



Effective Test-taking Strategies for Nursing Students

1. Read the question slowly and carefully paying attention to:
 - Subject of the question (patient, medication, plan, procedure, etc.)
 - Key words (age, sex, acute, chronic, pre/post op, etc.)
 - Polarity: positive (asking for what is true) or negative (asking for what is false or the exclusion)
2. Visualize what the question is asking
 - Then image the correct response before looking at the answers
3. Notice word choices in the answers:
 - Closed-ended words are often incorrect as they are extreme (all, always, every, must, none, never, only, and just)
 - Open-ended words are usually favored over closed-ended words: (may, usually, normally, commonly, and generally)
4. Favor global answers over specific choices when the global answer includes the specific choices that are also correct:
 - Example: What constitutes a healthy diet?
A) apples B) avocados C) fish D) Mediterranean diet
5. For prioritizing questions, use filters to run the question through:
 - ABC's – does the question have anything to do with airway, breathing or circulation?
 - Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs – consider in order of hierarchy physiological, then safety and security, then love and belonging, then self-esteem, and finally self-actualization
 - Where in the nursing process does this question take place?
6. Once you select an answer, reread the question with the answer to make sure it makes sense. If you start self-doubting and begin to ask "What if..." leave it alone. If you guessed, trust your hunch.
7. Never leave answers blank. If you run out of time to go back, they will always be 100% wrong. At least give it an educated guess.
8. Select-All-That-Apply (SATA) questions are just true or false. Answer each option independent of the others. Then select all the options that are correct.

