

## Clerkship Tips

### MS3 Tips: What do you know about your third year clerkships that you wish you had known in July?

You will be fine. Focus on preparing for each rotation's exam. Make a schedule and go from there.

You will survive and become a much better student doctor in the process. It gets easier as time rolls on, so you will feel overwhelmed on your first rotation- just remember, EVERYBODY feels just like you do, the attending/interns all know you feel overwhelmed, and everyone is there to help. Feel free to ask questions, and be ready to learn everyday.

Go into every single rotation like it may be the thing you do for the rest of your life. A5 get way more out of it, and you'll enjoy it far more too.

It's a long, long year. Pace yourself accordingly.

Shelf exams are hard.

It's WAY easier to study over 6 weeks than it is over the last 10 days of a clerkship.

Halfway through the year you'll realize that you have to stop worrying 24-7 about being graded. And when you do, your enjoyment will go up, but not as much as your performance. Relax and be yourself.

Especially in WWAMI, many of the attendings sign up to host MS3s because they love to teach.

Moving to a new place every 6 weeks is hard.

Being the only med student on a WWAMI rotation is fine for 6 weeks but 12 weeks in a row alone was too much for me.

Hours are way, way longer in Seattle than in WWAMI.

Be ready to be flexible. The first week of each clerkship is always hard to adjust to and it takes about a week before you can get your bearings each time.

Third year is a way different beast than the first two years of school. While it can be great, it also wears you down. Probably everyone will hit a low. Don't be afraid to reach out to your friends and mentors.

Clerkship exams are difficult and preparation is different from clerkship to clerkship. The best way to prepare changes for each clerkship and often, the best way to get that info is to learn from those who've done the clerkships ahead of you.

Isolation can be a real challenge. Anchor yourself to the classmates/friends/family that matter to you and make those relationships a priority, especially when you're traveling.

Hands-on experience on clerkships doesn't just happen, you have to seek it out and show interest.

I wish I had known that a high pass is equivalent to honors with regards to making a residency application competitive.

It will be OK.

Work hard, have fun. Love life, enjoy life. Take care of yourself, wellness.

You have to let go of control over exactly how well you are going to do. You just put your best foot forward. It's awesome to be working with providers and seeing patients, so just get what you can out of it, put your best foot forward and try not to sweat some of the silliness. I think that like middle school, most people found MS3 to be exciting and developmentally appropriate but not an experience many people would want to repeat.

It will be to your advantage to know what you want to apply in by January of your 3rd year. This might mean scheduling that clerkship earlier in the year.

Medicine is a really great foundation to start with, because it helps to inform all of your other clerkships.

Be an adult! Show up 5 minutes early. Feel out the teams and situations and most importantly where you fit into that.

WWAMI has certain pros and cons as do Seattle sites (UW/HMC/VA). Its great learning to have a mix of both!

Take advantage of your elective and do something relevant to the residency you are interested in applying to. Remember all of those interesting classes you wish you had taken in college but never did because it wasn't relevant for your future career at the time? Don't make that same mistake in medical school. Take this opportunity to experience other fields, whether it is in line with your career goals or not.

With every new rotation you will feel like you're floundering for the first week. It will feel like you don't know anything and have no idea what you're supposed to do. That is okay. Everyone feels like that. You will figure it out and just as you feel like you got this rotation down it will be time to switch. Welcome to the life of a 3rd year.

The exams are very difficult, study hard.

## MS3 Tips: What advice do you have for students beginning their clerkships to help them flourish?

Be positive and enthusiastic. Ask for feedback regularly, it gives you time for improvement if needed.

There is a difference from the region to the U. Be prepared for switching between them. If you have been in the region and then come to the U, remember the ICM2 presentations-->that is what they want. :)

Be open minded and flexible. The best thing you can do is "go with the flow" on your rotations, and be available to learn from every experience. Get ready to learn everyday. Help out your team. We as students are not below any task, and doing some less exciting things like writing notes and following up on consults/labs aren't directly contributing to your knowledge of medicine, but they are helping you and your team leave earlier, and in doing so makes your senior resident's life easier and ultimately improves your grades.

First impressions really matter. Bust your tail the first week.

Remind yourself every day - really - what an honor and privilege it is to be involved in patient care.

It's really, really hard to do, but try not to focus on the fact you're being evaluated all the time.

You get out what you put in. Period.

I know it's not PC to say, but I don't know many folks who get lots of Honors and have a lot of "balance" in their life. Just being honest.

Your attendings are regular people with a sense of humor (usually) and families and a strange affection for Katy Perry, not imposing automatons intending to turn you into a quivering puddle of protoplasm. Get to know them!

Almost all residents remember quite well how hard MS3 can be and will go out of their way to help you.

Return the favor.

Be a good teammate. Always always always.

Make your co-med students on your team shine. People WILL notice.

Read the site rankings very carefully - but take them with a grain of salt, too. A site may have 4 rankings from the last 5 years - but they have 6-8 students a year. Still, they're a valuable datapoint.

Decide ahead of time whether it's more important to you to prioritize academics / teaching or lifestyle in choosing sites.

Note that prioritizing academics does NOT mean just staying in Seattle for all rotations.

Ask for advice from any and every MS3 and MS4 that you know.

Think carefully about where you'll get your letters of recommendation.

Think about where you fit into the team, and try to be as useful as you can, especially when you're working with residents. Also, take advantage of any time that faculty or residents provide teaching and try to push them to do it more often, even if you have many notes to write. This is definitely the best learning!

Take time to talk and examine your patients like in first and second year. You will learn more about them than the rest of your team.

Take all the free time you can manage.

Ask preceptors about their expectations up front.

Put your patient's care first and do your best to improve their care.

Ask for feedback early and often, but don't be a pest every day...

