

The New Nurse Survival Kit

A printable & fillable guide for surviving — and thriving — in your first year of nursing

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1. Shift Prep Checklist: Every Day Is a New Day

- Pack your stethoscope, pens, report sheet, snacks, and a water bottle
- Review patient assignments if available ahead of time
- Center yourself: deep breath, intention-setting
- Ask: "What kind of nurse do I want to be today?"

2. The 5-Second Confidence Boost

"I am capable. I am present. I can handle what comes next."

→ Try box breathing: Inhale 4, Hold 4, Exhale 4, Hold 4. Repeat twice.

3. Top 10 Survival Tips

- Ask questions early and often
- Document as if your license depends on it (because it does)
- Don't skip breaks — even 5 minutes matter
- Always verify meds, even if someone else checked
- Seek mentorship — and be a good mentee
- Leave work at work (mental boundaries protect you)
- Stay kind, but firm with unsafe or rude behavior
- Practice speaking up clearly and respectfully
- Self-reflect after tough shifts (don't numb it away)
- Celebrate small wins — they keep you going

4. Speak Up Script Bank — What to Say When It's Hard to Speak

Speaking up doesn't have to be confrontational — it can be clear, respectful, and safe. Use these ready-to-go phrases in tough moments:

When you don't understand an order:

- "Can you clarify that for me before I carry it out?"
- "I want to make sure I'm doing this correctly — can we go over it one more time?"

When a medication doesn't look right:

- "This doesn't match what's listed in the MAR. Can we double-check together?"
- "The patient said they don't recognize this medication. It could be new or changed — I'd like to pause and verify the reason before administering it."

 Pro Tip: Always check for recent medication changes or reconciliations. Verifying takes seconds — correcting an error takes much longer.

When something feels unsafe:

- "I'm not comfortable proceeding without another set of eyes."
- "This doesn't feel right — I want to pause and make sure we're aligned."

 Remember: Most facilities have protocols, support systems, and supervisors to escalate when safety is in question. You're not alone.

Use the CUS tool (from TeamSTEPPS) when escalating concerns:

- C – I'm Concerned
- U – I'm Uncomfortable
- S – This is a Safety issue

Example: "I'm concerned about this order. I'm uncomfortable giving it without clarification. I believe this is a safety issue."

When you need mentorship or help:

- "Can you walk me through this once so I can learn the right way?"
- "I'm still new — I'd love your insight before I try this on my own."

5. Documentation Do's and Don'ts

 Do:

- - Chart facts: vitals, times, actions taken

- - Use patient quotes: "Patient stated, 'I feel dizzy'"
- - Note all provider notifications and responses

⊘ Don't:

- - Use vague language like "patient seems okay"
- - Delay documentation — real-time is best

6. Reflection Pages

Today's Date: _____

What went well today?

What challenged me today?

What did I learn?

How am I feeling right now?

What will I carry forward into my next shift?

7. Self-Care Menu

15 Minutes:

- Step outside for air
- Listen to a favorite song
- Quick journaling

30 Minutes:

- Take a walk
- Call a friend
- Watch a comfort show

1 Hour:

- Attend therapy
- Meal prep for the week
- Take a nap guilt-free

8. Mentorship Tracker

Mentor Name: _____

Unit or Specialty: _____

Most helpful advice they gave me:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

9. Emergency Encouragement Cards

 You are the calm in the chaos.

 One shift at a time. You've got this.

 Your presence matters more than you know.

 You were made for this.

 Even on hard days — you are helping someone heal.

Before your shift, take a moment to reset — yesterday is done. Today, you start fresh.

 “Be brave. You are going to do your best and help someone today.”

Mental & Emotional Prep

 “Every day is a new day.” Let go of yesterday. Begin again.

Set an intention: calm, alert, compassionate, steady

Remind yourself: You don't have to be perfect — just present.

What to Bring

☒ Stethoscope, pens, report sheet, badge, water bottle, snacks (add a healthy snack you enjoy)

☒ Compression socks, extra scrubs, gum or mints

Quick Grounding Ritual

Inhale slowly (4 counts)

Hold (4 counts)

Exhale slowly (4 counts)

Hold (4 counts)

Repeat twice. Ground yourself with: “Be brave. You are going to do your best and help someone today.”