

TIPS

from ONS members

for **Student
Nurses**



First, congratulations! This is an exciting but also unique time to be graduating nursing school: You're eager and nervous, but on top of those feelings, we're still dealing with a pandemic!

My advice to you is to continue to ask questions and to seek out new information, not just in health care but to expand your scope of knowledge. Find your people so that you can work together to develop questions into new ways to improve patient care outcomes.

**Darcy Burbage,
DNP, RN, AOCN®, CBCN®
Newark, DE**

Practice self-compassion and self-care. The first year can be difficult and uncomfortable, and that's completely normal. Enjoy the journey. Do not be rigid with one path. Be open and pay attention to what interests you. Keep learning.

**Caressa Valdueza, NP
New York, NY**

**BE KIND TO
YOURSELF**

1. When working with your preceptor, listen to and practice what they say. When it is time for your turn and you do it correctly, they will see your interest and then provide you with even more tips.
2. You will learn a variety of things from other RNs. Apply what each one has taught you into what you want your career to be.
3. Come with a positive and compassionate attitude. We care about our patients, and we want new RNs who want that as well.
4. If you are not sure about something, ask. We would 100% prefer that you ask a question than do something that could harm a patient.

Patrick DiMeo, BSN, RN • Columbus, OH



Congratulations

Congratulations on choosing the greatest profession. You have so many opportunities, from inpatient to outpatient, communities, schools, and teaching. Many young nurses became travelers for a few years and learned differences between cities and facilities.

I believe a newly graduated nurse should start with an inpatient setting experience. This is where you will learn the most in basic skills, interprofessional collaboration, and mentorship. Be open to feedback, ask questions, and try not to take any constructive criticism personally. That also applies to unkind patients. Usually, they are scared and vulnerable, and sometimes they will act out.

They just need reassurance or a plan so they feel more control. Listening and acknowledging goes a long way.

If you are considering an advanced degree, I believe building a few years of nursing experience first, so you know what your nursing specialty or interests are very important.

Join your local ONS chapter for continued colleague support, education, and mentorship.

Congratulations. And yes, you should be proud!

Paula Anastasia, RN, MN, AOCN® • Los Angeles, CA

Be patient and kind with yourself. Find a mentor. Leave work at work—it's a great skill! Good luck and be excellent!

**Patty Kormanik MSN NP-C AOCNP
San Diego, CA**

Smiley

Ask all the questions! Choose an environment to start your career that welcomes questions and learning opportunities. You will have a lot of stress your first year, and you will need a support system at work that will help you learn and grow. You also need a toolbox of resiliency-building and decompression techniques—deep breathing, meditation, gratitude journal—all things you need to practice now so they are second nature when the pressure and stress build. Remember it is going to get easier with time and experience. Self-reflect throughout your first year to observe how you have grown by leaps and bounds. Take the time to check the rearview mirror every once in a while, but don't stare in it to find all your mistakes. Grow from the experiences as they are, and always strive to do your best. You got this!

Sara Scott, BSN, RN, OCN® • Cleveland, OH

*Give yourself time to adjust
and don't compare yourself
to more seasoned nurses.*

Sangita Seaburg, BSN, RN, OCN® • Virginia Beach, VA

Get one to two years of experience in an acute care setting; it provides invaluable learning opportunities. If it is your passion, then continue. Consider looking at all the options available to nurses. I didn't find clinical research until I became an oncology nurse, 17 years into my career. I very much wish I had been introduced to other specialties like this one. If you're single, you may be able to travel and network with so many others. I still maintain the contacts I made as a traveler and network with them to this day. Consider radiation nursing, nurse navigation, breast health nurses, survivorship coordinators, etc.

**Julie Leach, MSN, RN, OCN®
Hilo, HI**

Remember you are new and are not expected to know everything. Ask questions: If you don't understand something, ask for clarification and explanation. If you go right to an oncology floor as I did, it can be overwhelming, but your preceptor will guide you. Remember to breathe and take good care of yourself with nutrition, exercise, sleep, and other self-care. Listen to and learn from patients. Trust the nursing process; everyone is nervous when they start. Remember why you wanted to be a nurse and find joy in each day. Congratulations and welcome to an amazing community!

**Rose Wolfe, RN, BSN, OCN®
Baltimore, MD**





As you begin your nursing career,

recognize that learning does not end with graduation. Advancements in cancer care continue to increase. You will find that the science of cancer care and the art of compassion and caring are the pillars of your oncology nursing practice. Use your knowledge and skills in both as you build relationships with patients and families and members of the cancer care team. There will be times of sadness; allow yourself time to grieve. There will be times of success; celebrate. Stay connected with ONS (or another nursing organization) so you have a network nationally and internationally and can contribute your voice to influence cancer care policies. Congratulations on your entry to our profession.

**Brenda Nevidjon, MSN, RN, FAAN
Durham, NC & Pittsburgh, PA**

Excellence is a habit—practice it daily, especially in the little things that make a big difference. Find a mentor, examine the little things they do, and adopt them yourself. Perhaps it is something they say before they leave a patient’s room, such as “Is there anything else I can do before I go?” or the way they organize their assignment. Always be ready to adapt the way you do things if you discover a practice of excellence.

