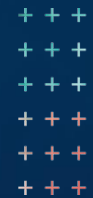




LEARNING ACTIVITY

Communication & Safety Challenge

Anesthesia Answers Educator Toolkit



Facilitator overview

PURPOSE

To help students apply health literacy and patient communication principles to realistic anesthesia scenarios by practicing rapid clinical decision-making, identifying communication challenges, and developing patient-centered responses that promote safety, trust, and advocacy.



Overview

The CRNA Communication & Safety Challenge is an interactive, scenario-based activity designed to help students translate communication principles into clinical practice.

Students will work through four realistic perioperative communication scenarios that challenge them to think like a future CRNA. Each scenario presents a moment where communication choices can influence patient understanding, trust, preparation, and safety.

STUDENTS MAY COMPLETE THE ACTIVITY:

- + Individually
- + In small groups
- + As a facilitated classroom activity



Facilitator instructions

Step 1: Introduce the Challenge

Explain to students: “As future CRNAs, you will often have limited time to answer questions, reduce uncertainty, and prepare patients for anesthesia. These brief interactions can significantly influence patient trust, understanding, and safety.”

Step 2: Present the Challenge

Present students with each challenge scenario by sharing/casting your screen on a larger monitor, printing hard copies, or sharing your screen via video call platform if the class is virtual.

For each scenario, students have 2 minutes to respond. They should consider:

- + What would you say?
- + What would you do?
- + Why does it matter for patient safety?

Step 3: Debrief

After each scenario, ask students to share their approach. Discuss:

- + What communication challenge was present?
- + How did the response address the patient’s needs?
- + How did the approach support education, advocacy, or safety?

Reinforce strong communication:

- + Educates patients
- + Reduces uncertainty
- + Builds trust
- + Supports informed decision-making
- + Promotes patient safety



Learning activity



Student role

You are the CRNA.

What would you say? Your goal is not to find the “perfect” response. It’s to practice making thoughtful communication decisions that support patient safety, trust, and understanding.

For each challenge, you have 2 minutes. Discuss:

- + What would you say?
- + What would you do?
- + How does your response support safe patient care?



Scenario 1: I trust you

SCENARIO

Your patient is preparing for surgery and tells you: “I don’t really understand what anesthesia involves, but I trust you.” The patient appears calm and does not ask questions.

CHALLENGE

How do you respond in a way that respects the patient’s trust while ensuring they understand what to expect?

CONSIDER

- + How would you assess the patient’s current understanding?
- + What information is most important to communicate?
- + How would you encourage questions or participation?

ANSWER

- + What would you say?
- + What would you do?
- + How does your response support safe patient care?



Scenario 2: The silent patient

SCENARIO

During your preoperative assessment, a patient provides short answers, nods along, and says they understand the anesthesia plan. However, you are unsure whether the patient truly understands what was discussed.

CHALLENGE

How do you assess understanding without making the patient feel uncomfortable or judged?

CONSIDER

- + What questions could help reveal understanding?
- + How might teach-back be used?
- + How can you create an environment where patients feel comfortable asking questions?

ANSWER

- + What would you say?
- + What would you do?
- + How does your response support safe patient care?

Scenario 3: Too much information, too little time



SCENARIO

A patient asks: “Can you tell me everything that could go wrong with anesthesia?” The operating room is preparing for the patient, and you have limited time.

CHALLENGE

How do you balance transparency, informed consent, and avoiding information overload?

CONSIDER

- + How would you prioritize the information provided?
- + How would you address the patient’s underlying concern?
- + How can communication remain clear under time constraints?

ANSWER

- + What would you say?
- + What would you do?
- + How does your response support safe patient care?



Scenario 4: After the procedure

SCENARIO

In the post-anesthesia care unit, a patient appears distressed and says: “I don’t remember anything. Did something happen?”

CHALLENGE

In the post-anesthesia care unit, a patient appears distressed and says: “I don’t remember anything. Did something happen?”

CONSIDER

- + How would you respond to the patient’s concern?
- + What reassurance or education may be helpful?
- + How can communication continue to support recovery?

ANSWER

- + What would you say?
- + What would you do?
- + How does your response support safe patient care?



Questions or comments?

Contact the Anesthesia Answers team:

anesthesiaanswers.org/contact-us