

Wildcat First Semester Nursing Student Check List

Are you ready to begin your first semester of nursing school? You might be wondering what kind of things to get prepared ahead of time to make the first few weeks run more smoothly for you and your family. This checklist serves as a guide to help you think through some key areas to develop a plan, create strategies, get organized, and find resources to support success. You can also make an appointment with the CON Academic Success Coach before the semester begins to get a jump start in these areas: [Make an Appointment](#)

TIME MANAGEMENT

Check box	Check list and items for consideration	Action plan: list what needs to be done to complete this item
	<p>Decide on the type of planner you want to use. Considerations include electronic versus paper, needing access to monthly, weekly, and daily pages, space big enough to enter due dates (monthly) and assignments (weekly/daily).</p> <p>Tip: Check out monthly/weekly planners that have vertical time format which makes it easy to schedule assignments.</p>	
	<p>Once you get access to D2L and can check out your courses, go through each course looking for due dates and write them on the monthly calendar. Do this for the entire semester for each course.</p> <p>Tip: Consider color coding your courses when you enter them onto the monthly calendar.</p> <p>Tip: For all due dates on papers or projects, enter a “plan date” at least 3 weeks in advance on the monthly calendar. This will be the date you plan out the paper, decide how many days it will take to write it, and enter the writing process into the week-at-a-glance calendar.</p>	

	<p>Tip: Use this time to check out each course on D2L, click on the buttons, see what is there. Take notes for where you found certain sections or items that you want to remember later.</p>	
	<p>Once you have completed the monthly calendar, look for weeks that are extra busy. How can you get more time to study? Should you plan to get a few things done the week before?</p> <p>Tip: Consider enlisting family members or friends to take some of your responsibilities for that week, or invite out-of-town family to come help babysit and take care of household chores? Maybe schedule more play dates for your children to be out of the house or attend summer camps? The key is to see the bottleneck and plan accordingly.</p> <p>Tip: If you are working, consider taking vacation time or schedule a trade to get adequate time during that busy week to study for exams, write papers, etc. Additionally, do not work a night shift the night before class or clinical. This interferes with long-term learning, but more importantly it creates a very unsafe clinical environment.</p>	
	<p>Fill out a 24/7, week-at-a-glance, time budget to make sure all personal, family, work, and school obligations are factored into your schedule. Here is a free 24/7 weekly planner sheet. Look right beneath the sheet to print a version without the shaded rows.</p> <p>Tip: This 24/7 sheet is a game changer as it identifies what days and times you have set aside for study. Each week you can prioritize assignments and place them into the weekly calendar.</p>	
	<p>Decide how you will let family members know when you are available during the day/week to help reduce disruptions (especially important if you have a partner and/or children).</p>	

	<p>Tip: Consider a white board or use sticky notes outside your home office door that lists your break times and allows others to write questions they want to address when you have your next break.</p> <p>Tip: For young children, consider using a timer to indicate when your next break will be. This way they can “see” how much time is left before interrupting you.</p> <p>Tip: When you have children it is critical that you plan in your weekly/daily schedule to focus some time on them first before they start “demanding your attention.” Consider how the following suggestions may be appropriate for your situation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the morning, plan 30 minutes talking with them, eating breakfast, doing morning yoga as a family, getting ready for school, etc. • When they get home from school, important time to check in with them, ask about their day, provide a snack, check in on homework or sports activities. • The evening routine. Time to bathe small children, read a nighttime story, and tuck children into bed. • Plan at least one family activity a week such as Friday movie night, Saturday trip to the zoo or a park, board game night, time at the swimming pool, or trip to a favorite children’s museum or activity center. 	
	<p>Are there time saving systems you can set in place now such as: online weekly grocery ordering, auto pay for bill paying, online ordering and delivery of pet supplies, weekly delivery of fresh meal kits, scheduling housekeeping services, set up daily dog walking services, plan for children to spend time with other friends and family members, set up nanny services or babysitters around test time for additional study time, delegate household chores among all family members, etc.</p>	
	<p>Always guard your sleep! Plan to be in bed by 10:00pm most nights, so start winding down before then, shut down electronics 45 minutes before bedtime to minimize blue light exposure, consider a nighttime routine including some</p>	


	stretching, breathwork, or gratitude journaling. Make sleep a priority in your weekly/daily calendar.	
	Decide on obligations, activities, or work that you can stop or suspend while in school. Notify these organizations that you will be stepping down until finished with school.	

