

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 can use your time wisely, and making sure your patient has a chance to voice her concerns. Adapted from our book.

Step	What you say
1. Welcome your patient	"Nice to meet you." "Great to see you again." Not: "You look great" (the patient might not feel great!)
2. Ask about your patient's main concerns for the visit	"What are the important questions you wanted me to answer today?" "Is there anything you wanted to ask me about?" "Do you have anything to put on our agenda?" "Anything else?" (often the most important issue is not first)
3. Explain your agenda	"There are 2 things I wanted to make sure we talked about..."
4. Propose an agenda that combines the patient's and your concerns	"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?"
5. Be prepared to negotiate.	"Ok, i understand that the most important issue for you today is ____." "I hear that you have a number of questions. Could we prioritize them so that we cover the most important ones if we don't have time to get through all of them?"
6. Ask for feedback	"Do you feel like we've covered the agenda? How did we do?"