

Your first charge shift

Shift-start checklist + 5-minute huddle script

Two printable pages from **Floor to Charge: The Confident Nurse & Charge Nurse Kit**.

A first charge shift usually starts with someone handing you a phone. Then a call-out comes in, an admission is on the way, and the float nurse is asking where the supplies are.

These two pages give you a plan for the first 30 minutes: what to check before anyone needs you, and what to say in a huddle that takes five minutes. Print them, cross off what doesn't fit your unit, and keep them in your pocket.

The full kit has 25 printable pages

A years 1-3 growth guide, delegation and conflict scripts, a preceptor kit with weekly check-ins, a ready-for-next-role self-assessment, a resume update guide and an editable tracker.

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Charge nurse shift-start checklist

The first 30 minutes of a charge shift set the tone. You aren't trying to know everything yet. You're trying to find out what could go wrong today, and who needs you first.

BEFORE REPORT

- ☐ Arrive early enough to look before anyone needs you
- ☐ Staffing for this shift and the next: who's here, who's floating, who's new or orienting
- ☐ Open beds, expected admissions, discharges and transfers
- ☐ Who your supervisor or on-call leader is for this shift, and how to reach them
- ☐ Your phone, pager or radio works
- ☐ Where the staffing, rapid response and chain-of-command policies are

CHARGE-TO-CHARGE REPORT

- ☐ Highest-risk or least stable patients (room or bed numbers only)
- ☐ Falls risk, behaviors, sitters or 1:1 needs
- ☐ Pending admissions, procedures, transfers
- ☐ Staffing gaps, call-outs, breaks still owed
- ☐ Equipment or supply problems
- ☐ Family concerns you should know about
- ☐ Anything escalated that's still open

ASSIGNMENTS & HUDDLE

- ☐ Assignments fair and safe for acuity, skill mix and continuity
- ☐ New nurses and orientees paired with support
- ☐ Breaks planned for everyone, including you
- ☐ Float or agency staff shown the unit basics
- ☐ Huddle held on time (use the huddle script)

FIRST HOUR

- ☐ Walk the unit and lay eyes on your highest-risk patients
- ☐ Ask each nurse: "What do you need from me today?"
- ☐ Check on the newest nurse and the float nurse first
- ☐ Hallways clear, emergency equipment checked per policy

THROUGH THE SHIFT & HANDOFF

- ☐ Re-check staffing for next shift early
- ☐ Close the loop on everything you escalated
- ☐ Keep a running list for your charge handoff
- ☐ Event reports done per policy
- ☐ Thank your team, and name one specific thing

MY UNIT'S EXTRAS (ADD WHAT YOUR UNIT ALWAYS NEEDS CHECKED)

Your facility's charge nurse role description and policies define what charge is responsible for. Cross off or add items to match your unit.

The 5-minute huddle script

A good huddle is short, standing, and the same every time. People should walk away knowing the plan, and knowing they can come to you. Read this word for word for your first few huddles. After that, make it yours.

1

Open • 15 sec

"Quick huddle, five minutes, then I'll let you go. Thanks for being here."

2

Staffing • 30 sec

"Here's who we have today. [Name] is floating to us from [unit], so please help them find things. [Name] is orienting with [preceptor]."

3

Watch list • 1-2 min

"Rooms to keep an eye on today: [room], [room]. [One line each on why.] Falls risk in [rooms]. Isolation in [rooms]."

4

Flow • 30 sec

"We're expecting [#] admissions and [#] discharges. [Any procedures or transfers.]"

5

One focus • 30 sec

"One reminder today: [a single item, like a new process, a supply issue or a unit goal]."

6

Close • 30 sec

"I'll come find you for breaks. If you're getting behind or worried about someone, tell me early. I'd rather hear it at 10 than at 2. What did I miss?"

MY HUDDLE NOTES

Item	Notes (room or bed numbers only, no names)
Staffing	
Watch list	
Flow	
One focus	
Questions raised	
Follow up after	

One focus item, not five. If the huddle has five reminders, nobody remembers any of them. Save the rest for email, the board or tomorrow.

Hold the huddle where patient information won't be overheard, and follow your facility's privacy rules about what can be said in common areas.