

A close-up, shallow depth-of-field photograph of a person's hands typing on a laptop keyboard. The background is softly blurred, showing a desk with papers and a pair of glasses.

3 Ways to Speed Up Therapy Documentation

A solid orange square graphic element located on the right side of the image.

The Problem

Staying late and working through your lunch to finish your documentation is one of the worst parts of being a PT or OT.

A therapist can spend 2+ hours a day just typing notes! Sometimes it feels like we do more typing than treating!

The Question is...

“How can I speed up my documentation without sacrificing the quality of my notes or time spent with patients?”



The Solution

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Here are 3 steps you can take to speed up your documentation.

So you can leave on time and go home to family, not more documentation!

1. Streamline Subjective Questions

Try standardizing your welcome question to focus on specific functional components.

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Instead of asking, “how are you feeling today?”
Try asking, “What things have been easier to do since I saw you last week.” Or ask,
“What kind of movements are still giving you trouble?”

Their answers can direct the treatment

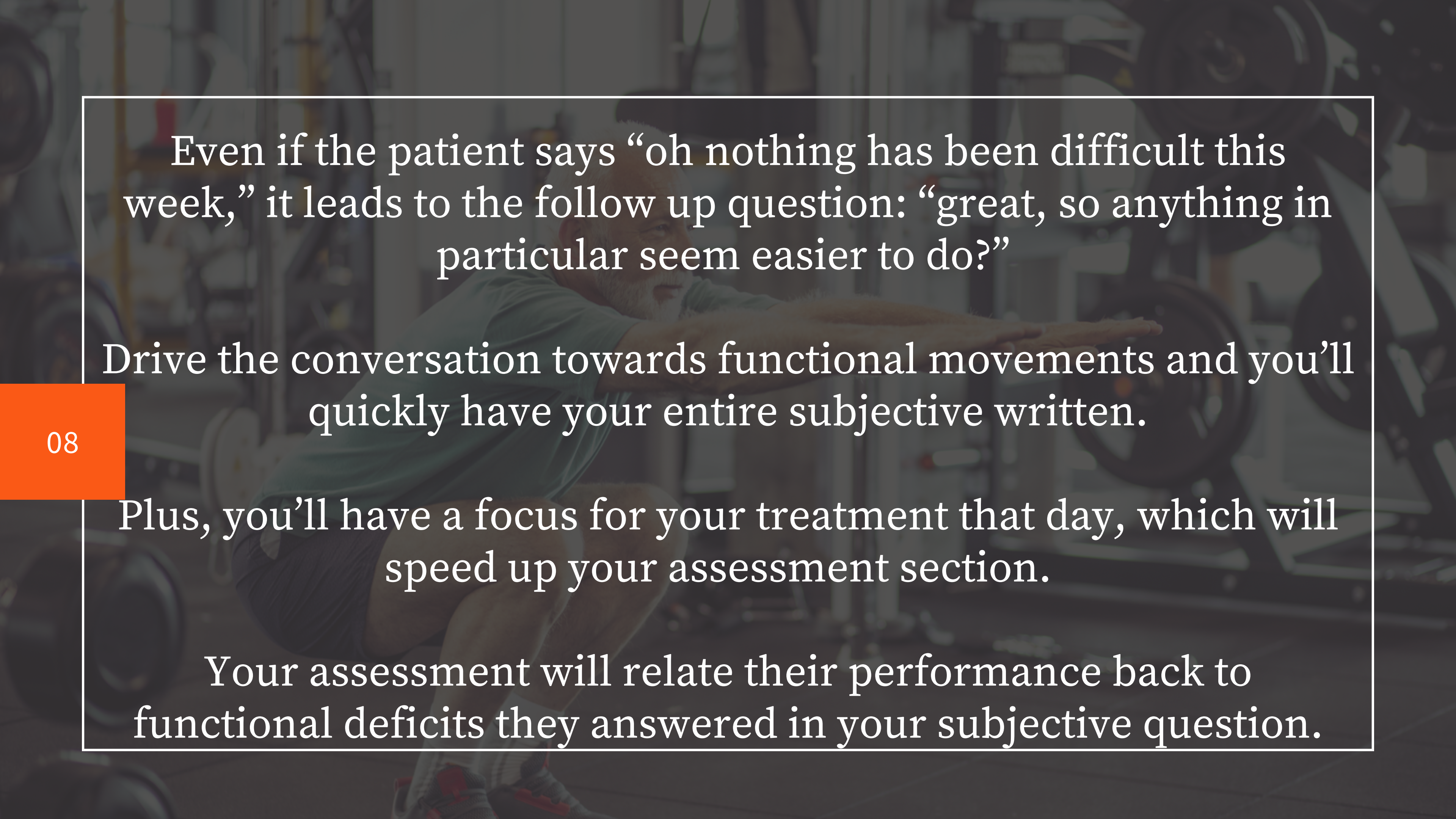
I like to focus the conversation towards these questions because it focuses on the patient's needs and also writes my subjective for me.

