

Giving Feedback After a Direct Observation

Directly observing your learner during a clinical encounter with a patient allows for specific and timely feedback. Good feedback can clarify and entrench learning. Feedback after a direct observation can reinforce what the learner is doing well, identify areas for improvement and help the learner reflect and develop self-assessment skills.

STEP 1: PREPARE for Feedback

Start planning the focus of your feedback conversation in advance.

Before the observation:

- Consider the learners goals as an area of focus of the observation
- Watch for key and important elements based on your clinical experience (e.g. things that can be missed or overlooked)
- Take notes during the observation - focus on one or two things that you think are valuable to the learner's development and save the bulk of your feedback for after the observation
- Interject only if you think there is feedback that is more important or critical in the moment (e.g. physical examination or procedural technique correction or patient safety concerns)

STEP 2: LISTEN to the Learner

After the observation, listen to the learner - have them reflect on the patient encounter to start your feedback conversation.

- **Preceptor:** *"Let's talk about your foot exam - give me a quick summary of what you saw/did. What aspects of the exam went well?"*

This allows the learner to:

- Start the feedback process by speaking about their clinical encounter rather than just listening
- Gain confidence by speaking their thought process out loud
- Begin to connect the process and the results of the exam

Encouraging the learner to reflect on the encounter can be an effective bridge to the rest of the feedback conversation.

STEP 3: DISCUSS the Encounter

Let the learner know what they did well - aim for 1-2 specific practices for the learner to continue.

- **Preceptor:** *"You took the time to look carefully at the foot, noting change in shape and nail damage, and then you felt for warmth, pulses, sweating, cap refill. Keep taking the time for a good inspection before starting the rest of your exam."*

Ask the learner a question to get them to expand on their summary of the encounter and reflect on what they might want to improve on/do differently:

- **Preceptor:** *"Were there any parts of the exam that you found difficult or that you would do differently the next time?"*
- **Learner:** *"I feel pretty good...I think I remembered everything. But I want to practice more, and I wasn't sure if I positioned myself correctly."*

The learner's response(s) might correlate to the areas you noted for improvement, creating an entry point for some constructive feedback.

STEP 4: CONSIDER Areas for Improvement

There is always a possibility that a learner has difficulty accepting your feedback. Linking areas you for improvement/feedback to the learner's reflections on the encounter can be a helpful place to start.

- **Preceptor:** *"You mentioned that you weren't sure about your positioning. That's a good reflection; through the years I have found that..."*

Focus your feedback on 1-2 specific areas - provide concrete descriptions of actionable behaviour.

- **Preceptor:** *"When performing the Romberg test, ensure they are standing with their feet together while closing their eyes."*

Review key takeaways and highlight an area to work on for next time. Again, specific suggestions are key - make sure that you are focusing on something the learner can change or improve. Think of it as changing what the learner 'does' rather than who they 'are'.