



22 SECRETS FOR SURVIVING NIGHT SHIFT

Follow these 22 secrets to make sure you survive your shift and your career of rotating shifts.

WELCOME

Working shift work sucks. Especially when you have to work rotating shifts.

There is no doubt that working the Night Shift will take its toll on most people. Some people love Night Shift and the hours don't affect them at all. They are the exception, not the rule.

Our team sat down and discussed what it takes to survive a career of night shifts. We wanted to provide you with simple and valuable hacks to help you survive your night shift and a long career full of them.

We can't stress how important consistency is in terms of handling the night shift rotation like a boss. Consistency with your nutrition, with your sleep, with your training and with your tactics.

Night shift is going to affect everything, so relying on consistency is key to limiting the negative effects.

We also strongly encourage you to attend a specific "Low Light/No Light" course to make sure your tactics are where they need to be for night shift.

If you have any questions about these tips and tricks or about anything that Effective Fitness Training has to offer, please reach out to Coaches and Physical Therapists at coach@effective.fitness

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1.) Consistent Sleep Schedule - Maintain the same sleep schedule on your days off to the best of your ability. If it isn't possible, then you need to make sure that you are adjusting it immediately after your last shift and making sure to sleep as much as possible before the start of your next shift. One way to get your internal clock in a routine is to view sunlight upon waking, even if you wake up later in the afternoon/evening for your shift.

2.) Eliminate Sleep Disturbances - Make sure you hang blackout curtains or shades to eliminate all light in your room. Also, use a sound machine to drown out the noise of normal daily activities going on around you. A sleep mask and ear plugs can also help.

3.) Limit Screen Time & Blue Light Before Bed - Stay off your phone, tablet and laptop for up to 2 hours before you go to bed. Blue light affects your circadian rhythm, which is already affected by your schedule; so put the phone down. If you are in bed, you must stay off your screens. Read a book you will fall asleep much faster, especially if you don't like to read!

4.) Keep Your Room Cool - Your body temperature is naturally elevated during the day so if you have to sleep during normal daylight hours, you will likely feel warmer than at night. Keep a fan going, which keeps you cool and provides white noise, and/or kick the A/C down a degree or two during your sleeping hours. Recommended temperature for quality sleep is between 60-70°F.

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5.) Develop a Sleep Routine - Having a consistent sleep routine is critical to proper sleep regardless of the shift you are on. The key here is to have a routine that helps you decrease stress, lower your heart rate and slow down your breathing to a resting state which helps you to relax and prepare your body for sleep. Take a hot shower, do some light stretching or bedtime yoga, read a book, do some breathing exercises, journal, meditate, drink some chamomile tea and/or connect with your partner. Any combination of these things should help you down-regulate your central nervous system and help prepare you for a good night's sleep.

6.) Eat a Protein-Packed Breakfast - Make sure that the first meal of your day is packed with protein. This will help make sure that you get a head start on your protein intake for the day. It will also help you feel full longer. Keep this high protein idea in mind when it comes to snacks, too. Protein is an essential macronutrient that will aid in performance, recovery, and essential body processes, so make sure you are consuming enough each day (1 gram of protein per pound of bodyweight).

7.) Meal Prep is Essential - It's not like there were ever that many good late night options, but since COVID struck, there are even fewer options as almost everything is closed after midnight now. This means you absolutely must prepare your meals in advance. ([Check out our meal prep options for night shift here](#))

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If you fail to plan your meals, you will fail in your night shift efforts. You can cook 8-10 meals in 30-90 minutes of your last day off before you begin your shift. Stop procrastinating and commit to meal prepping. Future you will be super thankful that you took the 60 minutes to prepare your meals.

8.) Stay Vigilant About Personal Safety - Working night shifts as a law enforcement officer can pose unique safety challenges due to reduced visibility and potential increased risk. Always prioritize your personal safety and take proactive measures to protect yourself during nighttime patrols or assignments.

9.) Drink More Water - Drinking water not only helps you stay awake but it also helps you stay hydrated and keeps your body operating on all cylinders. Few things limit your physical and mental performance like being dehydrated. Aim to drink half your bodyweight in ounces per day. Not all of your fluids must be water but the majority should be water. The more active you are, the more you will need to drink. Think: An extra 8 ounces of water for every 30 minutes of activity.

10.) Limit Caffeine Intake - Stop drinking caffeinated beverages during the 2nd half of your shift. A good rule of thumb is: Stop consuming caffeine 6-8 hours before your planned (remember, you have a routine) bed time. The half-life of caffeine is 5-6 hours in the average adult, meaning if you consume 300mg at 8PM, at 2AM you will still have ~150mg of that caffeine still roaming around your system.

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11.) Avoid Alcohol - While you might think that alcohol will help you fall asleep, it will absolutely wreck the quality of your sleep. Your body (liver) has to work hard to metabolize the alcohol. You will likely have to pee more often due to this process. Your REM sleep is also greatly affected. There are many other ways that alcohol affects your sleep, but you get the point. You may fall asleep quicker, but you will not stay asleep and you will not be rested or recovered in the morning. A solid and consistent sleep routine will help you with sleep way more than alcohol.

12.) Exercise Regularly - Fitness is the foundation of survival and this is more true than ever when working the night shift. Working out consistently will help you to relieve stress and will help you fall asleep faster. Working at night can affect your mental health and may even increase risk of depression. Working out regularly will help to combat depression and reduce the risk due to the endorphins that are released during and after exercise.

