The Ultimate 8-Week CCRN Study Plan
THE ULTIMATE 8-WEEK CCRN STUDY PLAN

This study plan is designed for the nurse who worked full time (36 hrs weekly) and requires approximately 1-2 hours study time daily. I highly recommend doing some form of review (questions, videos, modules) on a consistent, day-by-day basis to maintain competency and enhance your retention of the materials being studied. Yes, this means studying on the days you work as well. But don’t fret! I have suggestions below to help you incorporate studying into your weekly routine so that it feels less like a burden. For those tips and even more, be sure to check out our CCRN article series (parts 1 & 2) on our website at https://thestudynurse.com/2020/09/02/how-to-prepare-for-and-pass-the-ccrn-with-confidence/ and https://thestudynurse.com/2020/09/04/how-to-prepare-for-and-pass-the-ccrn-with-confidence-part-2-of-2/

General tips for studying while working full time:

- Be sure to implement the assessment and interventions you’ve studied this week into your nursing practice while at work this week.
- Be smart in how you utilize your spare time...this may mean doing a few questions or watching a video on your lunch break, using a phone app to practice questions when waiting for any appointments, etc.
- Get in the habit of listening to some review videos while you get ready for work or stream the audio over your speaker system as you commute to work. Many times, I found that I could easily incorporate the content I listened to on my way to work into my nursing practice for the day which always helped provide better care for my patients.
- Here are some of the audio/visual resources I suggest you check out (some do have a cost $$$):
  - Nicole Kupchik’s CCRN review course with online videos and pdf PowerPoint slides
  - The AACN’s CCRN review course (less animated than Nicole’s videos)
  - Laura Gasparis’ CCRN review videos on YouTube
  - Lifelong Nursing’s CCRN review videos on YouTube
  - Sources for practice questions with rationales (some do have a cost $$$)
    - Barron’s CCRN exam prep book
    - Nicole Kupchik’s CCRN review book
    - The AACN’s practice exam booklet (only $10 for 150 questions and rationales to practice from the test maker!)
    - Pass CCRN Review book by Elsevier (available as a physical book, phone app with questions, or as an online question bank with 1000+ questions)
    - Board Vitals phone application (purchase price based on length of membership and if you want CEs for studying)
    - CCRN adult pocket prep phone application
    - CCRN critical care exam prep phone application

Always be sure to defer to the current CCRN test plan, made available to you on the AACN website. This study plan is flexible, meaning you can choose the topics studied each day of the week based on your work schedule. I've even gone as far to mark days/topics that are less intense and easier to review on the days you work. I'd suggest scheduling your exam about 9 weeks out once you get your authorization to test, and COMMIT to it! Then take your monthly schedule along with this sample study plan and pre-plan each day of the 8-weeks, whether it’s working a shift or studying a topic, and then cross it off this document as you go. I’ll put an example of what I’m talking about below for better understanding!

Sample weekly schedule:

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NOW, LET'S GET STARTED!
Week #1

I would suggest starting this study plan at the end of your shifts for the week, so your mind can rest and recharge.

- First, take a full-length practice CCRN exam to gauge your current status and level of expertise. Be sure to score it and review the rationales for all questions, especially ones you missed. When I take a physical exam, I make a little mark next to the question number if I’m not confident in my answer. Doing this helps me evaluate my deductive skills and come back to review those questions and rationales at a later time.
- Daily schedule by subject: Focus on the cardiovascular system this week! When reviewing each daily topic, be sure to focus on applicable related topics such as indications, signs and symptoms, assessment data, nursing interventions, things to monitor, potential complications, and patient education. Days with an asterisk may be more suitable to cover on the days you work.
  - Day #1: Full length practice exam
  - Day #2*: Review acute coronary syndrome (ACS), aortic aneurysm/dissection
  - Day #3: Review atrial fibrillation, hypertensive emergency/crisis, and papillary muscle rupture
  - Day #4*: Review percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI), transcatheter aortic valve repair procedure (TAVR)
  - Day #5*: Review cardiac surgery, tamponade, cardiogenic shock
  - Day #6: Cardiomyopathies, heart defects, valvular abnormalities, and heart failure
  - Day #7*: Rest!
- On days that you don’t take a full length exam, be sure to do a minimum of 25-50 practice questions daily. To do this, you can utilize a variety of resources such as CCRN review books, flash cards, phone apps, etc. ***BONUS if you can isolate questions related to the cardiovascular system for this week***
- Don’t forget to work your three 12 hr shifts as a full-time intensive or progressive care unit nurse!

