OSCE communication checklist

An OSCE communication checklist covers the opening, listening, plain language, showing you care, checking understanding and the close, and it applies to every station. This is our own practice list.

The checklist, step by step

1. Greet the patient by name, say who you are, and say what you plan to do and how long it will take.
2. Ask an open question first, and listen without interrupting.
3. Use the patient's own words back to them to show you are listening.
4. Signpost: say what you are about to ask or do, and why.
5. Use plain words. Explain any medical word you cannot avoid.
6. Give information in short pieces, and check what the patient has understood after each piece.
7. Notice the patient's feelings, and respond to them in words before you carry on.
8. Ask about worries and what the patient would like to happen.
9. Summarise what you have heard and what happens next.
10. Invite questions, and close warmly.

What candidates commonly forget

- Introducing yourself and saying your role.
- Using the patient's name.
- Pausing.
- Checking understanding, not just asking "do you understand?".
- Responding to emotion before moving on.

How to use this list

This is our own practice checklist. Exam bodies mark in their own way. Use it to build a routine, then say each step aloud as you do it. You can also practise with an AI patient on this site, and try one station free with no sign-up. For more on how to use a checklist, see our OSCE tips.

Common questions

What are the top communication marks to practise?

The same few skills appear everywhere: opening well, listening, plain words, empathy and checking understanding. Practise them on every station.

Where can I read about good communication?

NICE has guidance on patient experience and on shared decision making.

Is this a marking sheet?

No. It is our own list for practice.

Sources

- NICE: Patient experience in adult NHS services (CG138)
- NICE: Shared decision making (NG197)

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