

The New Nurse Survival Guide

Your first year on the floor, made survivable

Nursing school teaches you to pass the NCLEX; the first year teaches you to be a nurse. This guide is the practical, morale-saving advice new grads wish they'd had.

Survive your shifts

- Build a 'brain sheet' report system; cluster care to save steps.
- Time-management beats speed — prioritize by acuity (ABCs: airway, breathing, circulation).
- Never be afraid to ask or escalate. 'I don't know, let me find out' is a safe answer.

Protect your body and mind

- Shoes and compression socks are not optional — your feet/back will thank you.
- Hydrate and actually take your break when you can; burnout is the real risk.
- Debrief hard shifts with peers; you will see heavy things — process them.

Grow your career

- Find a mentor and a unit that supports new grads.
- Keep certifications current; specialize once you find your fit (ICU, ER, peds, etc.).
- Document factually and contemporaneously — it protects you and the patient.

Insider glossary

Brain sheet — A nurse's personal shift-organization worksheet.

Acuity — How sick/unstable a patient is; drives prioritization.

Report/Handoff — Passing patient info between shifts (e.g., SBAR).

Charting — Documenting care in the record.

Starter checklist

- Comfortable shoes + compression socks
- A brain-sheet template
- A mentor
- Snacks/water for shifts
- Self-care plan

For the heroes in scrubs — nurse-life merch in the L5D0 vault