

B. Laboratory

II. Teaching skills for the lab

Teaching skills for lab
Linda Harrison CST

Lab instruction is a vital part of the surgical technology program. Intensive lab instruction is invaluable to the ST student and their progression into the clinical setting.

Lab instruction should mimic the OR experience and routine in as much detail as possible.

My general rule of thumb is, stress the small stuff and intensify the big stuff.

Lab instruction is more beneficial to the student if taught in small groups. I work with a 5:1 ratio in the lab setting.

In an ideal world each step must be mastered before progressing to the next. In “our” world that isn’t possible. A student may be working on more than one skill at time. The student must be able to multitask and in most cases they are pushed to complete tasks when they don’t feel as capable or comfortable as they think they should. When teaching lab skills it is important to include the rationale for the skill, demonstrate the skill, allow time for the student to practice the skill and review a ‘letter perfect’ return demonstration of the skill by the student.

Giving the student exact written steps to performing a skill helps. They must learn the steps in the exact order without prompting from the reviewer. See if they can tell you the steps before they perform the action. This will also help them to get their thoughts in order and think things out in a logical manner. Another approach is to allow them to talk themselves through the demonstration of the skill.

I allow the students to work in small groups and am constantly checking their progress with mini skills pop tests. I’ll pull a student out of the group and ask them to perform a skill of my choosing. If they succeed they are rewarded and if they fail, they simply don’t get the reward and are warned they may be pulled again at any time. I tell them that these unannounced “quizzes” count towards their total number of attempts. Remember, they only get three chances to complete a skill.

Most programs limit the number of times a student can attempt a skill for check off. Mine have three chances to demonstrate a skill and it must be perfect and “appear” natural. By this I mean, the steps should flow in a natural pattern of movement, one step flowing into the next without hesitation.

Surgical Technology students should (not) or (never) be allowed in the operating room without competence in the basic skills. The staff feels that it is the responsibility of the school to make sure the students are proficient in the basic skills of scrubbing, gowning, gloving and recognition of the sterile field. The staff also feels that the student should be able to recognize the basic instruments and instrument categories.