With either question, the subjective section will be filled with information related to the patient's functional improvements or limitations.

Standardized Subjective Question Ideas

Hi John, good to see you. Let's head back to the (room, bike, area, etc).

- So what kind of things have been feeling easier to do this week?
- What kind of things are still bothering your (back, knee, neck etc)?
- So what movements have you been able to do easier this week with your (shoulder, back, neck, etc)
- What movements are still bothering your (shoulder, neck, etc.)
- Since starting with the cane last week, what things have been the most difficult to do?

A background image of a man with a beard and grey hair, wearing a light blue t-shirt and dark shorts, performing a squat in a gym. He is holding a barbell across his upper back. The gym equipment is visible in the background.

Even if the patient says “oh nothing has been difficult this week,” it leads to the follow up question: “great, so anything in particular seem easier to do?”

Drive the conversation towards functional movements and you’ll quickly have your entire subjective written.

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Plus, you’ll have a focus for your treatment that day, which will speed up your assessment section.

Your assessment will relate their performance back to functional deficits they answered in your subjective question.

Structure your questions to write documentation for you!

While you're asking this question, you can type their response almost verbatim!

“Putting on my jacket is easier to do but I still feel pinching in my shoulder when I reach back.”

“ I have no problems using the cane, but still go up and down stairs one at a time. My knee still feels weak like it might give out.”

"Patients reports no issue with exercises and states improvement with getting up and down from a chair with less knee pain."



2. Use Google "Voice To Text" Feature

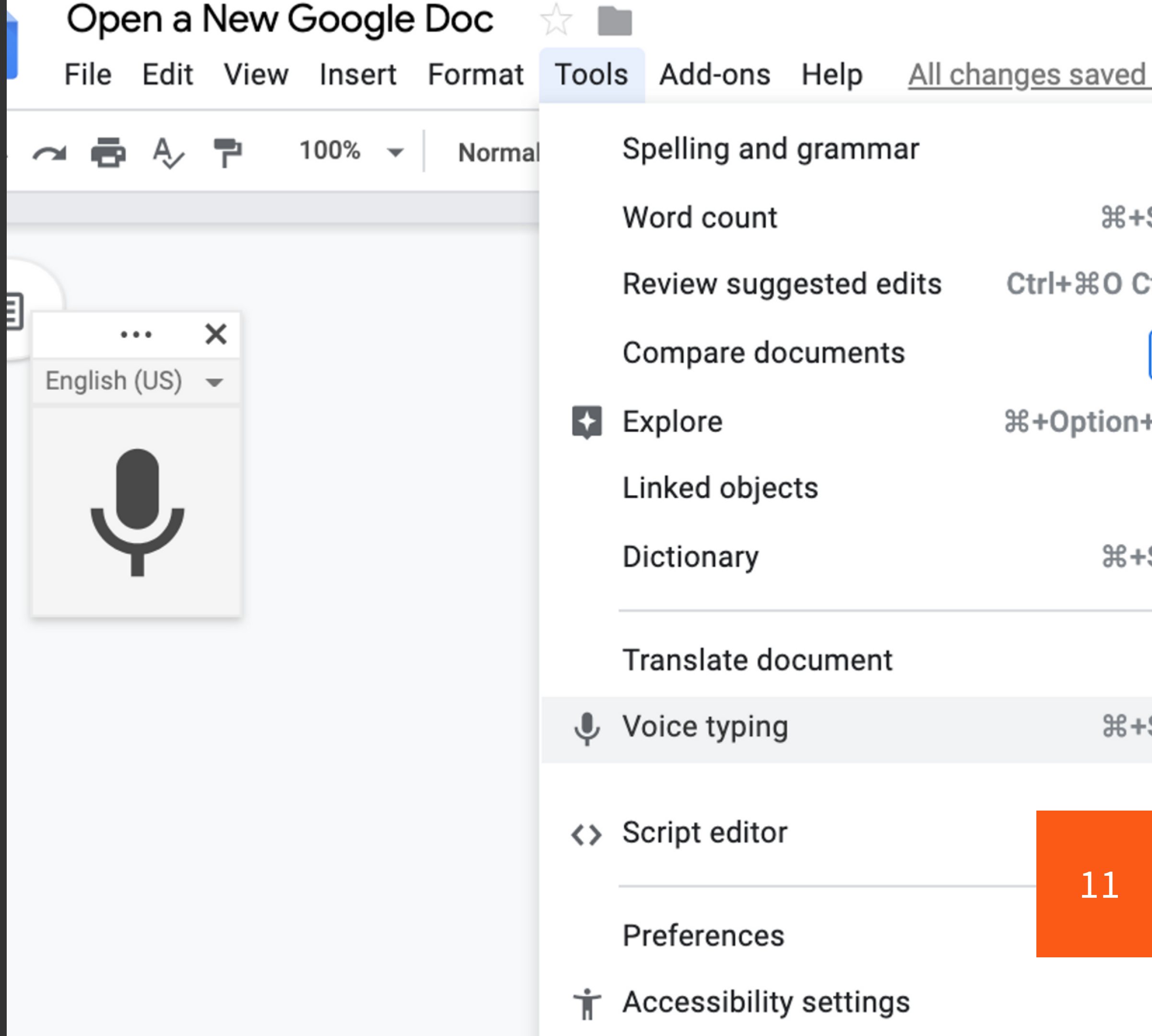
If you are not a fast typist, it may be helpful to dictate your notes.

