

According to the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, this document identifies the core functional ability activities/attributes essential for an individual to perform nursing activities in a safe and effective manner. However, the presence of a disability that impacts an individual's ability to demonstrate competence in these areas should not be considered in isolation from the accommodations that can be used to compensate for a noted deficiency. Individuals considering nursing as a career may also find this information useful. National Council of State Boards of Nursing, Inc. (1997 Volume 18 Number1)

Functional Ability Categories and Representative Activities/Attributes

Gross Motor Skills

- Move within confined spaces
- Sit and maintain balance
- Stand and maintain balance
- Reach above shoulders (e.g., IV poles)
- Reach below waist (e.g., plug electrical appliance into wall outlets)

Fine Motor Skills

- Pick up objects with hands
- Grasp small objects with hands (e.g., IV tubing, pencil)
- Write with pen or pencil
- Key/type (e.g., use a computer)
- Pinch/pick or otherwise work with fingers (e.g., manipulate a syringe)
- Twist (e.g., turn objects/knobs using hands)
- Squeeze with finger (e.g., eye dropper)

Physical Endurance

- Stand (e.g., at client side during surgical or therapeutic procedure)
- Sustain repetitive movements (e.g., CPR)
- Maintain physical tolerance (e.g., work entire shift)

Physical Strength

- Push and pull 25 pounds (e.g., position clients)
- Support 25 pounds of weight (e.g., ambulate client)
- Lift 25 pounds (e.g., pick up a child, transfer client)
- Move light objects weighing up to 10 pounds (e.g., IV poles)
- Move heavy objects weighing from 11 to 50 pounds
- Defend self against combative client
- Carry equipment/supplies
- Use upper body strength (e.g., perform CPR, physically restrain a client)
- Squeeze with hands (e.g., operate fire extinguisher)

Mobility

- Twist
- Bend
- Stoop/squat
- Move quickly (e.g., response to an emergency)
- Climb (e.g., ladders/stools/stairs)
- Walk

Hearing

- Hearing normal speaking level sounds (e.g., person-to-person report)
- Hear faint voices

Hear faint body sounds (e.g., blood pressure sounds, assess placement of tubes)
Hear in situations when not able to see lips (e.g., when masks are used)

Visual

See objects up to 20 inches away (e.g., information on a computer screen, skin conditions)
See objects up to 20 feet away (e.g., client in a room)
See objects more than 20 feet away (e.g., client at end of hall)
Use depth perception
Use peripheral vision
Distinguish color (e.g., color codes on supplies, charts, bed)
Distinguish color intensity (e.g., flushed skin, skin paleness)

Tactile

Feel vibration (e.g., palpate pulses)
Detect temperature (e.g., skin, solutions)
Feel differences in surface characteristics (e.g., skin turgor, rashes)
Feel differences in sizes, shapes (e.g., palpate vein, identify body landmarks)
Detect environmental temperature (e.g., check for drafts)

Smell

Detect odors from client (e.g., foul smelling drainage, alcohol breath, etc.)
Detect smoke
Detect gases or noxious smells

Reading

Read and understand written document (e.g., policies, protocols)

Arithmetic Competence

Read and understand columns of writing (flow sheet, charts)
Read digital displays
Read graphic printouts (e.g., EKG)
Calibrate equipment
Convert numbers to and/or from the Metric System
Read graphs (e.g., vital sign sheets)
Tell time
Measure time (e.g., count duration of contractions, etc.)
Count rates (e.g., drips/minute, pulse)
Use measuring tools (e.g., thermometer)
Read measurement marks (e.g., measurement tapes, scales, etc.)
Add, subtract, multiply, and/or divide whole numbers
Compute fractions (e.g., medication dosages)
Use a calculator
Write numbers in records

Emotional Stability

Establish therapeutic boundaries
Provide client with emotional support
Adapt to changing environment/stress
Deal with the unexpected (e.g., client going bad, crisis)
Focus attention on task
Monitor own emotions
Perform multiple responsibilities concurrently
Handle strong emotions (e.g., grief)