Microskills for Students: Twelve Tips for Improving Learning in the Ambulatory Setting

The “Microskills Approach” is designed to optimize student precepting encounters by encouraging students to share responsibility for their education and training. Below are 12 tips to prepare students for their community-based ambulatory experiences.

1. Ask students to **identify clinical goals** and incorporate them into precepting encounters.
2. Ask students to describe their **clinical background**, then set expectations based on the student’s experience.
3. Provide an **orientation** to the clinical site.
4. Review **patient schedule** to select cases that meet learning goals.
5. Discuss and share effective ways for **reviewing a chart**.
6. Ask students to **share their hypotheses**; this helps you assess how they think through problems.
7. Encourage students to **explain the rationale for their diagnosis** to assess critical thinking and address faulty reasoning.
8. Support students in **self-assessment**.
9. Show students you are available to give **feedback**. It is OK for them to ask for it.
10. Explain that **process-oriented questions** are more effective than strict knowledge questions (see Table 1 in Lipsky, 1999 for examples).
11. Encourage **reflection**.
12. Have students identify topics for **additional exploration** and create a plan to learn more about them.

An education isn’t how much you have committed to memory, or even how much you know. It’s being able to differentiate between what you know and what you don’t.

- Anatole France

**References / Resources:**