A fantastic feature in Google docs allows you to open a new document and speak into your computer while it types out the text.



How To Use Google Voice Typing

1. Docs.Google.com
2. Open New Doc
3. Go to Tools
4. Select Voice Typing
5. Click on Gray Microphone & Talk
6. Copy & Paste text into your EMR



For those who type a significantly detailed assessment or history within an evaluation, this can cut down typing time by up to 50% for many therapists!

With the information typed in a Google doc, you can copy and paste it into the text field in your EMR, deleting the text from the Google doc and saving it within your EMR.

Is Google Docs Safe to Use?

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Google is HIPPA compliant. Plus, you're not storing the information in Google long term. You're simply saving time and using it as a free dictation service!




A close-up photograph of a person's hand typing on a white, minimalist keyboard. The hand is positioned over the middle and right sections of the keyboard, with fingers pressing down on keys. The background is a soft, out-of-focus white surface.

3. Set Up Hot Keys on your computer or tablet

Set up quick phrases to auto populate with shortcuts on your computer or tablet.

Both Samsung and Mac based operating systems will allow you to create 'hot keys' or 'quick phrases' that replace a string of letters. (Windows takes a different app)



Whether you're an outpatient clinic or home health setting, there are some phrases that are repeated over and over.

“The patient presents with sign and symptoms consistent with the diagnosis of _____”

*“Patient instructed in with return demonstration of the following exercises: ____”
.Etc etc.*

For example, in home health, before I listed out the exercises performed I would preface it with a statement like this:

“Patient instructed in with return demonstration of the following exercises: ___”

So instead of typing the whole thing, I set up a shortcut on the Samsung tablet’s smart typing setting to type this line whenever I wrote the letters pii (patient instructed in).

You can set the shortcut to type whatever you want and customize the prompts very quickly!

09:58



< Smart typing

Predictive text

Show predicted text based on what you've entered.



Auto replace

English (UK)

Text shortcuts

Create shortcuts for your frequently used phrases.

Auto spell check

No languages selected

Auto capitalize

Capitalize the first letter of each sentence automatically.



Auto spacing

English (UK)

Auto punctuate

Double tap the space bar to insert a period followed by a space.



