



NAVIGATING DIFFERENT STRENGTHS IN PAL PRECEPTOR GUIDANCE

In any learning environment—especially within a PAL model—students bring unique experiences, confidence levels, and clinical abilities to their rotations. It's natural for some variation in knowledge, communication, or decision-making to emerge between peers. This is an opportunity to cultivate complementary strengths, mutual respect, and personal growth. The preceptor plays a key role in ensuring both learners feel valued and supported. The goal isn't to make students the same—it's to help them learn together, support one another, and develop the confidence to ask questions, give feedback, and grow as team-ready professionals.

- ✓ **1. Acknowledge and Normalize Variation**
 - Discuss that students have different strengths—and that learning from each other is part of the process.
 - “It’s normal to have slightly different skill levels. What matters is how you support each other’s growth.”
- ✓ **2. Set and Adjust Expectations**
 - Clarify individual learning goals early on. This helps avoid comparison and focuses students on their own progression.
 - Consider tailoring certain activities:
 - One learner may lead a task, while the other observes and offers feedback.
 - Or reverse the roles in areas of differing strength.
- ✓ **3. Coach Collaboration Skills**
 - Reinforce that helping each other learn is part of PAL—not competition.
 - Model collaborative communication. For example, ask: “How might you check in with your peer before you jump in?”
 - Encourage students to use structured feedback prompts and reflect on how they're supporting one another.
- ✓ **4. Monitor Dynamics Actively**
 - Don't wait for issues to surface—ask proactive check-in questions:
 - “How are you working together?”
 - “Are there ways I can help you each feel more balanced?”
 - Be alert to signs that one student is dominating or withdrawing, and address it early.
- ✓ **5. Intervene Supportively if Needed**
 - If imbalance persists, consider:
 - Scaffolding tasks differently for each learner.
 - Pairing individual feedback with peer coaching goals.
 - Providing private encouragement or support to the less confident learner.

Tip: Your coaching supports more than clinical growth—it helps students build empathy, flexibility, and collaboration skills. PAL thrives when both learners feel respected, supported, and included.