

## 4 Types of RD2BEs Who Don't Pass the RD Exam

By: Jenny Westerkamp

### No Plan Nicole

- Nicole sat and read material a few times a week.
- She used multiple study guides and tools, but felt very overwhelmed with how she could get through all of them.
- She would listen to the comments in Facebook group about all the different ways people studied and all the tools they used.

**What went wrong:** Nicole didn't have a set plan. She didn't know when to schedule the exam or if she felt ready or spent enough time studying. She took the exam too early when she should have moved back her exam date.

**Why this doesn't work:** Not having a study plan will decrease the likelihood of a successful Exam Day. A study plan keeps you accountable.

#### What to do instead to have a plan and stick to it:

1. Create your calendar with block scheduling - plan WHEN + WHAT.
2. Plan for specific types of sessions that incorporate active learning techniques that line up with your learning style.
3. Plan for extra time on a weaker topic "If I don't understand the material then..."
4. Reflect on your progress frequently and be honest with yourself.
5. Find an accountability partner or tutor.
6. Move the date back if needed.
7. With the right study plan and commitment, you can do this!
8. More does not equal better if your study method is not efficient.

### Passive Patricia

- Read and re-wrote an entire study guide.
- Did practice questions, gave her best guess, and then graded herself and looked at the answer rationale right away.
- Studying 8 hours a day never felt like enough. She didn't feel like things were sticking!

**What went wrong:** Patricia went into the exam feeling like the questions were confusing and couldn't recall the information even though she remembered studying it. She didn't identify her weaknesses throughout her studying, and she didn't use a study method that supported retention and understanding.

**Why this doesn't work:** Patricia used passive learning techniques, which are not as efficient as active learning techniques.

**What to do instead to actively learn:**

1. Understand your learning style - audio, visual, kinesthetic.
2. Challenge yourself with active learning techniques.
3. Use blank worksheets and tables and fill them in as you study.
4. Exposure yourself to practice test questions and slow down to really understand each one and ensure you don't have a weakness in that topic.

## Mike the Memorizer

- In college, he relied heavily on and was comfortable with a memorization study approach.
- He tried to use the same approach and memorize an entire study guide. This made him feel overwhelmed and burnt out.
- He studied practice questions, but used the same ones so was starting to memorize the correct answers.

**What went wrong:** Mike spent too much time trying to memorize and didn't spend enough time strengthening his critical thinking skills.

**Why this doesn't work:** The RD exam is meant to test your understanding and critical thinking skills, not just your retention of knowledge.

**What to do instead to understand, not only memorize**

1. Use blank worksheets and test your understanding of topics without looking at notes.
2. When answering practice questions, don't look at the answer right away. (Use the Study Smarter Method!)
3. Confirm you understand the rationale of why each answer is either right or wrong. Be able to explain to yourself why.

## Self Doubt Samantha

- Samantha was a repeat test taker.
- She always thought she was a really bad test taker, and she had test anxiety.
- Didn't think she could pass the exam and wanted to give up multiple times throughout.
- Found excuses to skip study sessions.

**What went wrong:** Samantha needed more support than she was giving herself.

**Why this doesn't work:** It's OK to get help if this is something you really want. It can be easy to give up, but there are so many resources available that can make it worth it.

## What to do instead to increase self-confidence:

- Get excited about your career as a dietitian.
- Reflect on all the hard work you've already done to prepare.
- Plan your study schedule and create a syllabus for yourself.
- Do a simulated exam day and try to replicate everything as much as possible, including the look of the cubicle, the calculator you use, the outfit you will wear.
- Have an exam day game plan.
- Do individual or group tutoring for accountability and support.
- Get mental health support from a licensed professional.

## Everyone is different - there is no one-size-fits-all approach.

### Differences include:

- Education/experience backgrounds
- Obligations and available study time– work, family
- Test taking skills and IQ levels
- Learning styles
- Knowledge or understanding gaps (e.g. great at math, not great at management)
- Timing between rotations and taking exam
- Mindset and mental health

**The key is to use a study method that reveals weaknesses in critical thinking and then having a study method that effectively addresses how to strengthen critical thinking.**

## Final Summary

- **Instead of memorizing**, focus on understanding topics
- **Instead of passive learning**, use a study guide that promotes active learning
- **Instead of no plan**, have a personalized plan and adjust as you go based on weaknesses revealed through studying
- **Instead of doubting yourself**, get help to increase your confidence