Keyboard swipe controls

< Samsung Keyboard

Languages and types
English (US)

Smart typing

Predictive text, Text shortcuts, Keyboard swipe controls

Keyboard layout and feedback

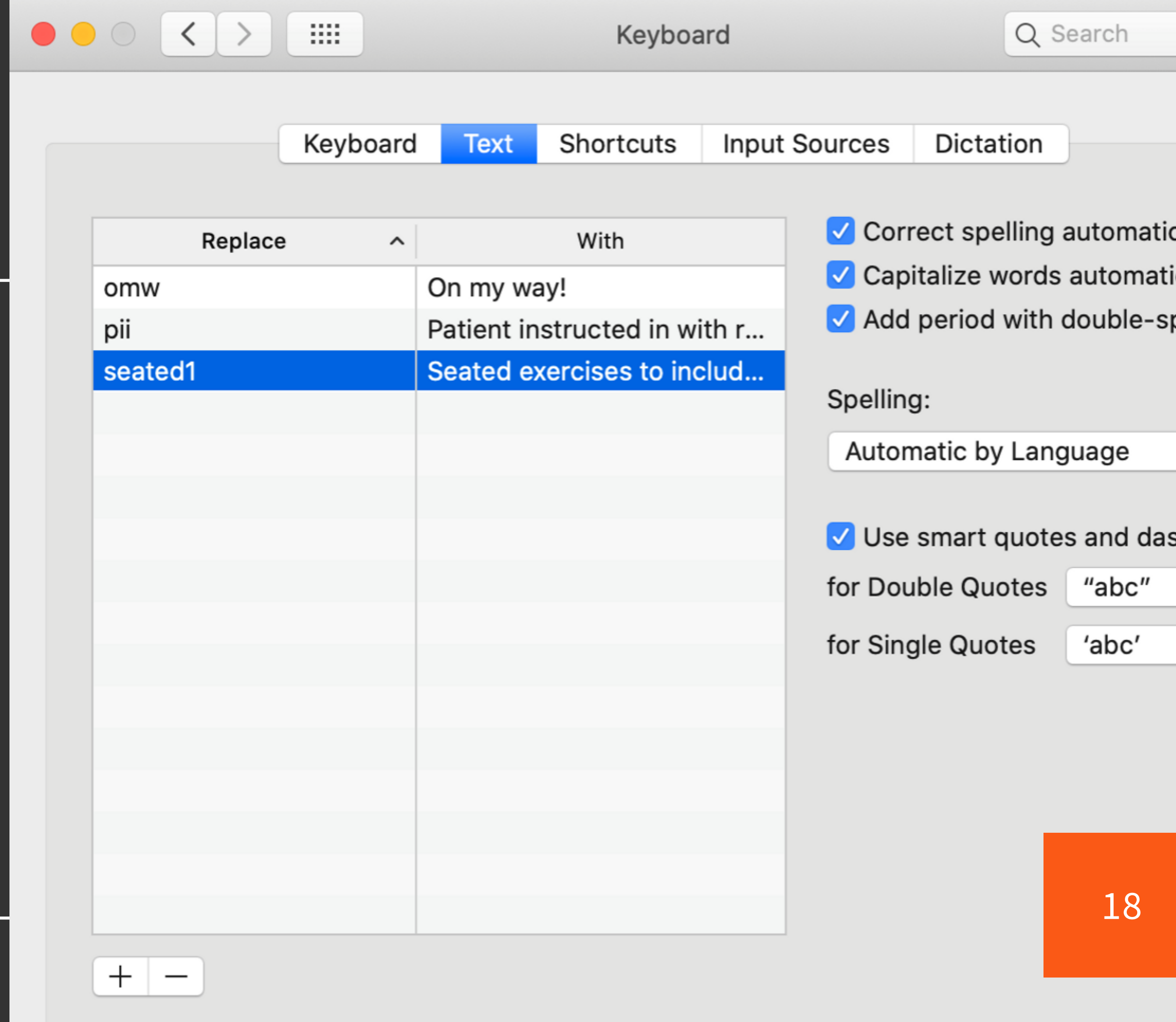
Keyboard toolbar, Keyboard themes, Keyboard size and layout

Reset to default settings

About Samsung Keyboard

Text Shortcuts on Mac

1. System Preferences
2. Select Text
3. Click "+" sign
4. Fill in text to replace
5. With longer phrase





Text Shortcuts on Windows (PC)

Windows does not have a native feature to replace text like Mac or Samsung tablets.

However, you are able to download free or premium apps.

Search for "Windows Text Expander" and you'll find the latest version you can download for your PC.

Bonus Tip: **Write better notes by** **using better formulas**

Starting from a blank text box is the worst approach to writing an efficient SOAP note.

When you have a structure for each section, you can zoom through a SOAP note much faster and with better detail.

It's one of the reasons I created efficiency formulas for each element of a SOAP note.

