

Mrs. Reeves' 10 Tips to studying Pharmacology

1. Do NOT Procrastinate

If you are a natural procrastinator, I want to warn you, that will not work for pharmacology.

Before embarking on the task of learning hundreds of medications, get yourself organized to maximize your success. Grab a planner (this one's simple, clean, and comes in different sizes) and start by writing in all of your assignments including exams to get organized. Then block time within your schedule that is strictly for studying and reviewing pharmacology.

For example, Monday and Tuesday, from 3-5 pm I will review new material and PowerPoints before the lecture on Wednesday.

Keep in mind that the most important thing is to be intentional, stick to your plan, and do not procrastinate.

Organization is vital but let us discuss different study tips so you cannot just pass but ace the dreaded pharmacology course.

2. BREAK DOWN THE MEDICATIONS BY CLASS

Organize medications by classes such as beta-blockers, SSRIs, antidepressants, etc. You will be able to recognize that drugs in the same class tend to have very similar or even the same characteristics for:

- Mechanisms of action
- Nursing assessments
- Interventions
- Patient teachings

Example: beta-blockers end in -lol

While you might know a common medication like metoprolol, you might not recognize nebivolol. However, what you will recognize is the ending -lol, meaning nebivolol is a beta-blocker.

Knowing the class and endings will make those lists of medications a bit less intimidating.

3. GET CREATIVE (studying does not have to be boring)

One of the best ways to study pharmacology is to create mnemonics, funny phrases, and stories. Putting these medications in a story format will help you better remember them come test time. Pharmacology made easy is an excellent book that is a great resource. Mrs. Reeves has a mnemonics book utilize it make copies of it.

4. PRACTICE NCLEX-STYLE QUESTIONS

NCLEX-style questions can be quite challenging and often intimidating. One way to become stronger and more confident is to practice a lot of questions using a dedicated NCLEX book.

Not only will it give you confidence in choosing the right answer when it's test time, but it will also help you retain the material. The key is to review the rationales both for content and for clarification in terms of why the answer you chose is correct or incorrect.

5. FORM STUDY GROUPS

If studying alone does not work for you, then forming a study group is a great alternative. You can reserve a study room in the library and meet once a week to go over new material together. Ask each other questions, and share resources and notes.

6. CHOOSE THE RIGHT ENVIRONMENT

Study in a quiet space and make it your own! You can even add some plants and motivating quotes around your desk area. If you have family, roommates, or it's a bit loud at home, then I'd recommend getting these noise-canceling headphones.

7. MAKE A CHART OF THE DRUGS

As you go, make a chart of the drugs in Microsoft Excel, which you can use as your study guide before semester exams and the dreaded final.

Organize the drugs by category and highlight the important side effects and information your professor specifically pointed out in class. Adding to the document as the class progresses, will prevent scrambling to remember hundreds of medications come exam time. You can also use the [Davis Drug Guide](#) as another trustworthy resource.

8. USE OUTSIDE SOURCES

In nursing school, you are expected to teach yourself quite a bit. What helped me most was using outside learning sources like YouTube! These two YouTube channels offer great pharmacology content in easy-to-understand formats.

- [LEVELUP RN](#)
- [SIMPLE NURSING](#)

Having another nurse break down and explain pharmacology terms and concepts to you can be extremely helpful, especially if you are not connecting the information in the lecture.

9. FLASHCARDS

Make them yourself. This can be a daunting and time-consuming task, so do not leave it to the last minute. For some, the act of writing the information helps them retain details more than reading the pre-made cards. You can choose how much information you want to add to each flashcard. Do you want them super in-depth or very simple and to the point? It is up to you.

TIP: Put the medication name on one side and the rest of the information on the other. Make sure you say the medication name aloud as you write it down.

If you are unsure on how to pronounce it, google it or YouTube it. Bring these cards with you wherever you go so that if you have some time, you can use them wisely and review your cards.

10. REPETITION IS KEY

Pharmacology can be challenging because you are required to memorize and recall a LOT of material in a very short amount of time. One of the best ways to establish knowledge and memory is to repeat concepts over and over again.

Repetition is the key to memory. You can do this with flashcards, PowerPoint slides, or by using the teach-back method (which ensures that you understand what you've learned). Even just talking to yourself about the different medications can help.

Have a pet? Pretend you are precepting them and teach them about the medications. It can help you truly learn and understand the drugs versus just recalling what is on the flashcards or presentation.

You Got This

Regardless of how you might feel about pharmacology, we can all agree that it is **one of the most important courses in nursing school**. It is important to have a solid study plan to pass the course and be a safe healthcare professional.

The **key to being successful** in learning pharmacology for nurses is to:

- **Get organized**
- **Formulate a study plan**
- **Follow that plan**