

**Title Tag:** 4-Step Guide to Becoming a Nurse Online

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## 4-Step Guide to Becoming a Nurse Online

Advancements in communication and education technology mean there are more ways to attend school and earn a degree. More disciplines are embracing distance learning, and even practice-oriented fields, such as nursing, may have options to obtain certain certifications online.

That's right: becoming a nurse online may now be possible. Like other paths to registered nursing certification, it still takes time and may still require you to attend some in-person sessions. If nursing is your dream profession and studying on your own time is your preference, it may be an option. But [can you become an RN without a BSN?](#)

From passing your General Education Development (GED) test to obtaining your master's of science in nursing, this guide will outline the steps to becoming a nurse.

### #1 Finish High School or Pass Your GED

Generally, becoming a registered nurse requires students to obtain postsecondary degrees. But, before you can begin at an accredited college, you'll likely need to finish high school.

If you're already at the postsecondary stage of life but don't have your high school diploma, earning your GED online can be quick and is solid preparation for the studying you'll do to earn your nursing degree.

The exams now have a digital option to make things easier for prospective students. So, along with other aspects of your nursing education, you can now complete your GEDs online.

The tests are available in both English and Spanish and cover four different areas of study, including:<sup>1</sup>

- Mathematical Reasoning
- Reasoning Through Language Arts
- Science
- Social Studies

Age restrictions, pricing, and testing requirements vary by state, so check the specific rules for your area. Then, after passing the tests and obtaining your diploma, the next step is to start searching for a nursing program.

## #2 The Nursing Career Pathways After Earning Your GED

### Get An Associate's Degree in Nursing (ADN)

Obtaining your GED is the launching pad for your career in nursing; where you choose to further your nursing education is up to you.

One of the routes for aspiring nurses to take is through an ADN program. ADN programs can teach the basics of the field and allow students to sit for their National Council Licensure Examination – Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN) exams upon graduation. More about these essential tests will be covered [later in this guide](#).

Many ADN programs can take around two years to complete. Whether you decide to attend a vocational school or take courses online, a lot of ADNs may follow similar structures that can include:<sup>2</sup>

- Finishing assigned course prerequisites, such as readings and video modules, covering the essentials of nursing theory and practice
- Attending live lectures, whether virtually or in-person, expanding on theoretical nursing topics
- Completing in-person clinical sessions where students practice real-world patient care skills under the supervision of professors or trained observers

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<sup>1</sup> "GED Test Subjects - See What's on the Test: GED." GED. GED, September 30, 2021. [https://ged.com/about\\_test/test\\_subjects/](https://ged.com/about_test/test_subjects/).

<sup>2</sup> "Online Nursing Degree Programs: What Options Are Available?" Online Nursing Degree Programs: What Options Are Available? RegisteredNursing.org, October 10, 2022. <https://www.registerednursing.org/online-nursing-programs/#online-adn-degree>.

However, even if you enroll in an online ADN program, you'll likely still need to attend live, in-person clinical hours to obtain your degree. These sessions practice the essential skills nurses need to utilize on the job and, generally, ADNs aren't administered without them.

So if you decide to pursue an ADN, picking one that will allow you to do your clinical placement at a nearby location (or planning to relocate) should be on your mind.

The potential coordination issues with clinical hours may be why some aspiring nurses opt to do their ADNs in person rather than an online program—or forego them all together in favor of a BSN.

### Get A Bachelor's of Science in Nursing (BSN)

Rather than pursuing an ADN, many nurses may instead choose a BSN. BSNs can take similar amounts of time to complete as ADNs, and many people's personal and professional goals involve acquiring a bachelor's degree.

In addition, having a bachelor's of science (BS) may make switching careers or obtaining further education easier in the future.

For these reasons, many individuals working toward a nursing career may opt for a BSN rather than an ADN. On the surface, there may be some notable similarities between the two, including:<sup>3</sup>

- A focus on the field of nursing, including relevant practical and theoretical knowledge to succeed as a nurse
- A structure based on independent study, attending live lectures, and obtaining practical knowledge
- Allowing graduates to sit for the NCLEX-RN upon graduation, assuming they have met their state's requirement for practice hours

While ADNs may be defined by their compulsory in-person clinical hours, BSNs don't always follow the same formula. BSN structures can differ from ADNs due to their potential:<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> "Online Nursing Degree Programs: What Options Are Available?" Online Nursing Degree Programs: What Options Are Available? RegisteredNursing.org, October 10, 2022.

<https://www.registerednursing.org/online-nursing-programs/#online-adn-degree>.

<sup>4</sup> "Online Nursing Degree Programs: What Options Are Available?" Online Nursing Degree Programs: What Options Are Available? RegisteredNursing.org, October 10, 2022.

<https://www.registerednursing.org/online-nursing-programs/#online-adn-degree>.

- Ability to be completed entirely online without any in-person clinical hours if you're already a registered nurse
- Prolonged virtual structure, with many online BSN programs having a competitive waiting list and taking four years to complete

Discover our recently launched [BSN nursing program online](#) that welcomes new students to our Arizona campus. Non-clinical courses are offered online, and you may finish the program in two years if you've met your general education requirements. Learn more about [traditional vs. accelerated nursing programs](#) to determine which is right for you.

