

THINK • PAIR • SHARE

The Missed Handoff

How teamwork turns separate health-care roles into safe patient care

5 MIN Think	8 MIN Pair	10 MIN Share	5 MIN Reflect
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Learning target

I can explain how coordinated roles and clear communication contribute to safe, effective patient care.

Essential question: *How does teamwork affect patient outcomes?*

Success criteria

- ☐ Identify members of a patient care team.
- ☐ Explain each team member's responsibility.
- ☐ Evaluate whether team communication protects the patient.
- ☐ Use lesson vocabulary accurately in speaking and writing.
- ☐ Explain how a teamwork behavior affects a patient outcome.

Vocabulary toolkit

Term	Student-friendly meaning
Collaboration	Working together to reach a shared goal.
Teamwork	Coordinating effort, skills, and decisions.
Communication	Sharing information clearly and respectfully.
Responsibility	Completing the duties assigned to your role.
Patient Care Team	Professionals who coordinate care for one patient.

Patient scenario: The missed handoff

Read independently. Underline the information the next health professional must know.

A teenager arrives in the emergency department after a bicycle crash. The patient has severe lower-leg pain, swelling, and an open cut. A parent is anxious and asking questions.

The emergency team controls bleeding and orders imaging. The X-ray confirms a fracture. During reassessment, a team member notices that the patient's foot is becoming pale and cool and that the pulse in the foot is weaker than before.

A shift change begins. The circulation change is not stated clearly during the handoff. The incoming team assumes the patient is stable and continues routine care. Thirty minutes later, the change is discovered.

THINK — Work independently

1. Identify the team. List at least four professionals who may contribute to this patient's care.

Patient care team members

2. Explain responsibilities. Choose three team members and state the responsibility each one should lead.

Team member	Responsibility in this case
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3. Trace the outcome. Complete the cause-and-effect chain.

Information gap	Delayed response	Patient risk	Effect on trust/care
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PAIR — Compare, clarify, and recommend

Partner names: _____ and

Professional discussion protocol

1. Partner A summarizes the problem in 30 seconds; Partner B listens without interrupting.
2. Partner B adds one detail or perspective that was missed.
3. Together, compare team roles and agree on the most urgent responsibility.
4. Use evidence from the scenario and at least three vocabulary terms.
5. Prepare one recommendation for a safer handoff.

Partner analysis

A. What was the primary teamwork failure? Use the word communication or responsibility.

B. Which details should have been communicated during the handoff? Cite at least two pieces of evidence.

C. Who was responsible for speaking, listening, confirming, or escalating? Explain how those responsibilities connect.

D. How could effective collaboration have changed the patient outcome?

Design a safer handoff

Write a concise handoff message the outgoing team member could give. Include the current concern, evidence, and the action needed next.

Our handoff message

SHARE — Defend your team's recommendation

Choose a speaker and an evidence checker. Be ready to share in 60 seconds.

Share-out element	Our response
Problem	
Most important evidence	
Team responsibilities	
Safer communication	
Patient-outcome connection	

Listen for new evidence

One idea from another group that strengthened or challenged our thinking

Individual reflection

1. What role did you play in today's collaboration? How did you fulfill your responsibility?

2. What communication behavior helped your pair? What would improve your teamwork next time?

3. Complete the sentence: Teamwork improves patient outcomes when...

Exit ticket

In 2–3 sentences, explain how coordinated roles and clear communication contribute to safe, effective patient care. Use at least two vocabulary terms.

Final response

Student self-check

Review your work before turning it in.

- ☐ I identified at least four members of the patient care team.
- ☐ I explained at least three team responsibilities.
- ☐ I evaluated the handoff communication using evidence.
- ☐ I connected teamwork to a specific patient outcome.
- ☐ I accurately used at least three vocabulary terms.
- ☐ I participated in the Think, Pair, and Share phases.

Vocabulary evidence

Circle or highlight each term where you used it in your responses. Then write one accurate sentence that uses any two terms together.

Collaboration	Teamwork	Communication	Responsibility	Patient Care Team
My vocabulary sentence 				

Quick scoring guide

Criterion	3 — Meets	2 — Approaching	1 — Beginning
Roles & responsibilities	Accurate and connected	Mostly accurate	Missing or unclear
Communication analysis	Evidence-based evaluation	General evaluation	Little analysis
Patient outcome	Clear cause/effect	Partial connection	No clear connection
Vocabulary	3+ terms accurate	2 terms accurate	0–1 term accurate
Participation	All 3 phases	2 phases	1 phase

Score: _____ / 15

TEACHER GUIDE

The Missed Handoff

Selected template: Think–Pair–Share

Why this template fits

The lesson asks students to explain teamwork’s effect on patient outcomes, identify team roles, explain responsibilities, and evaluate communication. Think–Pair–Share makes each student analyze first, then practice professional communication with a peer, and finally defend a patient-safety recommendation. It also mirrors the presentation’s repeated partner-discussion prompts.