Plan your week #1

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Week #2

- Work your three scheduled shifts as usual
- Daily schedule by subject: Focus on the respiratory system this week! When reviewing each daily topic, be sure to focus on applicable related topics such as indications, signs and symptoms, assessment data, nursing interventions, things to monitor, potential complications, and patient education. Days with an asterisk may be more suitable to cover on the days you work.
  - Day #1: Pulmonary embolism (PE), aspiration, pneumonia, pulmonary fibrosis, pulmonary hypertension
  - Day #2: COPD, asthma, bronchitis, emphysema, status asthmaticus
  - Day #3: Respiratory trauma/surgery, transfusion-related acute lung injury (TRALI), pneumothorax/hemothorax
  - Day #4*: Respiratory failure, acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS)
  - Day #5*: Ventilation modes and weaning trials
  - Day #6*: Arterial blood gases and treatments for various abnormal results
  - Day #7*: Rest!
- Be sure to do a minimum of 25-50 practice questions daily. To do this, you can utilize a variety of resources such as CCRN review books, flash cards, phone apps, etc. ***BONUS if you can isolate questions related to the respiratory system for this week***

Plan your week #2

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Week #3

- Work your three scheduled shifts as usual.
- Daily schedule by subject: Focus for this week will be on multiple smaller systems! When reviewing each daily topic, be sure to focus on applicable related topics such as indications, signs and symptoms, assessment data, nursing interventions, things to monitor, potential complications, and patient education. Days with an asterisk may be more suitable to cover on the days you work.
  - Day #1 = Endocrine (Diabetes, diabetes insipidus (DI), diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA), hyperglycemic hyperosmolar nonketotic syndrome (HHS), and syndrome of inappropriate antidiuretic hormone (SIADH))
  - Day #2 = Hematology and Immunology (Anemia, disseminated intravascular coagulation (DIC), idiopathic thrombocytopenic purpura (ITP), heparin-induced thrombocytopenia (HIT), and transfusion reactions)
  - Day #3 = GI (Abdominal compartment syndrome, hemorrhage, bowel ischemia/perforation/infarction/obstruction, surgery, liver failure, pancreatitis)
  - Day #4† = Renal/Genitourinary (Trauma, acute kidney injury (AKI), chronic kidney disease (CKD), rose-sis, electrolyte imbalances)
  - Day #5† = Integumentary (Cellulitis, infiltration, necrotizing fasciitis, wound care/management)
  - Day #6† = Rest
  - Day #7 = Full-length practice exam #2 to evaluate progress. Be sure to read the rationales for the questions too!
- On days that you don't take a full length exam, be sure to do a minimum of 25-50 practice questions daily. To do this, you can utilize a variety of resources such as CCRN review books, flash cards, phone apps, etc. ***BONUS if you can isolate questions related to the systems covered this week***

Plan your week #3

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Week #4

- Work your three scheduled shifts as usual.
- Daily schedule by subject: Focus for this week will be on multiple smaller systems! When reviewing each daily topic, be sure to focus on applicable related topics such as indications, signs and symptoms, assessment data, nursing interventions, things to monitor, potential complications, and patient education. Days with an asterisk may be more suitable to cover on the days you work.
  - Day #1 = Musculoskeletal (Compartment syndrome, fractures, osteomyelitis, range of motion/mobility, rhabdomyolysis)
  - Day #2 = Neurological (Encephalopathy, delirium, traumatic brain injury (TBI), dementia/Alzheimer’s disease)
  - Day #3† = Neurological (Infections, neuromuscular disorders, seizures, increased intracranial pressure, brain tumors)
  - Day #4 = Neurological (Acute spinal cord injury, neuro surgery, ischemic/hemorrhagic stroke)
  - Day #5† = Behavioral/Psychological (Agitation, delirium, suicide, depression, PTSD, substance use/withdrawal)
  - Day #6† = Rest
  - Day #7 = Full-length practice exam #3 to evaluate progress. Be sure to read the rationales for the questions too!
- On days that you don't take a full length exam, be sure to do a minimum of 25-50 practice questions daily. To do this, you can utilize a variety of resources such as CCRN review books, flash cards, phone apps, etc. ***BONUS if you can isolate questions related to the systems covered this week***