Remember the most potent tool you bring to the bedside is yourself! Your therapeutic presence can change a life as much as a medication can. Administer it with courage and compassion.

Valerie Burger, MA, MS, RN, OCN®, CPN • 33 • Bellmore, NY

inspire

Keep in touch with your fellow nursing students through regular check-in calls or coffee dates to share how your first year of being a nurse is going. It can sometimes be a stressful time, and sharing stories and experiences and hearing that others are facing the same challenges can keep everyone motivated in their first year. Focusing on self-care, including getting enough rest in between shifts, eating healthy, and exercising, is fundamental to a good transition as well.

Kristin Ferguson, DNP, RN, OCN® • Washington, DC

• LIVE IN THE •
moment

It’s okay to cry. Don’t bottle it up. When you witness pain, suffering, and death, you need to pause, feel it, and recognize the meaning of the moment. Then release it and let it go.

Matthew Ortiz, MSN, RN, OCN®, NE-BC • Spokane, WA

Communicate clearly. Be sure to clarify and define language and terminology. Patients and families need repetition and “teach back” to verbalize what they perceive about the information.

Practice self-care. Set boundaries that are respectful and realistic with yourself and others.

Be prepared to face situations and people who are difficult to manage.

Network with others. You cannot know everything and be everything to everyone. Actively seek out resources and build bridges, share, and connect.

Patricia Geddie, PhD, APRN, AOCNS®, FCNS • Orlando, FL



Make sure your family and friends are on board and support you. You will have times when you are not available to do your normal activities with them because of clinical, exams, etc.

Be prepared for lifelong learning. Florence Nightingale said, “Let us never consider ourselves finished nurses. We must be learning all our lives.”

It takes about a year after any program to get comfortable in your new role.

Be kind to yourself as you keep learning.

Deborah Mayer, PhD, RN, AOCN®, FAAN • Chapel Hill, NC



Everyone can be a teacher—question, listen to, and learn from everyone on the interprofessional team.

Roberta Strohl, RN, MN • Baltimore, MD

Engage in your work setting. Volunteer for a council or a committee.

Nurses who are engaged often have more job satisfaction—and it allows you to make a difference!

Be patient with yourself. It takes time to transition into a work setting, and there is a lot to remember. If you make a mistake, learn from it, but don't beat yourself up. We all make mistakes!

Find a residency program. This will provide you with a cohort to transition into practice and will help you apply knowledge you are learning in the clinical setting.

Jeannine Brant, PhD, APRN-CNS, AOCN®, FAAN • Billings, MT

Every experience, whether considered good and bad, provides an opportunity to learn and grow. Never be afraid to learn something new, approach challenges with a beginner's mindset, take deep breaths, and trust yourself. Welcome to nursing!

Michelle Payne, DNP, RN, OCN®, BMTCN® • Winston-Salem, NC

Join your professional nursing organization. ONS offers education, leadership, friendship, and scholarship. Being an active member will provide opportunities for your greatest accomplishments as a nurse!

Natalie D'Itri, MSN, RN, AOCN® • Arlington, VA



*Be open
minded and
curious.
Don't be afraid
to try anything
you are not
comfortable
doing.*

**Elfrida Bauer, RN, OCN®, CBCN®
Albuquerque, NM**



Get comfortable with not knowing all the answers or how to do everything. Know where you can get help and find the information.

Ask lots of questions! The question you don't ask could make all the difference for a patient's safety and well-being (as well as your own).

Find a mentor who is committed to helping you grow and succeed. Recognize that you will learn different skills and approaches from many different people. Take their best practices as gifts to build your toolbox.

Volunteer for extra professional development opportunities early in your career. Get involved in your organization's professional practice councils. Join a professional organization (like ONS) and be an engaged member. Show up. Contribute your experience and perspectives. We need to hear them!

Reflect on the process that you are going through by journaling (You'll be amazed later when you re-read your observations on how far you have come).

Practice gratitude every day! Explore opportunities to practice self-care. You are a precious resource. Take care of yourself first.

Laura Fennimore, DNP, RN, NEA-BC, FAAN • Pittsburgh, PA

When you begin working on your unit, observe who the staff go to most often for their opinion or guidance and use that person as an informal mentor. If seasoned nurses seek that individual's feedback, they must be knowledgeable and respected for their experience.

**Barbara Wampler, BSN, RN, OCN®
Tampa, FL**

BELIEVING

IN YOURSELF

IS THE FIRST

SECRET TO

SUCCESS

As a new nurse, I would have loved for other nurses to remember they too were once new and that books cannot teach you real-world experience. My advice to you is love yourself first, love others second, and ask questions when in doubt. Ask others to be patient with you as you learn because you cannot and will not learn everything overnight. Treat everybody as if they are your family member, and you will go far in your career. Congratulations, and welcome to nursing!

Stacey Scott, LPN • Chattanooga, TN

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