we didn't pass, but we did. Good luck!!!”

“From someone who didn't pass the first time - TAKE THE KAPLAN. The NCLEX test is not about knowledge, its about learning to take a test and give the answers they want. The UWSON does NOT teach to the NCLEX, so don't think that you are prepared

because you've just finished your BSN equivalency. This is not true. Just bite the bullet and pay the money for the course - either in person or online is good too.”

“I studied on my own using Kaplan and other NCLEX-based questions. I asked a lot of RNs I worked with for their advice on taking the NCLEX and the unanimous advice was to study by answering as many NCLEX-styled questions as you can and to self-diagnose the questions you answered incorrectly. You don't have to know new material, just know how the test wants you to answer its questions. Keep in mind that the NCLEX does not test your ability or skills as a nurse. It only tests how well you take the test. Wishing you all good luck!”

“I subscribed to Kaplan's online videos and practice questions (NCLEX-RN Complete Online). I studied for 8 hours a day, for about two weeks. I listened to the review, followed along with the book, and took notes. I also did practice questions and took assessments which evaluated my readiness for the exam.

It's an expensive program but I needed something more engaging than a book and it was really convenient to work from home. I felt like it provided a comprehensive review and some helpful test-taking strategies....And I passed!”

- Subscribe to Mosby's and practice with the online simulation – it will boost your confidence and give you an idea how it feels for the questions to be increasingly difficult.
 - Don't spend much time memorizing specific meds – you won't recognize the ones they test no matter what you do.
 - Practice reading and answering the questions – spend less time reviewing specific pathologies/systems.
 - Don't buy into a review course. It's a waste of money.
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“To prepare for the NCLEX I spent ten days of about ten hours each day studying intensely by myself. I also talked test taking strategies with other MEPN cohort friends. I studied the Saunders book front to back, including the questions at the end of each chapter. I found this text to be very well organized and comprehensive. I did not do any computer practice tests. I passed with 75 questions.

If I were to do it over again I would probably start studying a little earlier.”

“I started studying a tiny bit over summer quarter. I brought my Kaplan NCLEX Strategies book to clinical and did questions when I had downtime. When the quarter ended, I went on vacation for a week and then spent about 3 weeks doing very little but studying.

I used the Princeton Review book to cover the basics, Saunders for more depth and the online practice questions and Kaplan for the online tests. I never scored above 70 on a Kaplan test.

I didn't spend a lot of time on pharmacology. Certain drugs kept popping up on my practice tests so I memorized those but otherwise I mostly concentrated on knowing the very basics about the drug classes.

It was a pretty stressful period. I kept sane by exercising every day and checking in with classmates. Six of us took the exam together in North Seattle. All of our tests shut off after 75 questions. We then had an incredibly raucous mid-day party. The one thing I want to stress is how awful you feel after the exam (even if it stops at 75). The test is designed so that you only get 50% of the questions correct, and 15 of the questions are questions that they're trying out for the next exam. That means that you feel like you've failed because you know you've gotten several questions wrong.

I paid the extra money to know my results early because we discovered that the state licensure site wasn't being updated consistently. Best \$8 I've ever spent! Overall, I feel like it is a really stupid exam that doesn't truly measure your nursing knowledge. However, you have to take it seriously enough to put in the study hours.”