

How to Display Your Credentials



HOW TO DISPLAY YOUR CREDENTIALS

Common questions and
answers about displaying
your credentials in the
proper order

Why Do We Need a Standard Way to List Credentials?

Having a standard way ensures that everyone—including nurses, healthcare providers, consumers, third-party payers, and government officials—understands the significance and value of credentials.

What Is the Preferred Order of Credentials?

The preferred order is:

- ▶ Highest earned degree
- ▶ Licensure
- ▶ State designations or requirements
- ▶ National certifications
- ▶ Awards and honors
- ▶ Other recognitions

Why Is This Order Recommended?

The education degree comes first because it is a “permanent” credential, meaning it cannot be taken away except under extreme circumstances. The next two credentials (licensure and state designations/requirements) are required for you to practice. National certification is sometimes voluntary, and awards, honors, and other recognitions are always voluntary.

What Are Examples of Credentials?

Educational degrees include doctoral degrees (PhD, DrPH, DNS, EdD, DNP), master’s degrees (MSN, MS, MA), bachelor’s degrees (BS, BSN, BA), and associate degrees (AD, ADN).

Licensure credentials include RN and LPN.

State designations or requirements recognize authority to practice at a more advanced level in that state and include APRN (Advanced Practice Registered Nurse), NP (Nurse Practitioner), and CNS (Clinical Nurse Specialist).

National certification, which is awarded through accredited certifying bodies such as the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), includes RN-BC (Registered Nurse-Board Certified) and FNP-BC (Family Nurse Practitioner-Board Certified).

Awards and honors recognize outstanding achievements in nursing such as FAAN (Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing).

Other certifications include non-nursing certifications that recognize additional skills. One example is the EMT-Basic/EMT, awarded by the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians.

What Credentials Do I Have to Use?

On legal documents such as prescriptions and notes on medical records, you must use the credentials required by your state for your area of practice, for example, Susan Jones, RN, or Joyce Smith, APRN.

In professional endeavors such as speaking, writing for publication, or providing testimony before a legislative body, use all your relevant credentials. Note that journals sometimes order credentials differently, and it is acceptable to conform to their style.

What If I Have More Than One of the Same Type of Credential?

List the highest education degree first, for example, Michael Anderson, PhD, MSN. In most cases, one degree is enough, but if your second degree is in another relevant field, you may choose to list it. For example, a nurse executive might choose Nancy Gordon, MBA, MSN, RN. Note that the highest non-nursing degree is listed first followed by the highest nursing degree. A nurse who has a master’s in a non-nursing field might choose Anne Peterson, MEd, BSN, RN. If you have a doctorate and a master’s degree, omit your baccalaureate degree.

Multiple nursing certifications may be listed in the order you prefer, but consider listing them either in order of relevance to your practice or in the order they were obtained, with the most recent first. Always list non-nursing certifications last.

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Practice Excellence Through Credentialing

The mission of the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), a subsidiary of the American Nurses Association (ANA), is to promote excellence in nursing and health care globally through credentialing programs. ANCC's internationally renowned credentialing programs certify and recognize individual nurses in specialty practice areas. It recognizes healthcare organizations that promote nursing excellence and quality patient outcomes while providing safe, positive work environments. In addition, ANCC accredits healthcare organizations that provide and approve continuing nursing education. ANCC's Credentialing Knowledge Center™ offers educational materials to support nurses and organizations as they work toward their credentials.

ANCC's Certification Program enables nurses to demonstrate their specialty expertise and validate their knowledge to employers and patients. Through targeted exams and portfolios that incorporate the latest clinical practices, ANCC certification empowers nurses with pride and professional satisfaction.



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