

Teach Back



Teach Back is a conversational tool you can use to help patients understand important information. It involves asking the patient to repeat back information you have told them in their words.

Teach Back will help you know if your information and instructions have been understood. It enables you to hear directly from the patient what they have understood and provides opportunity for clarification. This promotes patient understanding, participation in decision making (shared decision making) and self-management of their health.

Who is this tool for?

All clinical staff (nurses, midwives, doctors and allied health professionals). Other staff who need to communicate information to patients, families and carers (e.g. consumer-facing administrative / ancillary staff) may also find using this tool helpful.

When should you use this tool?

When communicating with patients, families and carers, in particular when you are providing important health information for the patient to follow. Examples can be found [here](#).



Using Teach Back

- 1. Plan how you will deliver information.**
Prioritise important information to remove jargon and technical terms.
- 2. Chunk** – group the information into multiple chunks with only 1-2 important points in each chunk.
- 3. Deliver** – display comfortable, open body language and make eye contact. Consider using reader-friendly printed materials, lists and graphics to complement the process. These can be given to the patient.
- 4. Check understanding** – ask the patient to repeat back to you what they heard. Actively listen until they have finished before you decide whether to continue to the next chunk, or reiterate the information. Encourage them to write things down if that will help their understanding.
- 5. Repeat** – if you need to clarify and explain again try a different approach by using their words or a simple drawing.
- 6. Close the loop** – once all chunks of information are understood, ask the patient to repeat the key information back to you.

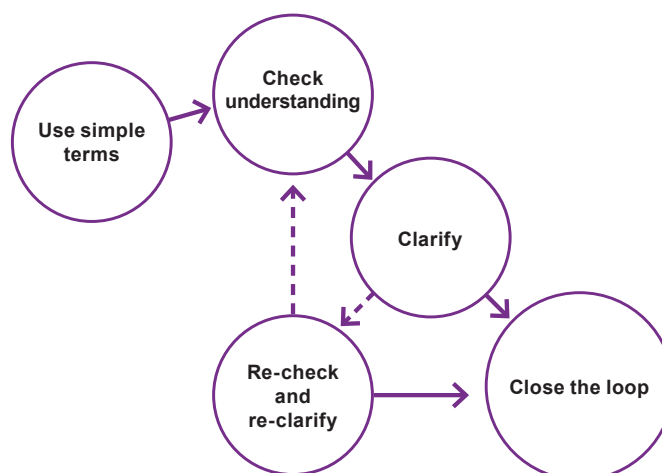


Figure 1: Modified from teachback.org



Why Teach Back works

Chunking or breaking up your full message or information makes it easier for the patient to understand it. You can check understanding of each chunk as you build the whole message. Information is delivered in the patient's language not yours, it will make sense to them.

Avoiding yes/no questions decreases the chance that your patient will say yes just to please you, even when they don't understand.

Closing the loop is important as it helps people remember and make sense of the whole message, meaning action is more likely.

Teach Back is not

Teach Back is not a test or a judgment of patient intelligence or literacy. Patient understanding is an indicator of how well you have explained something.

Teach Back is not a one-size fits all approach or a standard script. You will need to be flexible and adjust your language appropriately for each patient. It is a framework that you may use multiple times in a conversation – it is likely you will need to re-clarify and repeat with chunks or pieces of the full information.

Other factors that may influence understanding

If after using teach-back, the patient does not understand the information, consider:

- Are they using their glasses, hearing aids, or other assistive devices?
- Are there other factors impacting the teach-back exchange? For example cultural expectations or beliefs, health status, cognitive state, 'white coat' reaction or anxiety?
- Do they really need to know all the information now?
- Will a factsheet or list with important relevant information to take away with them help?

You may also consider involving a family member or patient advocate in the conversation if confusion persists.

Interested in going deeper?

A set of videos showing examples, including using an interpreter, can be found [here](#). In particular, we recommend you look and share the following:

- #1 – Customer Experiences
- #7c – Clarify, re-check and re-clarify
- #8a and 8b – Chunk and check
- #9 – Key elements

[Making teach-back part of routine practice – tips for starting out](#)

Safety Fundamentals and Accreditation

Implementing this Safety Fundamental for Person Centred Communication will support healthcare organisations to demonstrate they are meeting actions in *National Standards 2: Partnering with Consumers*, *3: Preventing and Controlling Healthcare-Associated Infection*, *4: Medication Safety*, *5: Comprehensive Care* and *6: Communicating for Safety*.

Acknowledgement and source

The CEC consumer partners for their input and support

www.teachback.org

<https://www.ahrq.gov/health-literacy/quality-resources/tools/literacy-toolkit/healthlittoolkit2-tool5.html>

¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC539473/>