OSCE checklist for blood pressure measurement

An OSCE checklist for blood pressure measurement runs from preparing the patient and choosing the right cuff to reading the result, recording it and acting on it. The list below suits a manual or an automated device.

OSCE checklist for blood pressure measurement: steps to practise

1. Wash or rub your hands. Check the device works and the cuff is clean.
2. Introduce yourself, confirm identity with two identifiers and explain what you will do. Gain consent.
3. Ask about recent exercise, caffeine, pain and need to pass urine, and let the patient rest if needed.
4. Seat or position the patient comfortably, back supported, legs uncrossed, arm bare and supported at about heart level.
5. Choose the cuff size to suit the arm. Place it on the upper arm with the marker over the brachial artery.
6. Manual: find the brachial pulse, inflate until it disappears, then deflate, wait, and re-inflate above that level. Place the stethoscope over the artery and deflate steadily. Note where the sounds first appear and where they disappear.
7. Automated: start the cycle and keep still and silent until it ends.
8. Release the cuff, remove it, and record both numbers and the arm used. Note the position and any problem.
9. Compare with the patient's usual readings and your chart. Say what you would do if the result is high or low, and repeat or escalate according to policy.
10. Tell the patient the result, thank them, leave them comfortable and clean the equipment.

What candidates commonly forget

- Cuff size. A wrong cuff gives a wrong reading, so say aloud that you checked it.

- Patient rest and arm support. A dangling arm changes the number.
- Talking to the patient during the reading.
- Writing the arm used, and the position, with the number.
- Saying what you would do next with an abnormal result.

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. Thresholds for high or low readings, and whether you check both arms, vary by guideline and by country, so use your local one. You can practise with an AI patient, and try one station free with no sign-up. See also the general OSCE nursing checklist.

Common questions

What is the correct arm position for blood pressure?

Bare, supported and roughly level with the heart, with the patient seated and the back supported. Follow your local guideline for details.

Which numbers do I record?

Record both the systolic and diastolic values, the arm used and the patient's position, plus the time.

What if the first reading is high?

Do not decide from one reading. Rest the patient, repeat according to your policy and escalate if your chart or local guideline says so.

Sources

- NICE NG136: Hypertension in adults
- NHS: High blood pressure

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