HOUSEHOLD RESPONSIBILITIES AND MEALS

Check box	Check List Item	Action plan: list what needs to be done to complete this item
	<p>Write out menus ahead of time for the first 2 weeks of the semester.</p> <p>Tip: Use a calendar to keep track of all menus. This will make planning future weeks menus much easier as you reference past weeks for ideas.</p> <p>Tip: Make sure you have a good, insulated lunch bag and a few ice packs to use for bringing lunch and snacks to school or clinicals.</p>	
	Consider preparing and freezing some meals ahead of time to cut down on preparation time once school begins.	
	Decide if you want to order weekly meal kits . Research available vendors in your area.	
	Plan to stock up on groceries and healthy snacks.	
	Make a list of all weekly household and outdoor chores including what day of the week they should be done. Items you are responsible for should be calculated in the 24/7 weekly time budget. Make a chart for all other items to be done by family members or hired out. Delegation is the name of the game!	

	<p>Before school begins, get caught up or ahead on household chores or repairs such as window washing, pet grooming, decluttering, fixing a leaky faucet, oil change for the car, pet vaccinations, annual medical and dental appointments, donating items to charity, and organizing your study space.</p> <p>Give your house a deep clean and clear off counters. It is amazing how much easier it is to study in a clean environment, minus all the visual distractions.</p>	
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ORGANIZATION OF OFFICE SPACE AND SCHOOL MATERIALS

Check box	Check List Item	Action plan: list what needs to be done to complete this item
	<p>Review information for your program requirements regarding the technology you need to have. Make sure it is set up with all appropriate programs installed, make sure the headset works if using one, etc.</p> <p>Tip: Some programs to consider are email, zoom, Microsoft Office, textbook publishing company, testing software, One Note, etc.</p> <p>Tip: PERRLA writing template – this is not required but highly suggested to support APA writing: www.perrla.com. Read the “how it works” section. There is an annual fee for this product, and they offer a 30-day free trial. Totally worth it! </p> <p>Tip: EndNote is also a reference management tool for writing and may be required to use in graduate courses. There is a steeper learning curve than PERRLA, but online training is available as well as sessions with our librarian. It is free to download for UA students. Check out the training available online: https://endnote.com/</p> <p>Tip: Download note-taking app if you plan to use one.</p> <p>Tip: Make an appointment with LHTI before school starts if you are having difficulties with the technology.</p>	

<p>Designate a place or system to put all the stray bits of information you “want to remember” for later. This can be instructions for turning a document into a PDF, the steps you take to turn in a paper, how to access the LHTI department, how to create a google doc to share with your study group, where to find certain</p>	
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	<p>information, etc. Over time, you will remember this stuff, but there is too much at first to expect to remember it all. So, designate one place for all such notes.</p>	
	<p>To keep papers organized, consider using 3-ring binders. Check out the Tips section, handout #12, Organizing Notebook for a method of organizing weekly and cumulative materials throughout the semester.</p> <p>Tip: You do not want to carry all your semester notes with you for fear of losing them. Using the notebook system allows you to keep one week’s worth of materials with you, and the rest stay home.</p>	
	<p>Create a designated study space. Be sure to furnish it with comfortable furniture and office supplies.</p> <p>Tip: Have extra paper and ink on hand for the printer.</p> <p>Tip: stock up on note-taking paper, pens, highlighters, notebooks.</p> <p>Tip: Furnish the office with a stapler and staples, a 3-ring hole punch, tape, sticky tabs, scissors, bulletin board with pins, and any other supplies you think you will need.</p> <p>Tip: Invest in a desktop or wall size dry erase board to use for keeping track of things, making concept maps, planning out projects, etc. Include the markers and an eraser.</p> <p>Tip: Make sure you have good lighting, preferably using natural lighting bulbs.</p> <p>Tip: Would you benefit from having a room diffuser to diffuse natural essential oils to support learning or relaxation? Check out professional grade essential oils and diffusers to purchase for your office. (Do not use if allergic or sensitive to these oils.)</p>	

	<p>Consider how you will transport your materials back and forth to school and clinical sites. Would a rolling backpack work better than a backpack? What are the features you want in a backpack? Size? Color?</p> <p>Tip: Pack a few essentials such as an extra pen, snack, personal hygiene items, mask, hand sanitizer, gloves, etc.</p> <p>Tip: Are there some essentials you can leave packed in a tote in your car trunk, such as a box of gloves, extra face masks, Kleenex, empty garbage bag, Clorox wipes, light jacket, etc.</p> <p>Tip: Be sure to pack a garbage bag in your car to place your clinical shoes in after clinical. Bring a comfortable pair of shoes to change into so you do not contaminate your car and home with germs and bacteria picked up from the hospital.</p>	
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NOTE-TAKING

