Use the following checklist to help ensure quality communication with your patients.

**Initial Contact:**

Introduce yourself by name.

Make eye contact.

Make physical contact (shake hand, touch arm).

Ask the patient how they would like to be addressed.

Record their preference in their chart.

Explain what you will be doing.

Ask the patient if they have any questions.

Listen to and look at the patient. Nod your head to indicate you are actively listening if continuing to record information in the medical record.

**Questioning:**

Use open-ended questions whenever possible.

Ask questions one at a time.

Allow the patient to respond in their own terms.

**Facilitation:**

Encourage patients to continue, using phrases such as “go on.”

Use nonverbal cues to demonstrate interest, such as nodding your head.

Paraphrase or restate what the patient has said for clarification.

Do not interrupt the patient.

Acknowledge and empathize with your patient’s feelings: “You seem worried” or “I sense you are concerned.”

Avoid paternalistic or authoritarian statements, such as “Don’t worry; you don’t need to understand what this is all about.”

Use understandable lay language, avoiding technical medical terms.

**Summarize:**

Conclude by summarizing what occurred during the visit.

Tell the patient when you will expect to receive test results, if applicable.

Verify the patient understands treatment plans or instructions.

Develop a plan with the patient for future care, if appropriate.