Study Schedule for NCLEX

2-3 MONTHS BEFORE THE EXAM

1. Begin organizing textbooks and lecture notes into your “NCLEX-stuff.”
2. Begin making notes about your “insecure” areas based on the first RN Predictor exam.
3. Plan to review your weakest area “first and last.”
4. Begin learning the format and content of the exam.
5. Take practice tests that approximate NCLEX like the ATI RN Comprehensive Assessment.
6. Assess your strengths and weaknesses based on that test.
7. Take practice tests that are specific to your area of weakness.
8. Establish a study schedule that includes adequate time to prepare, and flexibility. Your schedule will depend on your performance on the first RN predictor, how much time your will have, your clinical experience, and how confident your feel about NCLEX.
9. A general study schedule is 2-3 days per week for 1-2 hours. Adapt to your preferences and time frame for taking NCLEX.
10. Decide whether or not you will want to join a study group for NCLEX—based on your learning style and areas of strength/weakness. You should plan to review any areas of weakness before participating in a study group (do not totally rely on a group for your review!)
11. Decide on strategies to reduce anxiety before NCLEX (practice exams on the computer like the ATI tests are one strategy).

4-6 WEEKS BEFORE EXAM

1. Begin reviewing areas of weakness first so that you will have time to review them again before NCLEX.
2. Develop and organize your own notes in each subject for a final review just before the exam.
3. During the last 3-4 weeks, take at least one comprehensive test each week to help you become familiar with the type of questions to be asked.
4. After several weeks of studying, take your original ATI RN Comprehensive Assessment online to see how well you are doing now. It helps to get positive reinforcement on a gain in knowledge!
5. Be sure to practice ATI tests for all content areas.
6. Balance studying with time for sleeping, eating, exercising, socializing, and working—do NOT become a study hermit!
7. After your testing site is confirmed, decide if you will stay in a hotel to drive to the site. Make reservations early if needed.
ONE WEEK BEFORE EXAM

1. Begin your final review of material.
2. Re-take the ATI RN Comprehensive Assessment online or other ATI tests for the last time to evaluate your performance.
3. Recite the key ideas to yourself and you read the rationale for answers.
4. Make sure you have memorized all lab values, essential formulas, calculation equations, and immunization schedules.
5. Rest, eat well, exercise—and do NOT dwell on the test during non-study times.
6. Make sure that you have all the documents that you need for admission to the exam. If you have questions, call the NC Board of Nursing in Raleigh or the Board of Nursing in the state where you are seeking licensure.

THE DAY BEFORE THE EXAM

1. If you live more than one hour from the test site, plan on staying in a hotel near the site—preferably within walking distance.
2. Check out the site; make sure you know how to get there. Plan to arrive one hour early.
3. Do something that you enjoy during the day before the exam; have a relaxing dinner then relax again by watching TV, a movie, going for a walk, or anything that is pleasant and will keep your mind off of the exam.
4. If you are with nursing school friends, TRY to refrain from talking about the test.
5. If you feel the need to review notes, do so once—and then put them away by 6pm the night before the test.
6. Get enough sleep—you need to be both mentally and physically alert for the next day.
7. Double check that you have the right documents.

THE DAY OF THE EXAM

1. Allow time to have a good meal; avoid too much caffeine. Bring a snack with you for breaks or before the test. Some sites will give you a locker for your personal items.
2. Wear comfortable clothes; layers that can be changed depending on the temperature of the testing site. Be prepared for extremely cool or warm testing centers.
3. Make certain that you have the right documents for admission to the exam.
4. Arrive at the site ON TIME (earlier than you would ordinarily!).
**ACTUAL ADMINISTRATION OF EXAM**

1. Close your eyes. As you sit in your exam seat, tense all your muscles. Really try to “scrunch up” as many muscles as you can.
2. After you have tensed all your muscles, take a deep breath (through your nose) and hold it for a count of five—keeping your muscles tensed.
3. After reaching the count of five, simultaneously exhale rapidly through your lips and quickly let go of your muscle tightness by saying “now relax.”
4. With eyes closed, go as limp in the chair as you possibly can.
5. Now with muscles relaxed, take a second deep breath through your nose. Hold this breath for a couple of seconds. Then exhale slowly.
6. As you exhale, repeat the word “calm” to yourself. You will probably repeat “calm” seven to ten times while slowly exhaling.
7. Repeat these steps once or twice to achieve greater relaxation. Each time takes about 30 seconds.
8. Practice with this (or another) stress reduction technique as you prepare for NCLEX if you think it will help you.

**AS YOU BEGIN THE EXAM**

1. Once told to begin the exam, jot down formulas on extra paper PROVIDED by the test center.
2. Develop an assertive yet realistic attitude. Be determined that you will do your best, but also accept the limits of what you know at the moment. Use everything that you know to help you do well, but don’t blame yourself for what you don’t know.
3. Remember the guidelines for multiple choice tests.
4. Pay attention only to the test itself, not to the monitors, the room, what you “should have done” to prepare, to your friends, to your “computers,” to your spouse, etc... Just think about the test question in front of you!!
5. Don’t let lapses of memory produce anxiety or fear—lapses are normal, so take a deep breath to gain control and become calm again. Try yelling “stop” to yourself (not out-loud). Just say “I CAN DO THIS, I CAN DO THIS”.
6. **Do NOT** let the number of the question influence your feelings of confidence about yourself!!
7. At all times, remain confident in yourself—and you will succeed!!! YOU CAN DO IT!!!