Checklist for Writing Prescriptions

1. Does the patient need the drug?
2. Contraindications
   a. Allergies and intolerances
   b. Special circumstances *
      i. Age (children, elderly)
      ii. Gender (childbearing, contraception)
      iii. Pregnancy, breast feeding
3. Does the dose need modifying**?
   a. Elderly, children
   b. Renal insufficiency
   c. Hepatic insufficiency
   d. Other drugs (e.g., warfarin, phenytoin, digoxin)
4. Use of the medication
   a. Formulary
   b. Cost*
   c. Simplicity*
5. Safety
   a. Correct patient
   b. Medication reconciliation*
   c. Look-alike, sound alike (see LASA lists)
   d. Abbreviations (see JCAHO list)
   e. Drug interactions (e.g., ePocrates on PDA)*
   f. Follow-up and monitoring*
6. Communication*
   a. What (name, purpose)
   b. How (route, frequency, duration)
   c. What to expect (benefits, possible side effects)
   d. When to call and to follow-up
   e. Verify understanding

*For these and for patients on complex regimens, use a team (pharmacist, nurse, health educator, etc.) to assist you and to negotiate final regimen.

Element of Medication Order or Prescription

The following elements should always be included on the order:

1. Patient's full name (use 2 identifiers)
2. Patient-specific data (allergies, age, DOB, weight)
3. Generic/Brand Name of drug (Both should be stated. If only one is used, the generic is preferred; if generic is like a "sound-a-like" then use brand name to decrease confusion)
4. Drug strength in metric units by weight such as mg, meq, mmol
5. The dosage form
6. The amount to be dispensed --package units (e.g. bottle, tube, ampule) should not be used
7. Directions for use, route of administration, and frequency (Ambiguous orders should be avoided like "take as directed") --Orders should be specific (e.g., "take statin in the evening")
8. Purpose of medication (e.g., heart diagnosis, lung diagnosis, skin disorder)
9. Number of authorized refills
10. Signature