

# 8 Tips for New Grads in the ICU - Show Notes

*Below are 8 tips from three certified critical care (CCRN) nurses!*

## #1 Come in with an open and actively engaged mind

- Expect to be overwhelmed for awhile (at least 6 months)
- Fight the “I want to be perfect” mentality; while it’s admirable, it’s not possible – setting yourself for more stress and disappointment with that expectation
- Nursing is a *practice* – you’re never going to be at a point where you don’t make mistakes or be perfect. There is an art to this. The skills in nursing school aren’t the only ones you’ll need.

## #2 Be aware of typical ICU nurse characteristics

- Assertive, direct, business-like attitudes, detailed-oriented, anticipating things ahead of time, know protocols inside and out, intense, autonomous (very familiar with protocols, able to enact orders/protocols independently and then discuss with MD).
- You are still bringing something to the table, it’s just different than what the others who bring to the table who are already there.

## #3 Show initiative

- You’ll have to be assertive yourself - go home to learn and understand more
- Invest time into making yourself better in the off time
- Round with MDs, seeking out learning opportunities
- Introduce yourself to others

## #4 - Know yourself and be your own advocate

- Know your learning style and communicate this to your preceptor
- Know your limits / what you don’t know so you can fill in the gaps
  - Please don’t be *the new grad know-it-all*
  - Find the balance between not knowing anything and being so obvious about that people question your ability to be a safe care provider, and being the know it all who continually acts like they do not need to be educated
- Find a mentor!

## # 5 - Own your orientation

- Orientation is truly an extension of nursing school without formal grading
- Ask for help when you need it - sometimes your preceptor cannot always pick up on times when things aren't clicking
- Advocate for yourself!
- Work through the process of orientation; it's a marathon and not a sprint

## #6 - Keep an organized routine throughout your shift

- Have a systematic routine way of assessments, your day, meds, etc. otherwise you will miss somethings
  - This helps get through the shift and not miss things.
- Stop and get organized *first* before starting your shift so you start on a good note.
- Resource: *Anatomy of a Super Nurse, The Ultimate Guide to Becoming Nurse*, chapter 7

## #7 - Learn your alarms and use them to your advantage

- Have a love/hate relationship with alarms.
- If there is always one going off, you'll never know when it's real...turn yours off if it's non-actionable or adjust thresholds per policy.
- Use them to remind you so you don't forget.
- If you change a pump, add volume, silence an alarm, or whatever for another nurse – let them know!
  - [Do you hear what I hear? Combating alarm fatigue](#) - American Nurse Today
  - [Alarm Fatigue: A Patient Safety Concern](#) - American Association of Critical Care Nurses CEU (free for members, \$10 for non-members)
  - [Alarm fatigue: a top patient safety hazard](#) - NCBI

## #8 - You need downtime

- Becoming a critical care nurse straight out of school tough and exhausting, take care of yourself
- Again, advocate for yourself
- Take time off for yourself, make time for yourself - no one will do this for you

## Resources for newbies to critical care

- [Managing Your Time in Critical Care, Part I](#)
- [Tips for New Grads in the ICU: Showing Initiative](#)
- [Tips for New Grads in the ICU: Nurse Characteristics](#)
- [Tips for New Grads in the ICU: Be Your Own Advocates](#)
- [The FreshRN Podcast](#)
- [The NRSNG Podcast](#)
- [ICU Time Management Tips](#)
- [The Ultimate Guide to Creating an ICU Report Sheet \(for new critical care nurses and nursing students\)](#)
- [3 Code Blue Tips for New Nurses \(how to survive your first code\)](#)

NRSNG also has quite a few great resources for nursing students and new nurses. There are various courses, or the [entire academy](#). The specific courses that would be valuable to the new ICU RN in particular include:

- [The MedMaster Course](#)
- [The Lab Value Course](#)
- [Cardiac Essentials](#)
- [The EKG Interpretation Course](#)