Plan your week #4

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## Week 5

- Work your three scheduled shifts as usual.
- Daily schedule by subject: Focus for this week will be on **multisystem review**. When reviewing each daily topic, be sure to focus on applicable related topics such as indications, signs and symptoms, assessment data, nursing interventions, things to monitor, potential complications, and patient education. Days with an asterisk may be more suitable to cover on the days you work.
  - Day #1* = Acid base imbalances, electrolytes, arterial blood gases
  - Day #2* = Surgery (Bariatric, transplants)
  - Day #3 = Healthcare Acquired Events (HAEs) (ventilator associated pneumonia, catheter associated UTIs, central line associated bloodstream infections) and OB complications (eclampsia, HELLP syndrome, postpartum hemorrhage, amniotic embolism)
  - Day #4 = Toxic ingestion/overdose, dialysis
  - Day #5 = Targeted temperature management, multisystem trauma, pain
  - Day #6* = End of life care, brain death criteria
  - Day #7* = Rest

Be sure to do a minimum of 25-50 practice questions daily. To do this, you can utilize a variety of resources such as CCRN review books, flash cards, phone apps, etc. ***BONUS if you can isolate questions related to multisystem for this week***

### Plan your week #5

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## Week 6

- Work your three scheduled shifts as usual.
- Daily schedule by subject: Focus for this week will be on **hemodynamic monitoring**. When reviewing each daily topic, be sure to focus on applicable related topics such as indications, signs and symptoms, assessment data, nursing interventions, things to monitor, potential complications, and patient education. Days with an asterisk may be more suitable to cover on the days you work.
  - Day #1 = Pulmonary artery catheter (PAC), central venous pressure (CVP), arterial lines, and the normal ranges for the applicable values for each line
  - Day #2* = Distributive shock states (anaphylactic, neurogenic)
  - Day #3* = Septic shock, sepsis/systemic inflammatory response syndrome (SIRS), and multi-organ dysfunction syndrome
  - Day #4* = Cardiogenic shock, hypovolemic shock
  - Day #5 = Mechanical and IV cardiovascular support via intracardiac balloon pumps, Impella pumps, positive inotropes, and vasopressors
  - Day #6* = Rest
  - Day #7 = Full-length practice exam #4 to evaluate progress. Be sure to read the rationales for the questions!

On days that you don’t take a full length exam, be sure to do a minimum of 25-50 practice questions daily. To do this, you can utilize a variety of resources such as CCRN review books, flash cards, phone apps, etc. ***BONUS if you can isolate questions related to the hemodynamic topics covered this week***

### Plan your week #6

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
Week #7

- Work your three scheduled shifts as usual.
- Daily schedule by subject: Focus for this week will be on electrocardiograms and advanced cardiac life support (ACLS). When reviewing each daily topic, be sure to focus on applicable related topics such as indications, signs and symptoms, assessment data, nursing interventions, things to monitor, potential complications, and patient education. Days with an asterisk may be more suitable to cover on the days you work.
  - Day #1 = Basic electrocardiogram interpretation
  - Day #2 = Dysrhythmias interpretation and treatment
  - Now, focus on 12-lead ECG interpretation!
    - Day #3 = Watch YouTube videos instructing you how to interpret 12-lead ECGs
    - Day #4 = Practice interpretations with sample 12-lead ECGs (This may be easier to do at work if you can get your hands on some sample 12-lead ECGs from your unit and Emergency Department (ED)).
  - Day #5 = ACLS protocol reviews
  - Day #6 = Rest
  - Day #7 = Full-length practice exam #5 to evaluate progress. Be sure to read the rationales for the questions!

- On days that you don’t take a full length exam, be sure to do a minimum of 25-50 practice questions daily. To do this, you can utilize a variety of resources such as CCRN review books, flash cards, phone apps, etc.
  ***BONUS if you can isolate questions related to the ECG interpretation and interventions covered this week***

Plan your week #7

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Week #8

- Work your three scheduled shifts as usual.
- Practice a minimum of 50-100 questions daily and read the rationales.
- Watch CCRN review videos on YouTube (or another source that you prefer to use such as Nicole Kapchuk or the AACN’s modules)
- End the last day of your 8 week study plan by taking a final full-length practice exam to evaluate your progress and get you pumped for your exam...which should be no more than 3-5 days from the end of your study program.

Plan your FINAL week #8

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***NOW, GO AND ACE YOUR CCRN EXAM***