

GUIDE TO SETTING PRIORITIES

Nurses are often the first to identify and respond to patient complications. It is imperative that nurses are able to assess problems and prioritize all patients' needs in a manner that is efficient, even when there are competing priorities. Use these steps to help set priorities and improve patient care.

1 Priority One — ABCs + V&L

- A — Airway problems
- B — Breathing problems
- C — Cardiac or Circulation problems
- V — Vital signs concerns
- L — Lab values that are life threatening

2 Priority Two

- Changes in mental status
- Untreated medical problems
- Pain
- Urinary elimination problems

3 Priority Three

- Health problems that don't belong in previous categories, such as:
 - Activity
 - Family coping
 - Rest
 - Lack of knowledge