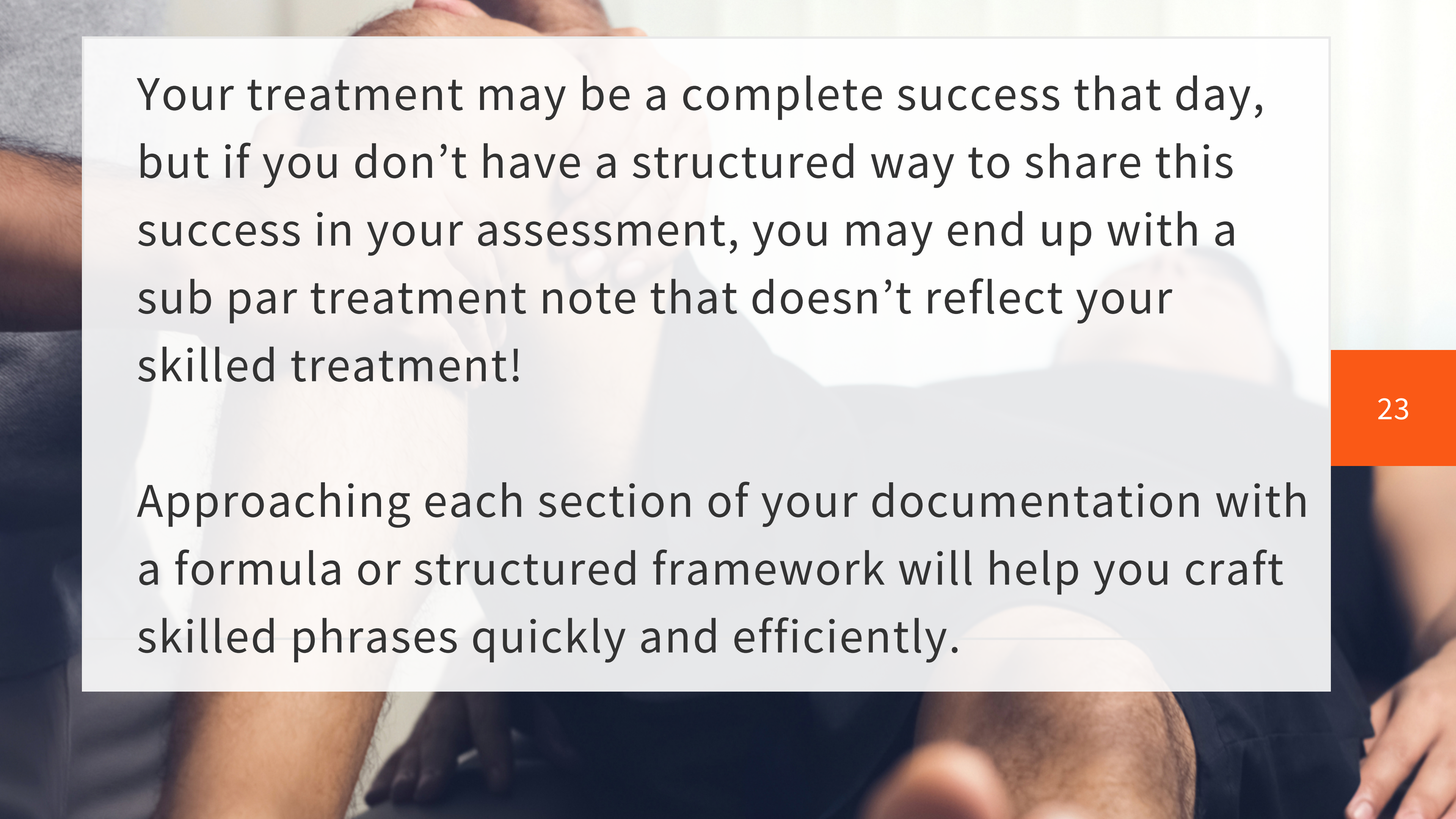
Assessment Formula

The patient (did what) + (how)
The therapist (did what) + (why)