Furthermore, state nursing boards may have formal requirements for completed clinical hours before you can apply to sit for the NCLEX-RN exam.<sup>5</sup> Approval is necessary to sit for the test, so completing a clinical placement can be imperative.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, when seeking out a BSN program in preparation for becoming a Registered Nurse (RN), look for one that provides hands-on, real-world training that meets your state's clinical hours requirements. Then, you'll likely be able to write your NCLEX-RN quickly upon graduation and begin working as a nurse sooner.<sup>7</sup>

### #3 Obtain Your Master's of Science in Nursing (MSN)

If you already have an ADN or BSN, this step may be optional—though it could help you achieve your personal or occupational goals quickly. Getting an [MSN degree](#) can also open up the world of nursing to individuals who didn't study it during their undergraduate.

For people with a BS in another discipline, an MSN can be a quicker entry point into the nursing field than obtaining another degree. Like BSNs, MSNs can be completed online, but doing so may present some significant drawbacks, including:

- Less opportunity to meet fellow students and craft valuable relationships to take into your career
- A lack of hands-on practice potentially means a less robust understanding of nursing's practical skills

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<sup>5</sup> "Renew Your License | Arizona State Board of Nursing - AZBN." Arizona State Board of Nursing. Arizona State Board of Nursing. Accessed March 20, 2023. <https://www.azbn.gov/licenses-certifications/renew-your-license>.

<sup>6</sup> "The Pathway to Practice - Nclex.com." NCLEX. NCSBN. Accessed March 20, 2023. [https://nclex.com/files/23\\_NCLEXAhpra\\_factsheet-Final.pdf](https://nclex.com/files/23_NCLEXAhpra_factsheet-Final.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> "Bachelor of Science in Nursing." Alliant Intl University. Alliant Intl University. Accessed March 19, 2023. <https://www.alliant.edu/health/nursing/bsn>.

While online MSN and BSN programs may not have in-person class hours, their potential inability to satisfy the prerequisites of the NCLEX can seriously detract from their convenience. Such online programs can be popular with practicing RNs who already possess licenses and want to better their chances of advancing their careers.<sup>8</sup>

#### #4 Take The NCLEX-RN

The NCLEX-RN exam is administered by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) to ensure consistency in knowledge and practice amongst nurses across America. It's also the final task between an aspiring nurse and their RN license.<sup>9</sup>

If you haven't sat an in-person exam up to this point, you're about to. That's because there are no provisions to take NCLEX tests online, and all exams are administered exclusively at the NCSBN's trusted testing locations, run by their partner Pearson.<sup>10</sup>

The NCLEX-RN can cover a broad range of nursing knowledge that students may learn during their ADNs, BSNs, or MSNs, and can test students on their:<sup>11</sup>

- Ability to apply learned theoretical knowledge in actual healthcare scenarios, such as by recognizing medical cues in patients and administering the proper treatment
- Fundamentals of patient care principles, such as how to show respect for patients and respond empathetically to their conditions
- Clinical judgment, often by being presented with difficult medical scenarios and being asked to plot the best plan of action

This is a small selection of what the NCLEX-RN exam may have in store. The test can be rather difficult and five hours are needed to complete it. You'll want to make sure you enroll in an educational program that will adequately prepare you.<sup>12</sup>

When deciding what school to attend in preparation for the big day, it may be wise to pick an accredited institution with a venerable track record to help prepare you for the NCLEX-RN's content.

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<sup>8</sup> "Online Nursing Degree Programs: What Options Are Available?" Online Nursing Degree Programs: What Options Are Available? RegisteredNursing.org, October 10, 2022.

<https://www.registerednursing.org/online-nursing-programs/#online-adn-degree>.

<sup>9</sup> "What the Exam Looks Like." NCSBN. NCSBN. Accessed March 19, 2023.

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<sup>10</sup> "Exam Day." NCLEX. NCSBN. Accessed March 20, 2023. <https://www.nclex.com/exam-day.page>.

<sup>11</sup> "NCLEX-RN Test Plan." NCLEX. NCSBN. Accessed March 20, 2023.

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<sup>12</sup> "Exam Day." NCLEX. NCSBN. Accessed March 20, 2023. <https://www.nclex.com/exam-day.page>.

## Prepare for the NCLEX-RN Exam with Alliant International University

If you're looking for a reputable institution with a hybrid approach to earning your nursing degree, choose Alliant International University. We offer convenient non-clinical courses entirely online *and* in-person clinical experience, all designed to prepare you for the NCLEX-RN.

BSN programs such as the one from Alliant International University can present the opportunity to ask questions, make connections, and practice skills first-hand. Not only does it fulfill the NCLEX's practice requirements, but Alliant's BSN can help you formulate an understanding of the exam's complex content.

If becoming an RN is your goal, Alliant can provide a solid theoretical foundation in nursing and satisfy the NCLEX-RN prerequisites so that you're ready to start your nursing career soon after graduating. Whether you're a graduating college senior, an adult learner with a career change, or a professional holding another bachelor's degree, you can find a professional nursing program that fits your unique goals at Alliant.

Contact our admissions office today to see which program is right for you.

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