

The Five Microskills of Precepting^{1,2}
Residents as Teachers Program
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This is a brief description of a framework that can be useful when you are precepting junior residents or medical students. You are precepting any time they:

1. Work up a new patient and discuss it with you at the time of admission
2. Develop daily plans for patients on your team
3. Have a specific patient care problem to address

The Five (or Seven) Microskills:

1. Setting expectations: Decide what the point of this discussions. Figuring out the differential diagnosis? Choosing an antibiotic? Practicing an oral presentation?
2. Getting a commitment: after hearing the history and/or physical exam, make the learner tell you what he/she thinks is going on before you tell him/her what you think.
3. Probing for supporting evidence: Ask the learner what made him/her come to that conclusion.
4. Reinforcing what was done well: Make sure you are specific (“Your history was very well-organized; I could really follow the chain of events even though it was really complicated”).
5. Correcting mistakes: Be specific and give details of what could be done differently next time (“Your physical exam was not as complete as it could have been; next time you have an asthmatic you should be sure that you report the respiratory rate, whether there is grunting, flaring and retracting, and the quality of the air entry as well as whether or not you heard wheezing”).
6. Teaching general rules: Point out how this situation is like other common situations. Don’t make an exception to the rule sound like the norm.
7. Encourage reflection and integrations: Ask the learner questions that make him/her think about the situations like “Was it hard for you to talk to the parent about this?” or “Did this child look like the last asthmatic you saw?”

Not every interaction requires all seven steps. Do what makes sense!

1. Neher JO, Gordon KC, Meyer B, Stevens N. A five-step “microskills model of clinical teaching. J Am Board Fam Pract 1992;5:419-24.
2. <http://whichta.kumc.edu/strategies/microskills.html>