

HOW TO WRITE AN OPERATIVE NOTE

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OBJECTIVES

- Understand the purpose of the operative note
- Know the essential components
- Write clear, concise, and complete notes
- Avoid common documentation pitfalls

WHY IS THE OPERATIVE NOTE IMPORTANT?

- Legal document
- Communication tool with other healthcare providers
- Basis for postoperative care
- Billing and audit requirements
- Teaching and research

TIMING OF THE NOTE

- Ideally written immediately after surgery
- Must be completed within 24 hours
- Procedure summary should be entered immediately post-op if delayed

STANDARD OPERATIVE NOTE FORMAT

1. Patient identifiers
2. Date & time of surgery
3. Pre-op & post-op diagnosis
4. Procedure performed
5. Surgeon & assistants
6. Anesthesia type
7. Findings



OPERATIVE REPORT

Date: _____

Time Started: _____ Time Finished: _____

Surgeon: _____ Anesthesiologist: _____

Surgeon Assistant: _____ Anesthesia Assistant: _____

Scrub Name: _____ Type Of Anesthesia: _____

Patient ID Label

Pre-Operative Diagnosis:

Post-Operative Diagnosis / Findings:

Type Of Procedure: ☐ Elective ☐ Emergency

Name Of Procedure:

Operative Details:

STANDARD OPERATIVE NOTE FORMAT

8. Step-by-step procedure description

9. Specimens sent

10. Drains placed

11. Complications

12. Estimated blood loss (EBL)

13. Disposition & condition

Type Of Procedure: ☐ Elective ☐ Emergency

Name Of Procedure:

Operative Details:

Complications During Surgery:

☐ Yes ☐ No

If Yes Please Specify: _____

Blood Loss:

Blood / Blood Products Transfusion:

☐ Yes ☐ No

Specimens Sent For Pathology:

☐ Yes ☐ No

Drains:

☐ Yes ☐ No

If Yes Please Specify: _____

Medications:

☐ Antibiotics

☐ I.V Fluids

☐ Analgesia

☐ Other

Secondary Closure Of Wound Needed

☐ Yes ☐ No , specify _____

Re-Operation Needed

☐ No ☐ Yes, specify _____

Responsible Surgen's Name : _____

Signature : _____



Supine Position



Trendelenburg Position



Reverse Trendelenburg Position



Fracture Table Position



Lithotomy Position



Prone Position



Jackknife Position



Fowler's Position



Knee-Chest Position



Kidney Position



Lateral Position



Wilson Frame Position

TIPS FOR WRITING THE NOTE

- Be objective and factual
- Use standard terminology
- Write in past tense
- Be concise but comprehensive
- Always document complications or confirm absence

EXAMPLE: GENERAL SURGERY OPERATIVE NOTE

Patient: John Doe | MRN: 12345678

Date: 18/06/2025 | Time: 10:00 AM

Pre-op Dx: Acute Appendicitis | Post-op Dx: Same

Procedure: Laparoscopic Appendectomy

Findings: Inflamed retrocecal appendix, no perforation

Procedure: Step-by-step description

Specimens: Appendix sent to pathology

EBL: <50 mL | Drains: None | Complications: None

Condition: Stable, transferred to recovery

COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID

- Missing post-op diagnosis
- Poor grammar or spelling
- Incomplete findings or steps
- Not specifying roles of surgeon and assistants
- No mention of complications or absence thereof

SPECIAL SITUATIONS

- Emergencies: urgency, consent, intra-op decisions
- Multiple procedures: clearly separate each
- Unexpected findings: always document
- Conversions (e.g., lap to open): state reason clearly


FINAL CHECKLIST

- All essential elements included
- Clear operative steps documented
- Complications addressed
- Grammar and clarity checked
- Signed and dated

CONCLUSION

- Good notes reflect professionalism and protect legally
- Support continuity of care and improve outcomes
- Practice and feedback help improve quality

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QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION