

## Teach-Back

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A method to check that information has been communicated clearly

- Is a test of the person giving information, not the one receiving it
- Is the best way to help someone understand information

American Medical Association and the AHRQ Universal Precautions  
Health Literacy Toolkit

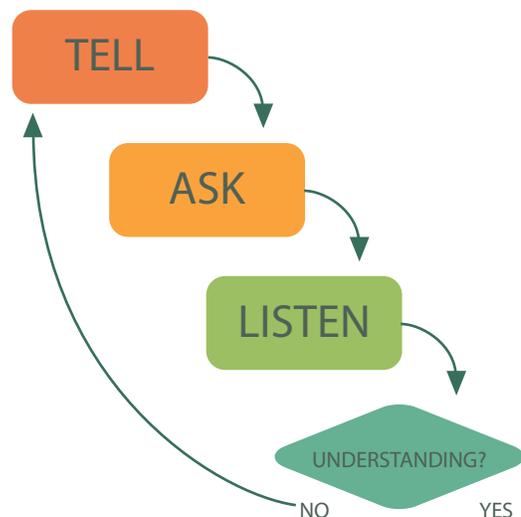
### How to Use Teach-Back:

1. Tell your information or instructions.
2. Ask if they can teach back your information or show you how they will carry out your instructions.

Examples:

- “Could you tell me back what we just talked about to see if I was clear?” OR
- “After you leave this appointment a family member or friend might ask you what happened today. What are you going to tell them about what you are going to do?”
- “Can you show me how you are going to do This at home so I know if I was clear.”

3. Listen or watch to see if their understanding matches with what you meant to communicate.
4. If you don't have a shared understanding, start with step one again and reword or add to your information/instructions to see if you can be more clear.



### Key points

- The responsibility is on the person giving information to make the message clear.
- Teach-Back should be used periodically during a conversation if more than one important message or instruction is being given.
- Chunk and Check: Provide a small amount of information, then check using teach-back to see if it was clear. Then proceed to the next chunk of information and check again.
- Don't ask “do you understand?” People will say yes even if they don't understand or don't understand in the way that you meant for them to.

## Tips for Using Teach-Back

- Use plain language (“living room” words)
- Try pictures or drawings
- Write key points down
- Create a system of who will do teach-back, when, and where

## Teach-Back Evidence

Teach-back has been shown to:

- Improve blood sugar control for people with diabetes (Schillinger, 2003)
- Decrease time it takes to get people taking warfarin (medication to prevent blood clots) to the right dose (Schillinger, 2007)
- Other publications show effectiveness for asthma patients and people with chronic heart failure titrating their own diuretic medication. (Paasche-Orlow, 2005; DeWalt, 2006)

For more information about teach-back and improving health literacy:

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (US) Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit at [www.ahrq.gov/qual/literacy/](http://www.ahrq.gov/qual/literacy/)

 Notes:

This summary was adapted from one developed by Connie Davis [www.conniedavis.ca](http://www.conniedavis.ca) in collaboration with Impact BC [www.ImpactBC.ca](http://www.ImpactBC.ca) in connection with the Health Literacy in Communities Prototype Collaborative, 2010.



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