

QUIZ: Rate Your Team's Communication Skills

Clients interact with every member of your health care team. Take this quiz to discover how well your team communicates. Circle the rating that best reflects your client education and service on a typical day. Total your points, and then find your score.

Rating: 5 = Always 4 = Most of the time 3 = Undecided/no opinion 2 = Occasionally 1 = Never

1. Staff and doctors use pets' names often in client conversations.	5	4	3	2	1
2. Client leaves the exam room with at least one written communication tool such as an exam report card, brochure, or handout.	5	4	3	2	1
3. Doctors and staff discuss the importance of parasite control and prevention with clients during visit.	5	4	3	2	1
4. We use senior care and/or puppy and kitten checklists to help create client awareness and to make sure we cover core topics.	5	4	3	2	1
5. We see senior pets twice a year for comprehensive exams.	5	4	3	2	1
6. Our veterinarians and staff use multiple teaching methods such as models, report cards, brochures, anatomical drawings, and x-rays in exam rooms when communicating with clients.	5	4	3	2	1
7. We review home-care instructions for dental and surgical patients with clients before bringing pets into exam rooms.	5	4	3	2	1
8. The doctor asks the client, "What questions can I answer?" before ending the exam.	5	4	3	2	1
9. Brochures are placed inside each exam room, where they are within easy reach for doctors and staff to give to clients.	5	4	3	2	1
10. Each exam room has framed educational posters.	5	4	3	2	1
11. Our hospital uses assistants and/or technicians in exam rooms for client education, animal restraint, and anticipation of veterinarians' needs.	5	4	3	2	1
12. Each exam room features educational models such as knee, hip, ear, or dental models.	5	4	3	2	1
13. Doctors and staff step out from behind exam tables to project positive body language and close-up interactions with clients and patients.	5	4	3	2	1
14. Each exam room has an x-ray view box or digital monitor.	5	4	3	2	1
15. When making recommendations to clients, team members and veterinarians use convincing phrases such as "Your pet needs a dental cleaning" or "Your pet needs year-round parasite protection."	5	4	3	2	1
16. Doctors use exam report cards to summarize their exam findings and recommendations and to help clients educate other family members at home.	5	4	3	2	1
17. We take digital pictures of patients during exams to include in exam report cards, track patient progress for an ongoing condition such as skin problems, or as part of home-care instructions.	5	4	3	2	1
18. We provide educational videos for in-clinic or home viewing.	5	4	3	2	1
19. We enter reminders in the computer for medical progress exams, callbacks, or needed follow-up care as soon as the client checks out.	5	4	3	2	1
20. All clients receive written home-care instructions following surgical or dental procedures.	5	4	3	2	1

TOTAL POINTS = _____

What Your Score Means

100-90: Clients appreciate your stellar communication skills, and every team member understands his or her role in client education. Make sure new staff members and veterinarians complete an orientation program on how to teach clients so exceptional communication and strong client compliance become part of your culture. Seek ongoing training to keep pace with the latest trends in communication techniques.

89-80: Your team delivers superior client education and seeks opportunities for improvement. Continue to grow your commitment to great client education with staff meetings at least monthly. Discuss an educational

issue during every session, such as ways to improve discharge appointments, client handouts, and what teaching tools you need to add. Discuss strategies to improve client compliance for heartworm testing and prevention, dental cleanings, senior screens, preanesthetic testing, vaccinations, and therapeutic diets.

79-70: You're ready to reinvigorate your team and renew your dedication to client education. Start with a staff meeting to discuss potential educational improvements, and consider a client satisfaction survey to check the effectiveness of your client education and communication.

69 or lower: Your team needs a vision of the level of client education possible at your hospital. To communicate your values, write a mission statement with your team. Then ask staff members to suggest ways to live the mission daily. Create a service award program that lets staff praise one another for positive results. For example, post a brag board where employees can write notes about a team member who they saw provide exceptional client education. Seek ongoing training on client education through seminars, websites, videos, books, and journal articles.