

OnlyMedPrep

Clinical Reasoning Checklist

Use this checklist when working through a clinical vignette.

1. Identify the Patient

- Who is the patient?
- What is the age and relevant context?
- Is the presentation acute, subacute, or chronic?

2. Define the Chief Problem

- What is the main symptom or clinical issue?
- What is the most important change from baseline?

3. Find the High-Yield Clues

- Vital signs
- Key physical examination findings
- Important laboratory abnormalities
- Imaging or diagnostic findings
- Risk factors and relevant history

4. Build a Problem Representation

Summarize the case in one sentence using only findings that meaningfully narrow the differential diagnosis or management decision.

5. Determine What the Question Is Asking

- Most likely diagnosis?
- Most likely mechanism?
- Best diagnostic test?
- Most appropriate next step?
- Best treatment?
- Most likely complication?

6. Compare the Options

- Which option directly addresses the current problem?
- Which options are premature, unnecessary, or contraindicated?
- Is there a time-sensitive intervention?
- Is the patient stable or unstable?

7. Final Check

- Can I explain why my answer is correct?
- Can I explain why the major distractors are wrong?
- What is the single highest-yield lesson from this case?