

Tips for Students for a Successful Preceptorship

Following are comments gathered from second-year students about what helped them have successful experiences in their first-year preceptorships.

- I don't have much to contribute, but I also **carry a small notebook during preceptorships to jot down cases, questions, and things to look back on later.** I've found that while it's easy to ask questions during preceptorships in family med/primary care, it's a lot harder to know when it's appropriate in other specialties (like in emergency med where it's constantly busy and the attending has a lot on their plate).
- Something I'd also encourage is to **encourage more students to engage with MAs, nurses, NPs, PAs, etc during preceptorships rather than just the MDs.** Oftentimes the mid-level staff do a lot of work that physicians overlook and have different perspectives to patient care; we tend to miss them as medical students.
- From my experience I've found **taking the initiative and asking my preceptor if I can do the H&P on a particular patient has served me well.** My preceptor first semester was a family med doc and she let me do the history and as much of the physical exam I felt comfortable doing. This semester I'm with an ob/gyn and he calls me when someone is in labor and lets me do exams in the office. All of this because **I told them what we've been learning in ICM and that I'd like practice in the clinic setting.** In some instances I was able to integrate what we learned in biochem or cell phys when I was with my preceptor, but I was mainly focused on polishing my clinical skills.
- I'm assuming in Seattle the preceptor program isn't what it is in Wyoming. But what I'd suggest is **taking the initiative, ask questions, and show your preceptor you are capable of doing things in the clinic** and you'll get a much better experience than simply following the physician from room to room.
- Something I have found to be an absolutely essential component of a great preceptorship experience was **having a sit-down meeting with your preceptor to clarify goals/expectations for the quarter at the very beginning.**
- **Don't hesitate to ask questions no matter how busy your preceptor seems.** They agreed to take you on and you are there to learn so ask away, that's the whole point.
- If you feel like you are overwhelmed by the pace of things take a moment, find a computer, log into the library, bring up a consult website (UpToDate, MD Consult, Micromedex, etc.) and read. **There is nothing wrong with learning at your own pace.**
- **Push yourself.** The only way to learn medicine is to get your hands dirty so don't be afraid to ask seemingly redundant or superficial questions. No one is born with the deductive powers of a skilled physician.