

# The Teach-Back Method

Obj. 8.8: Demonstrate the teach-back method to communicate health information.



## Your Learning Preferences

How do you learn? Explain the best methods, strategies, or types of learning that you have found to be the most personally effective.

DISCUSS

## Physician Communication:

With a partner, read through the three statements below that might be made by a pharmacist, physician, or other health care professional. **What do they have in common?**

- “I want to be sure that I explained your medication correctly. Can you tell me how you are going to take this medicine?”
- “We covered a lot today about your diabetes, and I want to make sure that I explained things clearly. So let’s review what we discussed. What are three strategies that will help you control your diabetes?”
- “What are you going to do when you get home?”

Source: <http://www.nchealthliteracy.org/toolkit/tool5.pdf>

NEW  
INFO

## The Teach Back Method

Studies have shown that 40-80 percent of the medical information patients receive is forgotten immediately (1) and nearly half of the information retained is incorrect. (2) One of the easiest ways to close the gap of communication between clinician and patient is to employ the “teach-back” method, also known as the “show-me” method or “closing the loop.” (3) Teach-back is a way to confirm that you have explained to the patient what they need to know in a manner that the patient understands. Patient understanding is confirmed when they explain it back to you. It can also help the clinic staff members identify explanations and communication strategies that are most commonly understood by patients.

1. Kessels RP. Patients' memory for medical information. *J R Soc Med.* May 2003;96(5):219-22.
2. Anderson JL, Dodman S, Kopelman M, Fleming A. Patient information recall in a rheumatology clinic. *Rheumatology.* 1979;18(1):18-22.
3. Schillinger D, Piette J, Grumbach K, et al. Closing the loop: physician communication with diabetic patients who have low health literacy. *Arch Intern Med.* 2003;163(1):83-90.



### Basic Communication Tips:

*Always:*

- 1) Use plain language.
- 2) Slow down.
- 3) Break it down into short statements.
- 4) Focus on 2 or 3 most important concepts
- 5) Check for understanding using **teach-back**.

#### So what is Teach Back?

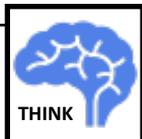
- Asking patients to repeat **in their own words** what they need to know or do, in a non-shaming way.
- **NOT** a test of the patient, but of how well **you** explained a concept.
- A chance to check for understanding and, if necessary, re-teach the information.

#### Testimonial

"I decided to do teach-back on five patients. With one mother and her child, I concluded the visit by saying 'So tell me what you are going to do when you get home.' The mother just looked at me without a reply. She could not tell me what instructions I had just given her. I explained the instructions again and then she was able to teach them back to me. The most amazing thing about this "ah ha" moment was that I had no idea she did not understand until I asked her to teach it back to me. I was so wrapped up in delivering the message that I did not realize that it wasn't being received."

*-resident physician, pediatric office*

Source: <http://www.nhealthliteracy.org/toolkit/tool5.pdf>



### Video: Teach-Back Examples

Watch the Teach-Back video, which features two examples:

- Scenario #1: Adjusting Insulin Dosage
- Scenario #1: Adjusting Blood Pressure Dosage

**How did the teach-back method go in these examples? What went well? What could be improved?**



### Your Turn: Partner Role Plays

Teach a simple piece of information to your partner & have them teach back.

#### Directions:

1. Plan a SIMPLE lesson. Choose a hobby, interest, skill, or recent lesson topic from school and select two pieces of information about it that you want to teach. Write them down.
2. Explain the information to your partner. Try to be as interactive as possible by using questions.
3. Ask your partner to repeat the information back to you. (i.e. "I want to be sure I explained this clearly, could you tell me...")
4. Determine whether your partner "got it" or not. If not, re-teach or re-explain the information.
5. Switch roles & repeat!



### Improving Communication Using the Teach-Back Method

For each scenario below, explain how the health care professional could improve the communication.

**Scenario #1:** Eliza, an 8-year-old patient, is diagnosed with asthma. Her pharmacist is filling a prescription for her first inhaler. He says to her mother, "You can show her how to use it. If you have any questions, check the pamphlet" and hurries her along so he can get to the next patient standing in line.

**Scenario #2:** Jim, a 68-year-old man who has prostate cancer, is about to start chemotherapy and radiation. His doctor quickly explains what the process will look like and then says, "I know it's a lot of information, but don't worry too much about the details. We will handle everything."



### Teach-Back Practice

Practice the teach-back method by choosing any topic, preparing a short and simple lesson, finding a volunteer to be your "pupil" and engaging in the teach-back process. When you finish, write a short reflection (1 paragraph) about how it went. Did it work? What went well? What would you improve upon next time?