

MANTRAS TO HELP SURVIVE CLINICAL CLERKSHIPS

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1. Know how to do a THOROUGH PHYSICAL EXAM!

No one will expect you to know everything about medicine on your first day on the wards as a third year medical student! But you WILL BE expected to know how to do a complete physical exam. Review pertinent exam before each rotation—i.e. Complete neuro exam before starting neurology; complete well baby exam before starting pediatrics.

2. Know your patient’s “Inside and Out”!

One way to impress your Attendings and upper level Residents is to know the patient you are caring for VERY WELL. Know their labs, allergies, medications, Past Medical History almost as well as you know YOURSELF! This mantra will quickly give you the title of being ‘reliable’ and set you apart from your peers!

3. Get good at reading EKGs and Chest X-rays!

Be prepared to be picked on during morning reports and clinical rounds. The most common topics where medical students are pimped on are how to read EKGs and Chest X-rays. If you can master the basics, you’re golden!

4. Know how to interpret basic labs.

You should be able to recognize which labs are grossly abnormal and which are within normal limits. Often, medical students are asked to interpret a CBC or a complete metabolic panel and you have to recognize the abnormalities and come up with common reasons of what might be causing the abnormality. Keep your Maxwell's handy!

5. SHOW ENTHUSIASM!!

This is your time to learn and grow as a student and a future clinician. Be a happy worker. Residents and interns have a hard life as it is, and behaving in a reluctant or uninterested manner will make things more difficult for them. Try to have a positive attitude. Make it a goal to learn SOMETHING from EVERY patient encounter—trust me, EVERY patient will teach you SOMETHING!

6. Hard work will go a long way!

Always try to be the first one to arrive and last one to leave. This shows your desire to learn and is another way to get good evaluations! Always remember that late-comers get noticed, and this is NOT what you want to get noticed for!

7. Always READ and KEEP READING!!

On your clinical rotations you will have a lot more time than you did as a first or second year medical student OR as a future resident! So make best use of it and ALWAYS READ about what you see on your rotations and keep learning.

8. Be cognizant of rotations you like AND dislike.

Take everything as a learning experience and be aware of what rotations and/or aspects of rotations you like or dislike as this will help you narrow your final field of choice. But always remember to RESPECT the rotation you are on—respect the Residents and Attendings' time and profession and do not discount them by blatantly showing disinterest!

9. Ask Questions!

This is your time to learn so make the best use of it. Asking questions shows your eagerness to learn and your interest in the field. Also, this is the best way to learn during your third year rotations and discuss articles you read and impress your Residents and Attendings!

10. Think about recommendation letters.

You should start planning in advance; especially if you are sure of what specialty you want to go into. Scope out faculty and/or Attendings who can write you good letters of recommendation. It is a good idea to get more letters than you will need. You can always decide in the end which ones you will actually use.