

# Instructions for Preparing Your Case History

## Purpose

There are three critical parts to the case history exercise.

1. Develop practice in exploring primary medical source materials and pick a case that matches your interests and abilities.
2. Learn to understand and pronounce medical words.
3. Clearly communicate the case to others, as you would in a hospital or medical office. In this case, the presentation will be made to your instructor (and to other students if in a group setting).

## Sources

Possible sources for the case history include:

- Your own personal case history. You must request this with a HIPAA release form from your provider's office, which can take several weeks.
- A friend or family member's case history. Again, they must make a HIPAA-compliant request which may take several weeks.
- Case histories from journals or books. You can use [Google Scholar](#) or [PubMed](#) to help you find one you are interested in.
- Case histories from the internet. You can use a search engine to help you locate an appropriate case history. Stick with reputable sources. **Do not** use so-called "case histories" which are selling medical procedures, devices, or "cures".
- Some instructors may allow you to write a case history following the proper format. If you want to write a case history, check with your instructor to find out if this is allowed and the format you should use.

## Citation

No matter how or where you obtain the case history, you **must** properly cite the source. Improper or missing citations result in a 10% point deduction (see [grading rubric](#)). If you are presenting your own case (or a friend or family member's), then cite it as a "personal source". Regardless of the source, always cite an author (usually a physician or other care provider). Anonymous case histories are almost never appropriate for this class.

## Length and Content

You may need to edit the case history to meet the length and readability requirements. If you do, make sure the case history includes some sort of "story" with a "beginning", "middle" and an "end".

- The "beginning" is usually the patient presentation (i.e. arrival at the office or hospital) with notes on the patient's age, gender, race (if relevant) and appearance.
- The "middle" may include the patient's history; one or more medical tests or procedures; or a detailed description of the patient's illness.
- The "end" is a diagnosis or, sometimes, autopsy following death.

The final, edited length should be about one page double-spaced, 1" margins, font size 11 or 12 pt. It must contain a *minimum* of 10 medical terms. Students will increase their chances of a high score by picking a case that is challenging and interesting.

You **may not** use the examples given on this web page, or the examples included with your textbook. See #1 under "Purpose" for why.

## **Presentation**

If you are presenting the case in person, you should make two copies. You will begin your presentation by giving your instructor one copy (including citation) and then you will stand in front of the class and read the other copy.

You may use audiovisual aids (X-ray, CT scan, MRI, histological section, etc.) for a more interesting presentation. Check with your instructor to ensure the availability of the audiovisual equipment you need.

The instructor will ask questions aimed at your case content and word understanding. Other students are encouraged to ask questions as well.

If you are an online student presenting by telephone or other means, your instructor may ask that a copy of the presentation be sent by email up to one week before the presentation. Your instructor will announce the deadline for this emailed copy. The case should be attached to an email within the course management software (i.e. [WebCT/Vista](#)) and should be in Word (.doc, .docx), Adobe Acrobat (.pdf), or text (.txt) format. No other formats are acceptable.