

# Teaching the Physical Examination in “SHORT” Encounters

## *Objectives in using this approach:*

---

1. Efficiently teach physical examination during brief patient encounters
2. Prepare to use every patient encounter as a physical examination teaching opportunity
3. Maintain learner-centeredness and patient-centeredness during physical examination teaching

## THE “SHORT” TECHNIQUE:



### Set the Stage

---

#### *Goals of the step:*

- Establish a positive learning climate
- Prioritize physical examination teaching
- Frame the encounter as an opportunity to practice hypothesis driven exam or to practice fundamental skills

#### *Example phrases:*

- “This is a risk free opportunity for you to work on physical examination skills.”
- “We will create physical examination learning opportunities for most of the patients we see today.”
- “We have a busy clinic, so we will have a plan before we go into the room. The next patient is here with a cough...”



## Highlight Specific Goals

---

### *Goals of the step:*

- Establish specific learning goals
- Narrow the scope of the encounter
- Focus the student on salient examination findings

### *Example phrases:*

- “What are two possible causes of cough?”
- “What are two physical examination findings that would go along with those causes?”
- “Wheezes and crackles are good ideas”
- “When we get to the exam, you will do a lung exam and describe her breathe sounds. I will coach you on the exam and give you feedback.”



## Observe and Coach

---

### *Goals of the step:*

- Establish specific learning goals
- Narrow the scope of the encounter
- Focus the student on salient examination findings

### *Example phrases:*

- “What are two possible causes of cough?”
- “What are two physical examination findings that would go along with those causes?”
- “Wheezes and crackles are good ideas”
- “When we get to the exam, you will do a lung exam and describe her breathe sounds. I will coach you on the exam and give you feedback.”



## Require a Commitment

---

### *Goal of the step:*

- Students to commit to description of findings, even when uncertain

### *Example phrases:*

- “Listen again and describe what you hear without using qualifiers, no matter what it is that you hear.”
- “Pneumonia is a syndrome – can you describe the actual sounds that you hear, rather than a possible diagnosis?”



## Teach Based on Findings

---

### *Goals of the step:*

- Minimum: Verify findings, allow student to re-examine until calibrated
- Extended: In depth discussion of findings, differential diagnosis

### *Example phrases:*

- “Wheezing is a continuous, musical sound ... I am hearing discontinuous popping noise, which sound like velcro to me. Listen again here until you can hear the crackles.”
- “Now that you can hear the crackles, can you tell me some causes of crackles?”