Check box	Check List Item	Action plan: list what needs to be done to complete this item
	<p>Consider what kind of notes you will be taking; handwritten or electronic. Make sure you have the supplies needed (note-taking app, paper, pens, etc.)</p>	
	<p>Watch these videos to get a refresher on notetaking: 5 notetaking methods Concept maps for nursing Cornell & Sketchnoting How to take Cornell Notes</p>	
	<p>Prepare your notetaking system: computer folders, 3-ring binders, tablet, spiral notebooks, etc.</p>	

STUDY STRATEGIES

Check box	Check List Item	Action plan: list what needs to be done to complete this item
	<p>BSN Students report spending approximately 4-6 hours a day dedicated to their studies. This will vary depending on several factors, such as if you have a clinical scheduled for the day, thus shifting homework hours to other days.</p> <p>It also depends on time management, competing obligations such as work, implementing effective study strategies, getting adequate rest, taking breaks, and the strategic use of a study group.</p> <p>Tip: First, take inventory to address as many of the above-mentioned items as you can before school begins and establish good habits from the very first week.</p> <p>Tip: If you must work, and the schedule is interfering with school, make an appointment with OSAA and/or the financial aid office to explore scholarships, grants, and loans to lessen the financial strain resulting in reduce work hours.</p> <p>Tip: Include 30-hours for study in your initial 24/7 planner. You can adjust from there once the semester begins. Remember study time is not classroom time. Study time is all the work you do outside of school like reading the textbook, watching video lectures, writing a paper, making medication cards, meeting with your study group, writing out the weekly objectives, creating concept maps to review material, practice taking NCLEX questions, etc.</p>	
	<p>Learning scientists tell us there are six effect study strategies. Review this site to learn what they are: Six Strategies for Effective Learning</p>	
	<p>Two strategies that will help with retention is to reread your notes soon after you finish taking them (within the hour). Then the next day, quiz through your notes. Put a check mark in the left margin of your paper by the items you answered</p>	

	<p>correctly. Use an empty “O” to designate the items you missed. This will show you what you know and what you don’t know, giving you an opportunity to address your knowledge gap.</p> <p>Tip: Make sure to schedule an hour in your planner, the day after reading and lectures (note taking activities,) to self-quiz and fill your knowledge gaps.</p>	
	<p>The textbook is required reading. While you may be tempted to skip it when pressured for time, don’t. Learn to work smarter. The textbook is the foundation of your in-depth nursing knowledge, while PPT slides are just an overview. Reading the textbook helps you build your foundation and your ability to critically think, so put in the time. Remember, test questions come from the textbook, lecture, and other course materials. So, plan to read the textbook as many test questions will come directly from this source.</p> <p>Tip: Use your planner to make time.</p> <p>Tip: Check out the online supplementary material the textbook publisher offers. Look at this before school begins, so you know what is there for future reference.</p> <p>Tip: Share reading notes with study group members, so if you couldn’t get everything read, you can at least read a short version of the chapter as presented through their notes. Then once a week quiz through the reading notes with the study group.</p> <p>Tip: Prepare to read the chapter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First read your objectives. • Then quickly read through the PPT slides and turn them into questions (see entry below for instructions). • Skim the textbook chapter, reading the headings, pictures and captions, summary, and questions just to get an introduction to the material (5 mins) • Now begin reading the first 2 sentences in the first paragraph. Decide if the information in that paragraph going to be important or can you skim it? It 	

	<p>is important if it answers your objectives or gives you more details about the information on the PPT slides. Does it help you understand the concept being presented? If so, take Cornell notes, so your notes will be quizzable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the information is not that important or you already know it, skim. • Therefore, it is important to prepare to read, so you can read with intention, looking for data that fills in the gaps and increases your understanding. 	
	<p>Turn PPT slides into a quizzable (Cornell-style) format by turning each slide into a question. (Remember, self-quizzing is the best way to study.)</p> <p>Tip: If you print 3 slides to a page in handout format, then simply write the question(s) above the slide. Use this link to see an example, scroll down to tip #21.</p> <p>Tip: If you are not printing your PPT slides, use a piece of paper to list each slide number and the question(s) you generated. You can then use the question handout to quiz yourself before looking at each slide.</p>	
	<p>Always prepare before coming to lecture (live or virtual) by going over the objectives first, turning the PPT slides into questions, then reading the textbook or other required readings. The lecture should be the final “bringing home” the material.</p> <p>Tip: You don’t have to take as many notes since you have already taken detailed notes from the textbook. If the PPT slide has the information, you can skip rewriting it. You can focus more on listening while taking the occasional extra note.</p>	
	<p>Watching videos can be a great way to deepen your understanding of the material. There are several resources to access nursing videos but be aware that some require subscriptions, and you may have to scroll through some ads. Check out a few now to see what they offer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RegisteredNurseRN.com • SimpleNursing.com • Nursing.com 	


