

How to Gain Work Experience as a New Graduate Nurse

Healthcare has always been an essential industry in every society. Nurses are an especially important part of healthcare, and even more so in this time of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although nurses are typically in high demand, new nursing graduates must still demonstrate their existing knowledge and willingness to learn, in order to gain more work experience and establish their careers.

This article will provide tips for nursing students or graduates to find a nursing job or gain any worthwhile and relevant industry experience.

1. Stay up to date and aware of news and recruitment trends in the nursing industry

Sign up to newsletters and mailing lists of all local and nursing/health companies and hospitals. This will keep you updated and knowledgeable about the nursing and health industry in general, which will be very useful when applying to jobs and especially during job interviews. This not only helps you understand relevant nursing and health topics but will also show employers that you have a deep understanding of the nursing and healthcare industry.

2. Establish connections within the healthcare and nursing industry

Try your best to establish close relationships with people in these industries, as the more people you know, the more likely it is that someone could recommend you for a job. If possible, try to participate in medical/nursing volunteer programs or attend health seminars or counseling information sessions. This not only helps you learn more knowledge and practical experience but will definitely introduce you to experienced people in the nursing field.

Make sure your LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram pages have up-to-date and relevant information about you. Do not post anything rude, inappropriate, or discriminatory on your social media pages, as this will make employers less likely to hire you.

3. Build upon the skills you already have

Graduates often have little or no work experience. Therefore, emphasise your soft skills (eg. empathy, communication, teamwork) to potential employers or volunteer programs when applying for any kind of work experience. Everybody has to start somewhere, so letting employers know that you are a motivated, hard-working and confident graduate will greatly help your chances of securing work experience.

It is also a good idea to have at least a basic understanding of industries and fields that must work together with the nursing and healthcare industry. For example, it would be useful to have an understanding of how information technology or accounting is used in hospitals.

4. Accepting a low salary for an entry level job

Building on from tip 3, most people cannot get their dream job as their first job. Any experience is better than no experience, at least when starting out as a recent nursing graduate. This means try to take any opportunity you can get that is even slightly relevant to where you hope your career will be in 5 to 10, or even 20 years from now.

In the end, gaining practical work experience is more important than any number of degrees or certificates you could earn. It is perfectly okay to accept a low salary for a starting position, as this could likely lead to promotions in the future. Just make sure you are being paid at least the legal minimum wage for your position. Also, do not let your employer treat you unfairly such as not paying you for overtime, or even bullying you at work.

5. Learn from experienced nurses

Learning from experienced people can be invaluable, as they can likely give you very suitable advice based on what job/s you are interested in. Nurses who have already been in the industry for many years, were once in the position you are in now. Talking to and establishing relationships with more experienced nurses can make it easier for you to build up your skills and work experience. A good starting point may be volunteering to work at a small private clinic that is close to where you live. Smaller clinics are more likely to have a friendly and casual environment which can help you feel more comfortable when starting out as a recent nursing graduate.

6. Apply to placements through your university

Explore the opportunities your university offers for placements. While the idea of working for no pay may not sound appealing, the experience is what matters the most when searching for graduate nursing jobs. Often placements eventually hire some students who perform really well during their work experience. Placements also give you much needed practical experience which can increase your confidence in working as a nurse.

Any kind of nursing work experience will give you invaluable knowledge, experience, and skills. You will also learn what skills you need to improve, what is necessary to be promoted to more senior positions, and how to establish relationships in the nursing industry.

If you have any questions about gaining work experience as a nursing graduate, please contact us through email at exceptionalstudyaustralia@gmail.com, call us on 0447840939 or message us through social media.