FREE NCLEX STUDY PLAN

Your NCLEX Study Plan: 4, 8 or 12 Weeks

Pick the plan that fits your life, print it and tick the boxes. Every week runs the same loop, so you always know what to do next, even on a tired day.

1. Pick your plan

PLAN	BEST IF	SUGGESTED PACE
4 weeks	You just graduated and can study most days.	5 to 6 days a week
8 weeks	You work part time or want room to review.	4 to 5 days a week
12 weeks	You work full time, are retesting, or have been out of school a while.	3 to 4 days a week

2. Run the same loop every week

- [ ] Take a mixed practice set (all Client Needs areas).
- [ ] Read every rationale, including on the questions you got right.
- [ ] Tag each question: Knew it, Lucky, Gap or Misread.
- [ ] Find your two weakest Client Needs areas and study them.
- [ ] Retest those two areas with new questions at the end of the week.

3. Rules that keep a plan working

- [ ] Study by Client Needs area, not by textbook chapter.
- [ ] Track the shape of your misses, not just the count.
- [ ] Use practice scores to find weak areas. They don't predict your NCLEX result.
- [ ] If you fall behind, drop a review day, not the weekly retest.

4. Free tools that go with this plan

TOOL	WHERE
10 free practice questions with rationales	rnpocketpal.com/free-nclex-practice-questions
NCLEX study guides (scoring, NGN, test day)	rnpocketpal.com/guides
RN PocketPal app for iPhone and Android	rnpocketpal.com/get-app

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KNOW THE EXAM

The 2026 NCLEX Test Plan at a Glance

NCSBN sets a share of questions for each Client Needs area. Use these ranges to decide where your study time goes. RN and PN plans differ, so use the column for your exam.

CLIENT NEEDS AREA	NCLEX-RN	NCLEX-PN
Management of Care (RN) / Coordinated Care (PN)	15–21%	18–24%
Safety and Infection Prevention and Control	10–16%	10–16%
Health Promotion and Maintenance	6–12%	6–12%
Psychosocial Integrity	6–12%	9–15%
Basic Care and Comfort	6–12%	7–13%
Pharmacological Therapies*	13–19%	10–16%
Reduction of Risk Potential	9–15%	9–15%
Physiological Adaptation	11–17%	7–13%

**RN: Pharmacological and Parenteral Therapies. A single exam can differ by up to 3% in each area. Source: NCSBN 2026 NCLEX-RN and NCLEX-PN Test Plans (effective April 2026), ncsbn.org.*

How the real exam works

FACT	WHAT NCSBN SAYS
Length	85 to 150 questions, in up to 5 hours including breaks.
Minimum-length exam	52 content-area items, 3 case studies (18 items) and 15 unscored pretest items.
Case studies	Six items about one client, one for each clinical judgment step.
Adaptive testing	Each question is chosen from your answers so far. The exam stops once it can make a pass or fail decision.
Exam length	Not a sign of a pass or fail. You can pass or fail at any length.
Partial credit	Items with more than one key can earn partial credit (plus/minus, zero/one or rationale scoring).
One at a time	Once you move to the next question, you can't go back.

Practice sets, including RN PocketPal's, are fixed sets of questions, not adaptive exams. Source: NCSBN 2026 NCLEX-RN and NCLEX-PN Test Plans (effective April 2026), ncsbn.org.

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4-WEEK PLAN

4 Weeks: Fast and Focused

For recent graduates who can study most days. Every Client Needs area in three weeks, then a week of mixed timed practice.

WEEK	WHAT TO STUDY	DONE
Week 1	Baseline mixed set. Then Management of Care (PN: Coordinated Care) and Safety and Infection Prevention and Control.	☐
Week 2	Pharmacological therapies and Reduction of Risk Potential.	☐
Week 3	Physiological Adaptation, Basic Care and Comfort, Psychosocial Integrity, Health Promotion and Maintenance.	☐
Week 4	Mixed timed sets and one long timed session. Retest weak areas. Light review the last two days; rest the day before.	☐

Every week: one mixed set, rationale review, then study and retest your two weakest areas. PN candidates: read Management of Care as Coordinated Care and Pharmacological and Parenteral Therapies as Pharmacological Therapies.

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8-WEEK PLAN

8 Weeks: Steady, With Room to Review

For part-time workers or anyone who wants a buffer. One or two areas a week, then two weeks of mixed practice and retests.

WEEK	WHAT TO STUDY	DONE
Week 1	Baseline mixed set. Learn the item formats. Set your weekly schedule.	☐
Week 2	Management of Care (PN: Coordinated Care).	☐
Week 3	Safety and Infection Prevention and Control.	☐
Week 4	Pharmacological therapies.	☐
Week 5	Reduction of Risk Potential and Physiological Adaptation.	☐
Week 6	Basic Care and Comfort, Psychosocial Integrity, Health Promotion and Maintenance.	☐
Week 7	Mixed timed sets, case studies and one long timed session.	☐
Week 8	Retest weak areas. Light review and test-day prep. Rest the day before.	☐

Every week: one mixed set, rationale review, then study and retest your two weakest areas. PN candidates: read Management of Care as Coordinated Care and Pharmacological and Parenteral Therapies as Pharmacological Therapies.

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12-WEEK PLAN

12 Weeks: Slow and Thorough

For full-time workers, repeat test takers, or anyone who has been out of school a while. One area at a time, with pharmacology split over two weeks.

WEEK	WHAT TO STUDY	DONE
Week 1	Baseline mixed set. Learn the item formats. Set your weekly schedule.	☐
Week 2	Management of Care (PN: Coordinated Care).	☐
Week 3	Safety and Infection Prevention and Control.	☐
Week 4	Pharmacological therapies, part 1.	☐
Week 5	Pharmacological therapies, part 2.	☐
Week 6	Reduction of Risk Potential.	☐
Week 7	Physiological Adaptation.	☐
Week 8	Basic Care and Comfort, Health Promotion and Maintenance.	☐
Week 9	Psychosocial Integrity, plus a mixed set.	☐
Week 10	Mixed timed sets and case studies.	☐
Week 11	One long timed session. Retest weak areas.	☐
Week 12	Light review and test-day prep. Rest the day before.	☐

Every week: one mixed set, rationale review, then study and retest your two weakest areas. PN candidates: read Management of Care as Coordinated Care and Pharmacological and Parenteral Therapies as Pharmacological Therapies.

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TRACK IT

Your Tracker and Test-Week Checklist

Weekly tracker

WEEK	QUESTIONS DONE	TWO WEAKEST AREAS	RETESTED?

Miss log

DATE	AREA	WHAT IT REALLY ASKED	THE RULE I MISSED	RETEST ON

Test-week checklist

- [ ] ID is government-issued, not expired and physical (not digital).
- [ ] First and last name match your registration exactly.
- [ ] ID has a photo and signature (or bring a second ID with your signature).
- [ ] Plan to arrive 30 minutes early. More than 30 minutes late can cost you the appointment.
- [ ] Phone and devices go in a sealed Pearson bag in a locker.
- [ ] Leave notes and study books at home.
- [ ] No hats, scarves or coats in the room. Earplugs come from the test administrator.
- [ ] Up to 5 hours, breaks included. Optional breaks after 2 and 3.5 hours.

Official results come from your board of nursing, within six weeks. Source: 2026 NCLEX Examination Candidate Bulletin (NCSBN / Pearson VUE), ncsbn.org.

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