

Start the visit by building an agenda

For a first visit, or the beginning of any visit, ask the patient what's at the top of their list, then share yours. You're making sure you're using your time wisely, and making sure your patient has a chance to voice her concerns. Adapted from our book.

STEP	WHAT YOU SAY & DO
1. Prepare with intention.	Familiarize yourself with the patient you are about to meet.
2. Welcome your patient.	"Nice to meet you." "Great to see you again." Not: "You look great." (The patient might not feel great!)
3. Ask about your patient's main concerns for the visit.	"What are the important questions you wanted me to answer today?" "Anything else?" (Often the most important issue is not the first.)
4. Listen intently and completely.	Sit down, lean forward and position yourself to listen; don't interrupt. Your patient is a valuable source of information.
5. Explain your agenda.	"There are 2 things I wanted to make sure we talked about..."
6. Proposed an agenda that combines the patient's and your concerns. Be prepared to negotiate.	"How about if we talk about your question first, then cover my 2 things?" or "Given these things, what is most important for you to cover?"
7. Ask for feedback.	"Do you feel like we've covered the agenda? How did we do?"