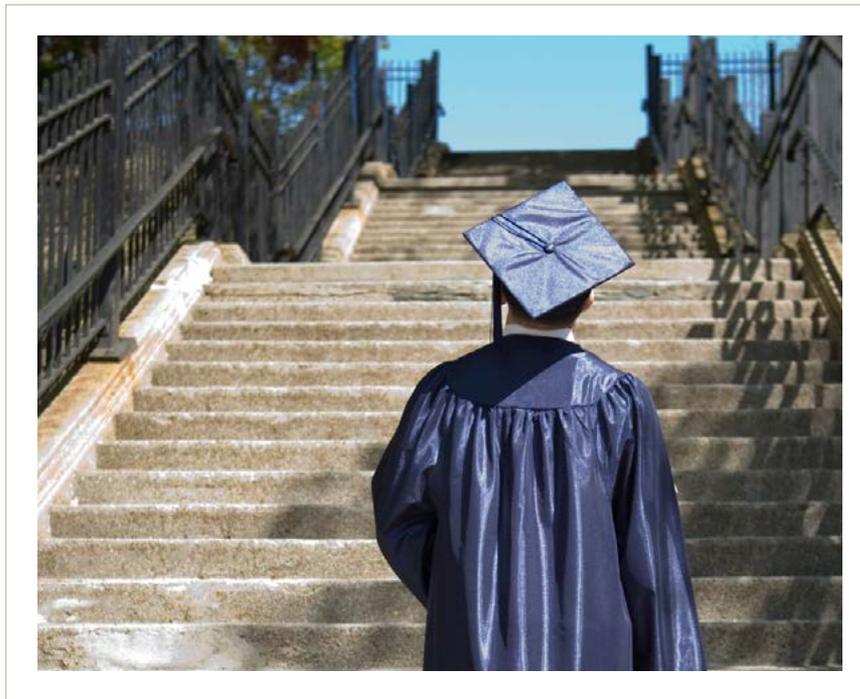# 1

This **Getting Started Guide** is your source for up-to-date information about choosing a nursing school or program. Use these tips to get organized and motivated—and get going on making your dreams a reality.

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≫ Now Is the Time

get ready to return to school

Going back to school is a bold move. Earning your nursing degree will be challenging whether you attend full-time, or fit part-time classes alongside family and work responsibilities. But with the job market getting more competitive every year, there's no better time to improve your education, energize your career and brighten your future.

Education is life changing

Diving into a nursing degree program could make you happier—and better off—than you've ever been.

job security

Degrees, diplomas, and certificates can open doors. When faced between the choice of hiring someone with an RN and one with a BSN, the majority of hiring managers would choose the higher degree holder, even though he or she would command a higher salary.

Also, according to a March 2014 government report, only 4 percent of college grads over the age of 25 are unemployed, compared to 7 percent of those who've only taken a few college courses.

family life

Imagine how incredible it will feel to finally graduate with that degree or certificate you've been thinking about for months—or even years. Make yourself and everyone in your life proud by enrolling in the program that will help you fulfill your longtime dreams and potential.

valuable connections

Thestudentsandinstructorsyoumeetinschool—whetheryouattend on-campusoronline—couldbeyourfriendsforlife.Youneverknowwho you'llmeetinclass.Theconnectionsyoumakemayhelpyoulandthejob you've always wanted.

self-esteem

Earning a nursing degree or certificate is an incredible confidence booster. It's also an eye-catching addition to your resume and a game-changer in a job interview. The best part? It brings you one step closer to helping others. You can feel pretty good about that.

earning power

Are you happy with your current salary? Imagine if you had the credentials to earn more?

Here are some encouraging facts about the benefits of a degree:

- The average college grad earns **64 percent** more than a high-school graduate.

- By 2018, **63 percent** of all American job openings will require some sort of post-secondary education. While employers will need nearly **22 million** new workers with post-secondary degrees, colleges will fall short of that mark by **3 million** graduates.

- At age 50, a college graduate out-earns a high school grad by **$46,500** annually.

- Employment for workers with a master's, professional or associate's degree is expected to grow twice as fast as the overall job market.

Ready to rise above average?

The more education you have, the more you're likely to earn:

Unemployment rate	Education attained	Median weekly earnings in 2013
2.2%	Doctoral degree	$1,623
2.3	Professional degree	$1,714
3.4	Master's degree	$1,329
4.0	Bachelor's degree	$1,108
5.4	Associate degree	$777
7.0	Some college, no degree	$727
7.5	High-school diploma	$651
11.0	Less than a high school diploma	$472
6.1	All Workers	$827

Source: U.S. Department of Education

- Investing in college is a better bet than investing in the stock market.

- Over a lifetime, the average college graduate earns roughly $570,000 more than someone with only a high school diploma—a tremendous return on the average upfront investment of $102,000.

- In 2013, young adults with a bachelor's degree earned 2.5 times as much as those who didn't graduate from high school (114 percent more, to be exact), 50 percent more than young adults who completed high school, and 25 percent more than those who had earned an associate's degree.

No more excuses!

What's stopping you from returning to nursing school? Whatever's holding you back, there's an even better reason to go ahead and make the move.

1 **I don't have money for school.**
Neither do most students when they enroll. See our financial aid guide for specifics on how to hunt down scholarships and find grants (which don't need to be repaid), and, if needed, how to find student loans with the lowest interest rate possible.

2 **I don't have time for school.**
How much time do you spend on things other than work or family? The typical American spends more than four and a half hours every day watching TV. You might have many hours each week—maybe even each day—that could be devoted to school. Online schools can save you time, too—no need to drive to campus.

3 **I'll miss my kids when I'm in class.**
It's true you'll have to sacrifice family time in the short term, but your kids will benefit in the long run. Online schools, with their flexible scheduling, may help you fit school into your busy life.

4 **My computer skills aren't great.**
If you can type a text message, you can participate in an online class. On-campus schools offer computer training for students who need it, and there are tutorials on YouTube. You don't need to be a computer genius to attend school—just good enough to complete your assignments.

5 **What if I'm the oldest person in class?**
It's much preferable to be one of the older students in class, or even the oldest, than never pursuing that degree. In fact, 71 percent of BSRN students were over the age of 30 in 2012, according to the National League of Nursing.

Get motivated

Heidi Grant Halvorson, Ph.D., is a contributor to *Psychology Today* magazine and the author of *9 Things Successful People Do Differently* and *Succeed: How We Can Reach Our Goals*. She says that you're more likely to achieve a challenging goal—like returning to school—if you do the following three things:

» **break a larger task into small and specific steps**

» **set a time limit**

» **announce your intentions to friends, family co-workers**

For example, you could set a goal of enrolling in nursing school by this time next year. But you're more likely to achieve it if you start small. How about researching five schools this month, or exploring three potential majors or programs in the next three weeks? Next, set a goal of investigating the most appealing schools more thoroughly, then set a goal of applying to one or more— then enrolling.

By breaking down your overall goal of returning to school into smaller, less intimidating tasks, you're more likely to stay on track and succeed.

Sample goal chart

Overall goal: Return to school in **summer/fall/spring 2015**

Steps	Details	Deadline	Notes
1. Decide on a program	Research 5 programs and pick the one that best suits my career goals and needs as a student	2 weeks from today	
2. Choose a school			
3. Apply		December 1	
4. FInd Financial Aid		Scholarship application #1 due January 15	
5. (Add your next step here)			
Last step: Enroll!			

My back-to-school goals

My goal: Return to school in **summer/fall/spring 20_____**

Steps	Details	Deadline	Notes
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
Last step: Enroll!			