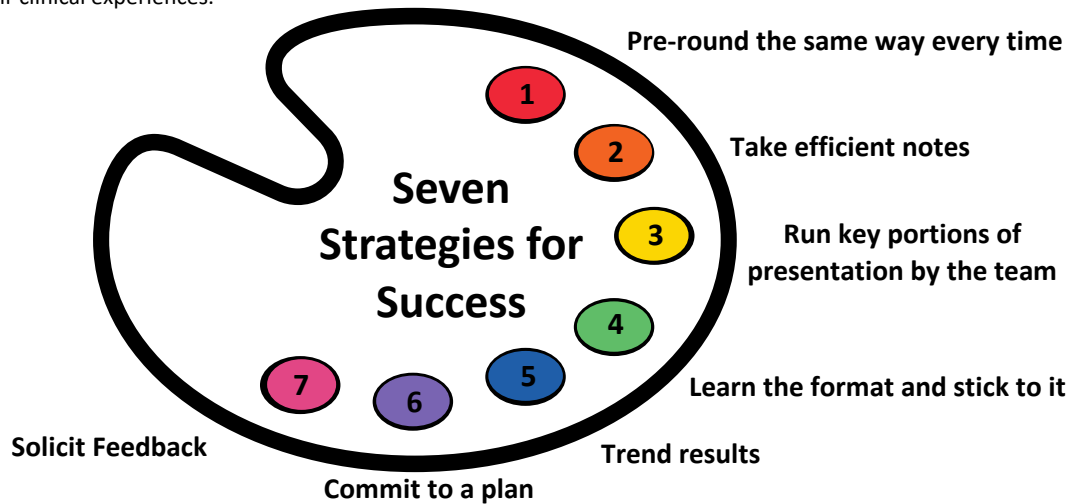


# The Art of Mastering Oral Case Presentations: A Third Year Medical Student's Perspective

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Oral case presentations are integral for effective team communication and play a critical role in medical student education.<sup>1,2</sup> Often, oral case presentation skills are learned through trial and error during clerkships.<sup>3</sup> While each medical specialty is unique, we present seven universal strategies to help medical students succeed with oral case presentations from the beginning of their clinical experiences.



## Definition of oral case presentation:

1. Team member presents patient information in a standardized manner to all team members with the goal of providing justification for their diagnostic and therapeutic plan.<sup>4</sup>
2. Team members reflect upon presentation and offer additional insight/advice.

## 1. Pre-round the same way every time 🕒

- Purpose:** Studies on Cognitive Learning Theory show that standardization frees working memory, thus improving learning capacity by reducing mental effort and increasing efficiency.<sup>5</sup>
- Do:** Review the chart in the same order every time.
- Don't:** Get distracted by abnormal results and jump out of order to review them.
- Pro-Tip:** Communicate with the overnight nurse to get patient updates.

## 2. Take efficient notes while pre-rounding 📝

- Purpose:** Note-taking aids in both memory and comprehension.<sup>6</sup> This will remind you to share important information when on the spot in front of the team.
- Do:** As you progress, write less subjective portions and write only harder to remember objective data (e.g. vital signs, lab results).
- Don't:** Read your notes verbatim as you present, use them as a reference.
- Pro-Tip:** Use different colors to make key results stand out.

## 3. Run key portions of your presentations by the team 🗨️

- Purpose:** Ensures team members are on the same page and reduces interruptions.
- Do:** Focus on discussing your top differential/the order of your problem list.
- Don't:** Give your full presentation as residents are also busy.
- Pro-Tip:** Ask your resident when would be the most convenient time to talk.

## 4. Learn the format and stick to it 🔄

- Purpose:** Using a standardized communication method--typically subjective, objective, assessment, and plan--provides a framework for clinical reasoning makes information retrieval easier.<sup>2</sup>
- Do:** Refrain from editorializing (e.g. why you think the patient has abnormal vitals *in the objective section*; save this for the assessment and plan).
- Don't:** "For vital signs, patient has a fever of 38°C which I think is due to pneumonia."
- Pro-Tip:** Ask what format/content is most relevant to that specialty.

## 5. Trend results 📈

- Purpose:** Provides context for abnormal results/vitals, signaling that you understand their significance.
- Do:** "Hemoglobin is 9 from a baseline of 14."
- Don't:** "Hemoglobin is 9."
- Pro-Tip:** Present the range rather than the most recent value. "Heart rate ranged from 76-113" is more informative than "heart rate is 76."

## 6. Commit to a plan 📋

- Purpose:** The assessment and plan showcases your knowledge and clinical reasoning. Provide your thought process for your differential and plan.
- Do:** "I want to order a chest x-ray to rule out pneumonia."
- Don't:** "I am not sure if this is correct...but I think we could consider ordering a chest x-ray?"
- Pro-Tip:** Don't allow pauses that invite interruptions.

## 7. Solicit feedback 🗣️

- Purpose:** Deliberate practice is a focused, coached effort to improve performance at well-defined tasks.<sup>8</sup> Real-time feedback is critical.
- Do:** "What would you have included/excluded?" "How would you have prioritized the problem list?"
- Don't:** Wait until the end of the rotation to solicit feedback.
- Pro-Tip:** Note changes made to your assessment and plan by the team and incorporate these into your next presentation.

**Disclosures:** Dr. Lessing reports serving as an associate editor of the freely-available Diagnostic Excellence course for Aquifer, Inc. He is not involved in Aquifer's freely-available Oral Case Presentation course. Ms. Konon and Dr. Hagan report no disclosures.

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