OSCE checklist for APGAR score

An OSCE checklist for the APGAR score covers scoring appearance, pulse, grimace, activity and respiration from 0 to 2 at 1 and 5 minutes after birth, adding them to a total out of 10, and starting help at once if the baby needs it rather than waiting for the score.

OSCE checklist for APGAR score: steps to practise

1. Wash your hands, wear gloves, check the resuscitation area is ready with a warm surface and working equipment, and know how to call for help.
2. Note the exact time of birth and start the clock.
3. Dry the baby, remove the wet towel and keep them warm, and assess breathing, tone and heart rate. If the baby is not breathing well or the heart rate is slow, call for help and start newborn life support at once, without waiting to give a score.
4. At 1 minute, score appearance, meaning skin colour: pink all over 2, body pink with blue hands and feet 1, blue or pale all over 0.
5. Score pulse, listening with a stethoscope: over 100 per minute 2, below 100 1, absent 0.
6. Score grimace, meaning response to stimulation: cries or pulls away 2, grimace 1, no response 0.
7. Score activity, meaning muscle tone: active movement 2, some bending of limbs 1, limp 0.
8. Score respiration: good breathing with a strong cry 2, slow or irregular 1, absent 0.
9. Add the five scores to give a total from 0 to 10, repeat at 5 minutes, and repeat at later times as your policy says if the score is low.
10. Record each score with the time, explain to the parents, and report any low score or concern to the midwife, neonatal team or doctor.

What candidates commonly forget

- Delaying resuscitation to calculate a score
- Scoring pulse by feel only when listening with a stethoscope is more reliable
- Not recording the time of each score

- Forgetting to dry the baby and keep them warm
- Not repeating at 5 minutes

Local policy comes first

This is our own practice checklist. Your college, hospital or country may do some steps differently. Where local policy and this list disagree, follow local policy.

Practise the hands-on steps with a classmate or in a skills lab, because an AI patient cannot watch your technique. You can practise the talking part with an AI patient, and try one station free with no sign-up. Back to the OBG nursing OSCE page: OBG nursing OSCE, or see the full OSCE checklist list.

Common questions

What is the OSCE checklist for the APGAR score?

Note the time of birth, dry and warm the baby, score appearance, pulse, grimace, activity and respiration from 0 to 2 at 1 and 5 minutes, add them and record, and start help at once if the baby needs it.

What do the letters stand for?

Appearance, pulse, grimace, activity, respiration.

Does a low score mean I wait?

No. A baby who is not breathing well or has a slow heart rate needs help and newborn life support at once. The score is recorded, but it never delays help.

Sources

- Resuscitation Council UK: newborn resuscitation and support of transition of infants at birth
- WHO pocket book of hospital care for children
- NICE NG235: intrapartum care

Checked 2026-11-13. Fees and rules change, so confirm them with the regulator before you book.