Preparation

- Print pages 1–5 for students; keep the teacher guide.
- Review the five vocabulary terms before students begin.
- Pair students strategically; assign Partner A and Partner B if needed.
- Display a 5–8–10–5 minute timer or adjust to the class period.
- Remind students that they are evaluating teamwork, not diagnosing or treating independently.

Suggested pacing and prompts

Time	Phase	Teacher move
3 min	Launch	Review the learning target and success criteria. Stress that a handoff transfers responsibility and information.
5 min	Think	Require silent work. Prompt: “Which change makes this urgent?”
8 min	Pair	Listen for evidence and vocabulary. Ask: “Who needs to know what, and how will they confirm it?”
10 min	Share	Invite contrasting recommendations. Press for a cause-and-effect link to patient outcomes.
5 min	Reflect	Students complete the exit ticket independently.

Look-fors during discussion

- ☐ Students distinguish teamwork from simply being agreeable.
- ☐ Students identify role clarity, completion of responsibility, clear communication, and closed-loop confirmation.
- ☐ Students connect the missed circulation change to delayed response, increased injury risk, and loss of trust.

- ☐ Students recognize that responsibility is shared across speaking, listening, confirming, documenting, and escalating concerns.

Teacher answer key

Likely patient care team members

- Emergency medical services: stabilize and transport.
- Emergency nurse: assess pain, wound, circulation, and changes; communicate and monitor.
- Emergency physician or advanced practice clinician: diagnose, order care, and make treatment decisions.
- Radiologic technologist/radiologist: obtain and interpret diagnostic images.
- Orthopedic specialist: manage the fracture and circulation risk within scope and setting.
- Patient educator/nurse: explain next steps and answer questions.
- Physical therapist: support safe movement and recovery after treatment.
- Patient and parent: share symptoms, ask questions, and participate in the plan.

Expected analysis

Primary failure: A significant change in circulation was not communicated clearly during the handoff, so the incoming team did not recognize the urgency.

Important evidence: The foot became pale and cool; the pulse weakened; these findings changed from the earlier assessment; the shift was changing; discovery was delayed 30 minutes.

Responsibility: The person who noticed the change should report and escalate it. The outgoing team should include it in the handoff. The incoming team should listen, clarify, confirm, reassess, and act within role and scope.

Outcome chain: Information gap → delayed reassessment/response → greater risk of tissue or nerve injury and more complicated recovery → reduced confidence and trust.

Collaboration: Team members share observations, clarify roles, confirm critical information, and coordinate the next action instead of assuming someone else handled it.

Sample safer handoff

“The patient has a confirmed lower-leg fracture and an open wound. During my most recent circulation check, the foot became pale and cool and the pulse was weaker than before. This is a new change. Please reassess circulation now, notify the responsible clinician, and confirm back to me that the concern and next steps are understood.”

Acceptable exit-ticket response

A patient care team improves outcomes when professionals coordinate their responsibilities and use clear communication. Effective teamwork prevents missed information, supports faster action, and helps provide safe, continuous care.

Common misconceptions and redirects

Misconception	Teacher redirect
Teamwork means everyone does every task.	Strong teams coordinate different expertise and respect role boundaries.
Only the person who missed the message is responsible.	Safe handoffs require speaking, listening, clarifying, confirming, and documenting.
Being nice is enough for teamwork.	Teams must respectfully question, speak up about risk, and stay focused on the shared goal.
A delayed message only affects speed.	Delay can also affect safety, recovery, continuity, and trust.

Differentiation and extension

Support: Provide sentence stems: “The team member’s responsibility is...,” “The evidence shows...,” and “If the team communicates clearly, then...”

Language support: Allow students to rehearse orally, annotate the vocabulary toolkit, and use the cause-and-effect chain before writing.

Challenge: Ask students to create a closed-loop response from the incoming clinician and explain how confirmation reduces risk.

Extension: Students role-play the handoff, then observers score role clarity, evidence, confirmation, and patient-outcome focus.