

12 Tips on Sexual History Taking... with examples

1. Open questions should be used at the start: *Tell me...Tell me about that.../So tell me the story...*
2. More open questions are employed to establish detail: *Tell me more about how this pain developed/ What is the discharge like?*
3. Straightforward anatomical terms should be used (vagina is OK, vulva often is not): *So you mean on the lips of your vagina?*
4. One simple framing statement before taking the sexual history avoids any sense of apology or embarrassment: *So, thinking about your sex life.../Some questions about your sex life../*
5. Focussing on events helps to avoid labels and generalisations: *When did you last have sex, any sort of sex..?*
6. Permission-giving can be included in the question (explicit permission for a range of answers): *Was that a one-off thing, with a regular partner, or something else? Have your partners been men, women or both? Was that oral sex, vaginal sex, anal sex...or all of them?*
7. The 'non acceptable' or non-sanctioned answer should be invited: *So that was without a condom...? /Do you ever use condoms? When did you last have sober sex?*
8. Remember that partners' place of origin is a major determinant of STI risk: *So was he from (this town/city).. or elsewhere? / Any partners from outside the UK?*
9. Gentleness should be balanced with directness: *So did everything happen with your consent...or perhaps not?*
10. Display innocent inquisitiveness to understand social issues: *I really don't know much about which dating Apps people use to meet up... can you tell me more?*
11. Make every question permissive of a full range of possible answers: *When did you last have sex with anyone else/ any other partner?*
12. Understand and mitigate the ways in which your own values might affect your questioning: *When was your last previous partner? (assumes serial monogamy – so avoid).*