OSCE checklist for knee examination

An OSCE checklist for knee examination starts by watching the patient walk, follows look, feel, move, then the special tests for fluid and ligaments, and ends with the hip. This is our own practice list.

The checklist, step by step

1. Wash your hands, introduce yourself, confirm identity, explain and gain consent. Ask about pain.
2. Expose both legs from the groin to the feet.
3. Watch the patient stand and walk first.
4. Look at both knees lying and standing: swelling, scars, redness, alignment and thigh wasting.
5. Feel for warmth, then the joint lines and the kneecap. Test for an effusion.
6. Move the knee: active, then passive. Feel for a grating sensation.
7. Test the ligaments and the cartilage with the special tests your course teaches.
8. Examine the hip, and say that you would also examine the ankle and the back.
9. Check the pulses and the nerves at the foot, if time allows.
10. Thank the patient, wash your hands and say what you think is wrong.

What candidates commonly forget

- Watching the patient walk before the couch.
- Comparing both knees.
- Examining the hip, as hip pain can show as knee pain.
- Asking before moving a painful knee.
- Saying what you would do next, such as X-ray or aspiration.

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 original examination stations, see the PLAB 2 stations list.

Common questions

What order should I use for a knee examination?

Most courses use look, feel, move, special tests, then the joint above and below. Follow the order you are taught.

Is this a marking sheet?

No. It is our own list for practice.

Which conditions might a knee station use?

Osteoarthritis, ligament injury and a swollen painful knee are common themes, so know the features of each. The NICE osteoarthritis guideline and the NHS knee pain page are good starting points.

Sources

- NICE: Osteoarthritis in over 16s (NG226)
- NHS: Knee pain
- NHS: Osteoarthritis
- WHO: Hand hygiene

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