

Master Patient Communication

20 Practical English Phrases for Healthcare Professionals

FREE PRACTICAL GUIDE

Clear communication is an essential professional skill in healthcare. This guide provides practical English phrases that healthcare professionals and learners can practice and adapt for everyday conversations.

How to use this guide: Read each phrase aloud, practice it in a realistic situation, and adapt the language to your professional role and workplace.

20 Essential Communication Phrases

1. Introduce yourself

"Hello, my name is _____. I'm a member of your healthcare team."

A professional introduction helps patients understand who you are and your role.

2. Ask how the patient feels

"How are you feeling today?"

A simple open question that gives the patient a chance to describe how they are doing.

3. Ask about the main concern

"What brings you in today?"

A natural and professional way to ask why the patient is seeking care.

4. Invite the patient to explain

"Could you tell me a little more about that?"

Useful when you need more detail without interrupting or making assumptions.

5. Clarify what you heard

"Just to make sure I understand, you're saying that..."

Summarizing helps confirm that you understood the patient correctly.

6. Ask about timing

"When did these symptoms first start?"

Helps establish when a symptom began and how it may have changed.

7. Ask about pain

"On a scale from 0 to 10, how would you rate your pain?"

A commonly used structure for discussing pain intensity when appropriate.

8. Show empathy

"I'm sorry you're going through this."

Acknowledges the patient's experience without making promises about the outcome.

9. Offer calm support

"We'll take this one step at a time."

A reassuring phrase that can help make the next steps feel more manageable.

10. Explain what happens next

"The next step is to review the information and discuss the plan with you."

Clear explanations can help patients understand what to expect.

11. Ask permission

"Is it okay if I examine you now?"

A respectful way to invite participation before an examination or procedure.

12. Use simple language

"Let me explain that in a simple way."

Signals that you want the information to be understandable and accessible.

13. Check understanding

"What questions do you have about what we discussed?"

Creates space for the patient to ask questions and clarify important information.

14. Give clear instructions

"Please follow the instructions we discussed and contact us if you have concerns."

Adapt instructions to your workplace procedures and the patient's situation.

15. Discuss follow-up

"Here is what you should do next."

Use this phrase before clearly explaining the follow-up plan.

16. Ask a colleague for clarification

"Could you clarify what you would like me to do next?"

A professional alternative when a workplace instruction is unclear.

17. Collaborate with the team

“Could we review this patient’s care plan together?”

Useful for respectful teamwork and collaborative communication.

18. Handle a language barrier

“Would you like us to arrange a qualified medical interpreter?”

Professional interpretation services can support clearer communication when available.

19. Respond when you did not understand

“I’m sorry, could you please repeat that?”

A polite and professional way to ask for repetition.

20. Close the conversation

“Before we finish, is there anything else you’d like to ask?”

Gives the patient a final opportunity to raise concerns or questions.

Quick Practice

Scenario 1 — New patient: Practice introducing yourself, asking what brings the patient in, and inviting them to explain their concern.

Scenario 2 — Explaining next steps: Practice explaining what will happen next and asking what questions the patient has.

Scenario 3 — Team communication: Practice asking a colleague to review a care plan and requesting clarification when instructions are unclear.

Communication Tips

- Use clear, respectful language.
- Listen without interrupting when possible.
- Avoid unnecessary jargon and explain unfamiliar terms.
- Check understanding instead of assuming.
- Follow your workplace procedures and professional scope of practice.
- Use qualified interpretation services when appropriate and available.

Important Educational Note

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