

TEACHING SKILLS FOR THE LAB

Obviously, the most important factor to incorporate into the lab is practice, practice, practice....the more time that can be set aside for the students to practice, including formal lab time and out-of-class time, the better they will be able to hone their skills and do well on the skills check-offs. Here are some tips and hints on how to teach in the lab.

- Show a video of the skill(s) to be learned for that day in lab.
- Instructor demonstrates each skill.
- Video tape the students so they can review.
- Form the skills to be learned into “blocks of skills” so that it is manageable for the instructor when teaching and provides a logical sequence for the student. For example, scrubbing, gowning, and gloving is one block; patient skin prep and draping is another block, and so forth.
- Provide the skill check-offs to the student so they can learn the sequence of events for a particular skill and be prepared for the check-off.
- Rotate the students through all roles of the O.R. team in the lab, i.e. circulator, second scrub, first scrub.
- Lab skills should definitely be taught by someone who is up-to-date in the first scrub role.
- Create a web site only accessible by the students (and program director) where they can provide comments and information on their experiences in the operating room, tips and hints, etc. for future classes to view.
- When a student is practicing a skill, have the other students write down comments on the performance and catch any “mistakes”.
- When the instructor is demonstrating a skill, purposely make mistakes to see if the students notice and point them out.
- When a student is practicing, have him/her verbally explain their actions and why they are performing a step in a certain way.
- Use anatomical simulators as often as possible. Some good simulators are available from Delletec, Inc., www.delletec.com
- If they are able to set aside the time have CST’s or CFA’s that work at area hospitals come to the lab to help the students during lab class time and in particular, outside of class time such as late afternoon.
- Coordinate as much as possible the teaching of lab skills in the order they are presented in didactic/lecture. The lab instructor should have a copy of all course syllabi in order to see the sequence of subjects presented in didactics.
- Pair up students and have them pass various types of instruments back-and-forth to learn the correct procedures for passing instruments and build speed. Include the loading of needles with suture on needle holders of various types for both left- and right-handed surgeons.
- Place various instruments on a table and have the students write down the name of each instrument and then review.

- Have the students practice putting instruments and equipment together, such as the Balfour retractor, plugging in the cords of laparoscopic instruments and equipment into the correct port, etc.
- Break the students up into two groups so they can practice at the same time and students aren't left standing around waiting to practice a skill. If the class is at the point of practicing mock procedures and there is only one O.R. table and mannequin, the other students can still work on various things such as loading suture on needle holders, draping Mayo stands, practice scrubbing, etc.