Study consistently throughout clerkships instead of waiting until the last few weeks. And ask peers for input about how to study best.

The safari is awesome, though it can get kind of lonely. Bring trinkets/pieces of home. My best decision was to bring my own pillow and my favorite sheets!

Always ask what your expectations with every new resident/attending that you meet. Come into the rotation with specific goals and communicate it with your team.

Be on time. Be interested. Accept that sometimes it's not you, it's them and you can't change them. The dude abides and so can you!

Spend 10 minutes the night before the clerkship reading up on the requirements and recommended texts (via the clerkship website). This will make part of day 1 seem like review, which is a bit nice amid the chaos of orientations!

Each clerkship will have a slightly different ID/CC statement. Read up on this before day 1 and you will already be ahead of the game! (Examples include OB, newborns, post op patients, etc)

I would say it took 1.5 to 2 weeks to feel comfortable with each clerkship. Meaning you spend 1/3 of your time feeling like an idiot, and then by the 5th to 6th week when you're in a groove it's time to move to the next clerkship! In the beginning you have to adjust to a new set of attendings/residents/staff. You have to adjust to the EMR or paper records system. I found myself feeling frustrated at the beginning of each for not being "quick" enough, but realized that it was due to the steep learning curve of each new environment.

Start studying for each test and going through material from day 1.

The worst part of 3rd year is getting evaluated. If you're scheduled to work with different attendings on a daily basis, be VERY prepared to adjust how you do presentations and write-ups based on their individual feedback.

When you get feedback do your best to incorporate what you're told. Especially if it's regarding your OCP. If you get feedback on Monday about your OCP, then on Tuesday you should have your OCP tweaked based on feedback.

Attendings and residents love when we show interest in things and love to hear that we're reading on our own about topics. Starting a sentence with..."So I read on UpToDate" is always a great thing.

As medical students we have a tendency to ask a lot of questions and expect answers. Strategy depends on the specialty you're working with. For example, at Surgery @ UWMC you should only ask questions that you've already tried to research on your own, but you couldn't find a good enough answer. I found in other specialties like Family Med, they still like to see that you're researching and reading on you own and asking questions.

Don't take feedback personally. It's a way to improve yourself. You don't have to agree with everything they say, you just need to be able to recognize constructive criticism and learn to work with all types of personalities, even difficult ones.

Start studying early in the clerkship.

### **Tips from Clerkship Directors/Administrators**

"Regularly checking emails" and finding out about housing, contacting the coordinator at the Clerkship site 6 weeks before the Clerkship begins to complete paperwork.

Be active in your learning and show interest

Establish your own personal learning goals, and communicate them to your preceptor and team

Be prepared, on time, professional

Know your patient better than anyone on the team

Understand the demographics of the community you will serve in WWAMI.

First and foremost, be enthusiastic and engaged! Act excited about what you are learning and show an interest in the specialty. Remember, no matter what field of medicine you ultimately practice in, you will need to know something about every field!

Be a great team member! Helping your team and showing initiative are essential ingredients of success. This includes anticipating what needs to be done and doing it.

It's essential to know your patients well, which includes reading up on their illnesses and upcoming surgeries. If the clerkship has on-line case that pertains to a patient's diagnosis, do them.

Share what you've learned with the attending and the team. "Spending 10 minutes during lunch looking up your patient's complaint, common causes of this and reporting back to your team at the appropriate time is much more important than spending a couple of hours at night reading about it and never discussing this with your team."

Participate (even if you are shy or uncertain) and don't be afraid to get answers wrong!! A majority of students commented that being wrong is not nearly as important as students' fear it is. Go back and find out the answer to a question you got wrong and report back to your team. One medical student said, "Answering questions wrong is NOT a red flag, but not trying is."

Ask for concrete feedback. Stay positive when you receive it and don't be defensive (even when it's tempting!) Try not to view it as a personal attack but an opportunity to learn. Remember, once you ask for feedback, follow through on the suggestions that you receive

Oral presentations are very important so put in the time to do them well. They should be well-organized and CONCISE, touching on only the most important details. Keep in mind the goal of the presentation-to convey information to your attendings and the team.

Be personable and never underestimate the importance of getting along well with others. This includes attendings, residents, nurses, janitors, receptionists.

Asking questions is a great thing but moderation is important and there is a time and place for all things. Don't pester but rather be engaging!" The team's top priority is the patients. When a team is busy or a patient is really sick, you may be ignored. Pay attention to what they do, read, and ask questions at a quieter time.

Adapt, Adapt, Adapt. "Adaptability is, hands down, one of the most important keys in third and fourth year. Every rotation, site, attending, resident, and staff member is different. Go with the flow. They all want something different and may give critical feedback. I tried to take this as an opportunity to learn different styles and not as an insult."

Study hard for the exam. Ask each Clerkship Director how best to prepare for the exam.

Find a mentor. Forge a relationship with someone on the team. In general, identify a mentor (such as your college mentor) that can help you strategize for your clerkships and career planning. You can share information or difficult experiences with that person confidentially, and he or she will help you to figure out what to do next. This is not "whining". It is helping you to respond in the best way for you.

Work hard to master the skills of the clerkship.

Don't just disappear. "This seems obvious but a lot of students will disappear for a few minutes to hours. You may seem invisible but you're not. "Don't leave without asking."

Never try to outshine your classmates or your teams. "This is a big red-flag."

Don't show disinterest in the clerkship. If you are interested in another specialty, tell the faculty. They can help shape your experience to be more pertinent to your career goals.

Don't show up late.

Don't give a case presentation without being prepared.

Don't be defensive when given feedback.

Don't rely on residents and attendings to initiate teaching. Go in with attitude that it is your responsibility to learn.

Don't get so comfortable with residents that you "jokingly" say things that come off as offensive or uncouth!