

Surviving the Night Shift

Summary: The night shift has many positives, like building better relationships with coworkers and gaining more hands on experience.



Having to work the night shift of any job is never ideal. Some are able to make this circumstance work with grace, others look and act like walking zombies. If you happen to be one of the zombies, there are some trade secrets you probably don't know about that can make your routine easier and get your circadian rhythm in sync.

See [How Using the Power of a Routine Can Make You a Top Performer](#) for more information.

Transitioning into the night shift can be difficult. If you are a nurse working three 12-hour shifts, try to get the shifts in a row for a few weeks so that you can get into the rhythm of being a night owl for half the week. If you are on a rotating schedule, try to get the shifts split with day shifts at the beginning of the week and nights at the end of the week. An example would be a day shift on Monday and then two night shifts on Thursday and Friday.

When the day arrives for your first night shift, wake up early and take a nap during the afternoon. This will let you get some rest before heading to work. Those that sleep in late tend to crash by 4am because they have been up for too long. When trying to get back to a normal routine, come home from your night shift and only sleep for four hours. This ensures that you will be tired enough to sleep that night.

Be sure to eat a good meal before heading to your night shift. This will give you some needed energy to get started and going for the next few hours. Pack high-protein meals and snacks to fulfill



any midnight munchies.

Exercise is important, no matter what shift you work. It helps you have more energy and more sound sleep. When you get tired at work, run the stairs a few times to wake up.

When it is time for you to sleep, make sure you don't get interrupted. Turn off your phone, hang black out curtains, lock the door, and tell everyone not to disturb you. You need to get restful sleep so that you can maximize the number of REM cycles you get.

The night shift doesn't need to be a bad thing. For nurses, it is a time to develop and master skills that the busy daytime doesn't allow for. With other shifts, working at night can be a time to do homework, read, or do whatever else the quiet night allows you to.

Photo: the-scientist.com