13.) Workout Before Your Shift - If you wait until the end of your shift you are likely to find a million excuses as to why you don't want to train for the day. Workout before your shift even begins and you will have more energy throughout your shift, you will feel better about yourself and you will sleep better at night. Plus, it gives you a reason to go to bed earlier. We always say to pick a gym time that you KNOW you will be able to make. One caveat is that if you get paid to workout on shift, then do it! No Excuses!

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14.) Minimum Effective Dose - This one pertains to the last two tips about exercise. You don't need to beat yourself up in the gym 5-7 days a week for 2 hours each day. In fact, if your body is not prepared or accustomed to working out 5 days a week then this level of volume will likely lead to burnout and/or injury. We subscribe to the Minimum Effective Dose Method of training. If you can't make it to the gym for 60 minutes before your shift then cut it down to 30 minutes. Can't make it to the gym at all? Then cut it down to 30 min. and do bodyweight or minimal equipment workouts at home. The key again is consistent hard effort. If you gave yourself 30 minutes of hard work at home every other day, you would be jacked, increase your performance at work, limit the effects of night shift and reduce the risk of injury. As little as 2 days per week can go a long way to making yourself 1% better. As a member of the Effective Fitness Training program you have access to bodyweight only and minimal equipment only workouts to help you get your workouts in regardless of time or equipment. **Plus you get a 14 Day Free Trial!**

15.) Adjust Volume/Intensity/Load - Maybe getting to the gym isn't a problem; that is great. Keep in mind that if you are new to night shift or if you are having a hard time adjusting to night shift then it is smart to adjust your training accordingly. There are a number of ways you can adjust your training to help make sure you don't affect your energy at work or your ability to sleep at night. While you acclimate to your new shift, you can reduce the volume of your workouts by reducing the number of sets for each exercise, or you can simply reduce the amount of reps completed.

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You can also reduce your intensity/effort or load (weight lifted). Lower the weights for a given exercise or with circuits, reduce the intensity by giving 50-75% instead of 80-100%. It's okay to dial things back. Remember, consistency is more important than any other factor when it comes to fitness and health.

16.) Mid Shift Movements - We encourage you to change positions often. Sitting in the patrol car for 12 hours at a time is miserable and is terrible for your body. You are designed to move and you need to change your position and posture often. We suggest that you get out of your car hourly (at a minimum). You don't have to get out for long, just walk around the car. Do a quick stretch or a quick set of 10 squats or pushups. Sitting is not inherently bad, nor is standing. What is bad is staying in one position for long periods of time. Anything over 6 hours is a bad idea and can be negative for your health. Plus, imagine responding to a high stress call after being seated for 6 hours with no movement. You won't be as ready as if you had walked around your car in the last hour.

Choose **one of these exercises** and do a quick set of 10 when you get out of your car:

- **Cossack Squat**
- **World's Greatest Stretch**
- **Single Leg Airplane RDL**
- **Inchworm + Pushup**
- **Air Squats**
- **3 Way Lunge**

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17.) Find a Safe Spot - If you don't want to do your reports at the station (out of sight, out of mind) then make sure you find a good, safe spot where you don't have to look over your shoulder every 10 seconds. Make sure it is well lit and that you know you are in a safe spot.

18.) Study Case Law - If you have down time on night shift, be thankful. Chances are you are busier than day shift. If you do find yourself with extra time or if you are looking for a way to kill time throughout your shift then take the time to study case law. If it isn't case law, then find something else about the profession to study. Use the time that you are getting paid to make yourself better and more effective. Don't waste it on social media. Learn or develop a skill.

19.) Attend Low Light/No Light Training - Tactics change at night or in low/no light situations. If you work night shift then you have a responsibility to train on your skills at night in low/no light scenarios. [Attend a Low/No Light training course](#) to make sure you are as effective as possible.

20.) Always Call for Backup - Make sure that you are communicating with your team and dispatch. If you are heading out on a foot patrol, make sure that you are "calling out" to let everyone know where you will be in case shit hits the fan and you need to call for backup. That's the next point. Always call for backup. Be patient and don't rush. Wait for backup to arrive before you continue.

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21.) High Quality Lights - It's dark out and your life may depend on your ability to shed light on a subject. **Make sure you have a high quality light.** It may be an investment but it is one that you will be thankful for if needed. Also, make sure to charge anything that needs to be charged and bring spare batteries just in case. Same goes for all of your weapon mounted lights. Always check to verify full operation before starting your shift.

22.) Clear Eye Protection - During the day, you will almost always be wearing sunglasses that help protect your eyes from debris.

At night, you are no longer wearing sunglasses so it's smart to wear clear eye protection. Sunglasses don't look weird and neither does clear eye protection, especially when it saves your eyesight. Check your ego.

THANK YOU FOR READING!

We hope that you found these secrets to surviving night shift helpful and that they help you become more prepared and more effective.

Working the night shift in the LE profession is a fact of life and we must come to terms with it. You will likely see a night shift at some point in your career.

When you do, don't fight it. Make a plan on how to overcome the challenge and make the best out of it. You will be better off on the other side.

Remember that consistency in your sleep, nutrition, training and tactics are the key to surviving the night shift. We have the fitness aspect covered for you, all you need to do is sign up and follow the program.

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OF WORKOUTS FOR ONLY \$1**

If you have any questions about this program or anything that Effective Fitness Training has to offer, please shoot them over to coach@effective.fitness.