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# Preparing to Write the NCLEX: A Student Guide



## Mandate

*Regulation for safe, competent, and ethical nursing care.*

Under the Nurses Act, the Nurses Association of New Brunswick (NANB) is legally responsible to protect the public by regulating members of the nursing profession in New Brunswick. Regulation makes this profession, and nurses as individuals, accountable to the public for the delivery of safe, competent and ethical nursing care.

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## Acknowledgement

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# Preparing to Write the NCLEX

## NCLEX Registration Examination

In order to become a registered nurse (RN) in New Brunswick, you must pass the entry-to-practice registration examination called the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX). The NCLEX is developed by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) in collaboration with Canadian RN regulatory bodies. The NCLEX uses computer adaptive testing (CAT) to test your knowledge of the entry-level competencies that are needed to provide safe nursing care at the beginning of your career.

The purpose of this guide is to identify some key resources to assist candidates to get ready to write the NCLEX.

### Key Resources

- NCLEX Examination Candidate Bulletin
- NCLEX Detailed Test Plan - Candidate Version
- CAT Video
- Pearson VUE – NCLEX Online Tutorial and Palm Vein FAQ
- The Registered Nurse Professional Development Centre (RN-PDC) Exam Preparation Support
- Nursing Education Course Outcome Notes

### NCLEX Examination Candidate Bulletin

The [NCLEX Examination Candidate Bulletin](#) provides all the information you require to take the exam including how to register and schedule your exam and the test site rules and regulations. It also provides information on NCLEX content, test development and test plans, as well as information on NCLEX psychometrics, including computer adaptive testing, pass or fail decision rules, the passing standard, and the effect of guessing on the exam.

The Test Plans provide information regarding the NCLEX exam including structure, content areas, sample NCLEX test items and can assist in guiding candidates in preparation for the NCLEX exam.

## CAT Video

Computer Adaptive Testing (CAT) is a method for administering exams that merges computer technology with modern measurement theory to increase the efficiency of the exam process.

The [Computer Adaptive Testing \(CAT\) Video](#) explains how and why CAT is used for the NCLEX.

## Pearson VUE

Pearson VUE administers the NCLEX at a temporary test site in Fredericton three times a year (February, June/July and October) and at permanent test sites in other provinces and states throughout the year.

Visit [www.nclex.com/prepare.page](http://www.nclex.com/prepare.page) to complete the NCLEX Online Tutorial and read the [Palm Vein FAQ for NCLEX Candidates](#) before the day of the exam.

## Registered Nurse Professional Development Centre (RN-PDC) Exam Preparation Support

The RN-PDC, located in Halifax, Nova Scotia, offers an on-line exam writing preparation workshop and other NCLEX support. For information on how to access their resources contact: [rnpdc@nshealth.ca](mailto:rnpdc@nshealth.ca).

## Nursing Education Course Outcome Notes

Review and study your nursing education program course notes and other materials that you used to prepare for exams throughout your nursing program. These resources should provide a thorough review of the foundational knowledge that you need to be successful on the NCLEX.

## Commercial NCLEX Prep Materials

NANB does not endorse any commercial preparatory courses or materials. Although there are many commercial products available the quality and accuracy of commercial materials cannot be verified by NANB and may not accurately reflect exam content.

## Notification of Exam Results

You will receive your exam results by e-mail the following business day. You will receive your results which will indicate a “pass” or “fail”. Should you have failed the exam, you will receive a Candidate Performance Report with your result. This report will provide you with information on whether you performed above, near or below the passing standard on each area of the exam and can be used to assist you when developing a study plan prior to rewriting the exam.

## Number of Exam Rewrites

A New Brunswick graduate or an international applicant who has received approval from NANB to write the NCLEX, may write the NCLEX an unlimited number of times within a three-year period but must wait a minimum of 45 days between writings. You must apply to NANB each time in order to be granted eligibility to rewrite the exam.

## Preparing to Rewrite the Exam

Before you begin preparing to rewrite the NCLEX, you should take the time to consider what factors may have contributed to failing the NCLEX. Identifying these factors can help you to develop a focused study plan.

Consider whether any of the following factors may have played a role in your performance on the NCLEX:

### Exam Format

The NCLEX consists of multiple-choice and alternate format questions presented through a Computer Adaptive Testing (CAT) model. Answers are either correct or incorrect, there are no marks for partially correct answers. To become more familiar with this type of testing:

- Review the NCSBN [Computer Adaptive Testing \(CAT\) Video](#)
- Review the NCLEX Psychometrics section in the [NCLEX Candidate Bulletin](#)
- Review the NCLEX Detailed Test Plan-Candidate Version

### Exam Content

Understanding how the exam content is organized and broken down into categories is essential in developing a study plan to prepare to write or rewrite and the exam:

- Review the *Content, Test Development and Test Plan* sections in the [NCLEX Examination Candidate Bulletin](#)  
Review the [Candidate and Educator Test Plans and Detailed Test Plans](#)

## **Exam Stress**

Fatigue and undue stress can affect your performance on the exam. Major life events can also impact your ability to deal with the stress of writing the NCLEX and you should take this into consideration before scheduling your exam. Therefore, planning in advance for the examination, scheduling your study time effectively, utilizing stress management methods that were effective during your nursing education program and resting, can help reduce your level of stress.

## **Readiness to Rewrite the NCLEX**

A positive attitude can be a strong ally. Have confidence in yourself. Use the experience you have gained from your previous attempt to pass the examination. An advantage you have is that you are now familiar with the exam format, how it is administered and what happens on the day of the exam.

## Exam Preparation Checklist

Use this checklist to help develop your own exam preparation plan. As you develop your plan, ask yourself the following:

### **Do I understand what Computer Adaptive Testing is and how it works?**

- Review the NCSBN [Computer Adaptive Testing \(CAT\) Video](#)
- Review the NCLEX Psychometrics section in the [NCLEX Examination Candidate Bulletin](#)

### **Do I understand what content will be tested in the NCLEX?**

- Review the NCLEX Content section in the [NCLEX Examination Candidate Bulletin](#)
- Review the [Candidate and Educator Test Plans and Detailed Test Plans](#)

### **Do I understand which nursing content areas I need to focus on?**

- Use the Candidate's Performance Report to identify any areas for improvement
- Review the [Candidate and Educator Test Plans and Detailed Test Plans](#)

### **Do I need to better manage my stress level?**

- Develop a study plan that balances work, social life and exam preparation
- If available contact Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) for stress management resources
- Reach out to colleagues, nurse manager and/or union representative for support and guidance on how to manage work commitments while preparing for the NCLEX

### **Do I need to use other exam preparation resources?**

- Contact RN-PDC or your employer for information on the exam preparation resources they recommend
- Review the exam preparation resources used by your school of nursing

### **Do I have a plan for the day of the exam?**

- Plan for meals, clothing to wear, information to bring and travel to the exam test site
- Plan relaxation techniques that can be used while taking the exam to keep calm and focused



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