

Setting Priorities

Nursing

Three ordering rules — ABC, actual before potential, and unstable before stable.

Prioritisation is a repeatable ordering rule, not a feel for urgency.

FIRST FILTER
ABC

SECOND
Maslow

THIRD
Nursing process

- Airway before breathing before circulation
- Life-threatening before urgent before routine
- Actual problems before potential ones
- Unstable patients before stable ones
- Acute change outranks a chronic finding
- Unexpected findings outrank expected ones

LOOK FOR IT

Two patients call: new breathlessness outranks scheduled pain relief, then reassess both.

Educational reference. Prioritisation frameworks support judgement; deteriorating patients follow local escalation protocol immediately.