	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Picmonic - Nursing • 7 Nursing You Tube Channel recommendations 	
	<p>Take advantage of reading ahead if given a reading plan before the semester begins.</p>	
	<p>Active engagement with the material is important. Consider several different ways to learn (visual, auditory, and kinesthetic).</p> <p>Tip: Read the text, then try listening to it being read. Which do you retain better?</p> <p>Tip: Draw concept maps using colors and pictures to supplement the map.</p> <p>Tip: Teach back concepts to your study group. Can you explain it in your own words?</p>	
	<p>Take breaks while studying!!!! It is very important that you schedule a break for every hour you study. You can have shorter study periods, but just make sure you study no longer than one hour before taking a 10-minute break. If you study up to 2 hours without a break, you drop down to 30% retention! So, take a break.</p> <p>Tip: Pomodoro method for a 2-hour block:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • study 25 minutes, take a 5-minute break • study 25 minutes, take a 5-minute break • study 25 minutes, take a 5-minute break • study 25 minutes, take a 15-minute break <p>Tip: Study for 45-60 minutes, then take a 10-minute break.</p> <p>Tip: If you have a short attention span or have children you need to check in with more frequently, consider studying for 20 minutes, then take a 10-minute break.</p>	

STUDY GROUPS (Looking ahead to the first week of school)

Check box	Check List Item	Action plan: list what needs to be done to complete this item
	<p>During the first week of school, seek out 3 other students who would like to form a study group. Exchange contact information and set up a time to meet not later than the first weekend.</p> <p>Tip: You may meet other students in your lab group or in lecture.</p> <p>Tip: You can ask the professor to help assist in creating study groups by hosting a sign-up sheet in the discussion board area.</p> <p>Tip: You can post in the student discussion board area that you are looking to form a study group, first three to respond, and give your contact information.</p>	
	<p>Decide how the study group can work together, and what day and time to meet each week. Use this time to quiz over the material, create concept maps, explain concepts, ask questions, quiz through the objectives, PPT slides, and textbook notes.</p> <p>Tip: Members can divide up the weekly objectives to complete them, Google doc the materials together, and create a robust weekly objective study guide.</p> <p>Tip: Plan to do all the course readings yourself but consider dividing up the textbook chapters to share your notes. See what you missed, and backup if you are behind.</p> <p>Tip: Once a week plan to meet to quiz through the weekly materials: PPT slides, lecture notes, textbook notes, and objectives.</p>	

	<p>Tip: Schedule the Academic Success Coach to meet with your study group within the first 2 weeks to help members explore the many ways they can set up and maintain a successful study group. Make an Appointment</p>	
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Disability Accommodations (Disability Resource Center DRC) & Mental Health Resources

Check box	Check List Item	Action plan: list what needs to be done to complete this item
	<p>If you had disability / learning accommodations previously before attending the University of Arizona, and want to explore if accommodations may be appropriate for you now, make an appointment with the DRC: Connect with DRC</p>	
	<p>If you have previously had accommodations at the University of Arizona, and would like to continue to use them, access your DRC student portal to activate the accommodations you want to apply to each course.</p>	
	<p>Check out the DRC website for assistive technology to support various ways of learning: Assistive technology</p>	
	<p>D2L provides alternative formats for engaging  in the material. Explore them using this icon:</p>	
	<p>Nursing school can be very stressful. So give consideration ahead of time what you need in place to support good mental health.</p> <p>Tip: Continue with counseling if you have been engaged in this service.</p> <p>Tip: Continue to work with your health/mental providers and prescribers to make sure you are receiving the best care possible.</p>	

Tip: The UArizona Campus Health, Counseling and Psych Services (CAPS), and the College of Nursing, offers many options for support and self-help. Check out the website now to see what is available:

- [CAPS Home Page](#)
- [CAPS Self-Help](#)
- [CAPS APPS](#)
- [Campus Health](#)
- [CON Student Support](#)
- [CON Mental Health & Crisis Resources](#)

Tip: Good health is dependent on good nutrition, exercise, 8 hours of sleep, and regular use of stress management techniques. Be sure to plan these activities in your planner and calendar.

(Last edited 9/6/22)