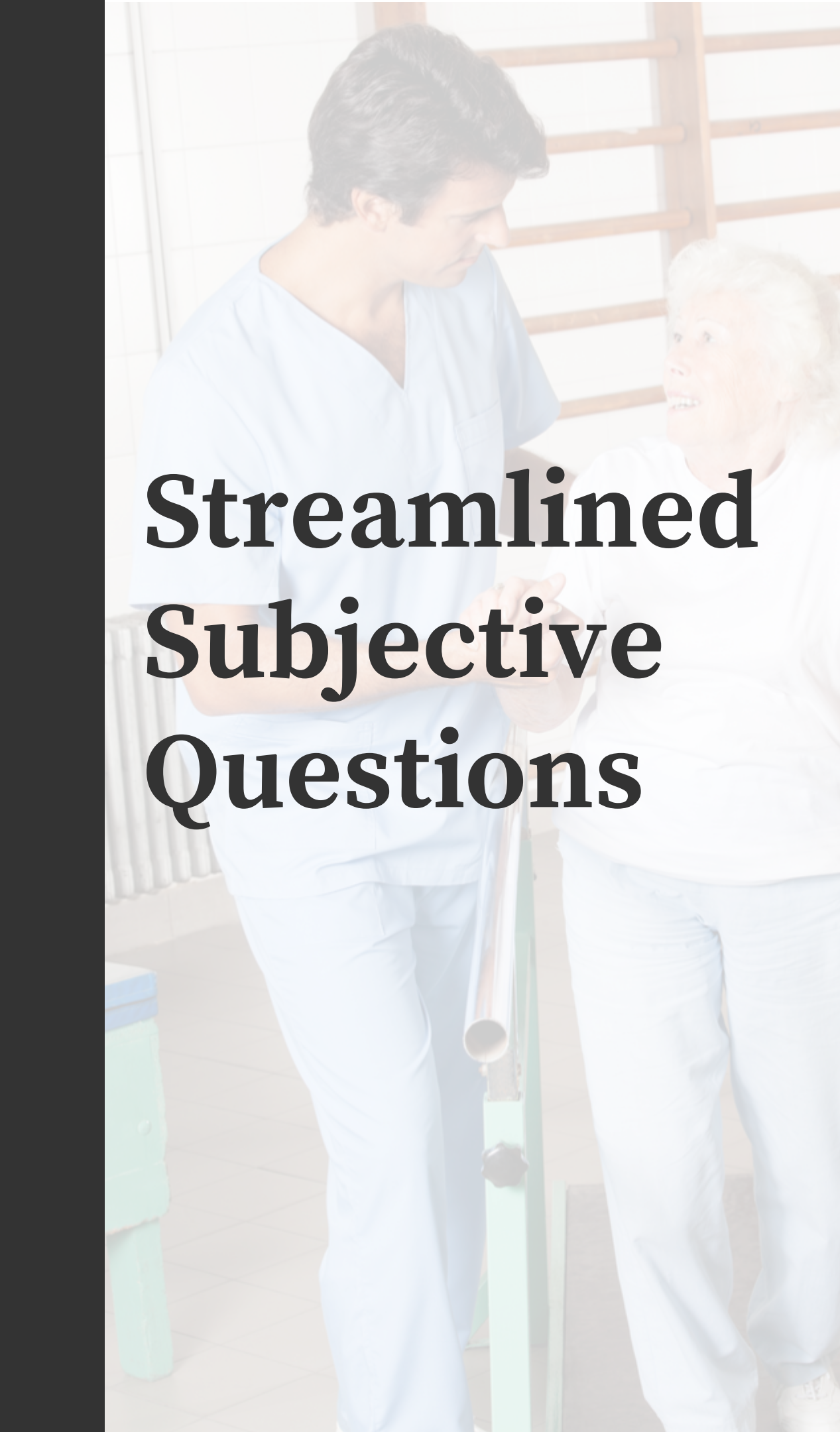
It might come natural for some therapists to think this way, but having a formula or a structure to our notes can be really helpful.

Think about a pilot's flight checklist. They've flown more times than imaginable, yet they go through their checklist step by step like a formula for a successful flight.



Your treatment may be a complete success that day, but if you don't have a structured way to share this success in your assessment, you may end up with a sub par treatment note that doesn't reflect your skilled treatment!

Approaching each section of your documentation with a formula or structured framework will help you craft skilled phrases quickly and efficiently.

A physical therapist in blue scrubs is assisting an elderly woman with a cane. The woman is wearing a white shirt and light blue pants. They are in a room with a wooden ladder and a green storage bin in the background.

Streamlined Subjective Questions

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Phrases I Often Type...

Fill in the space below with phrases you use for:

Exercise sequences

Assessment phrases

Statements on goals

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Fill In Keywords You Use to Reflect Skilled Treatment

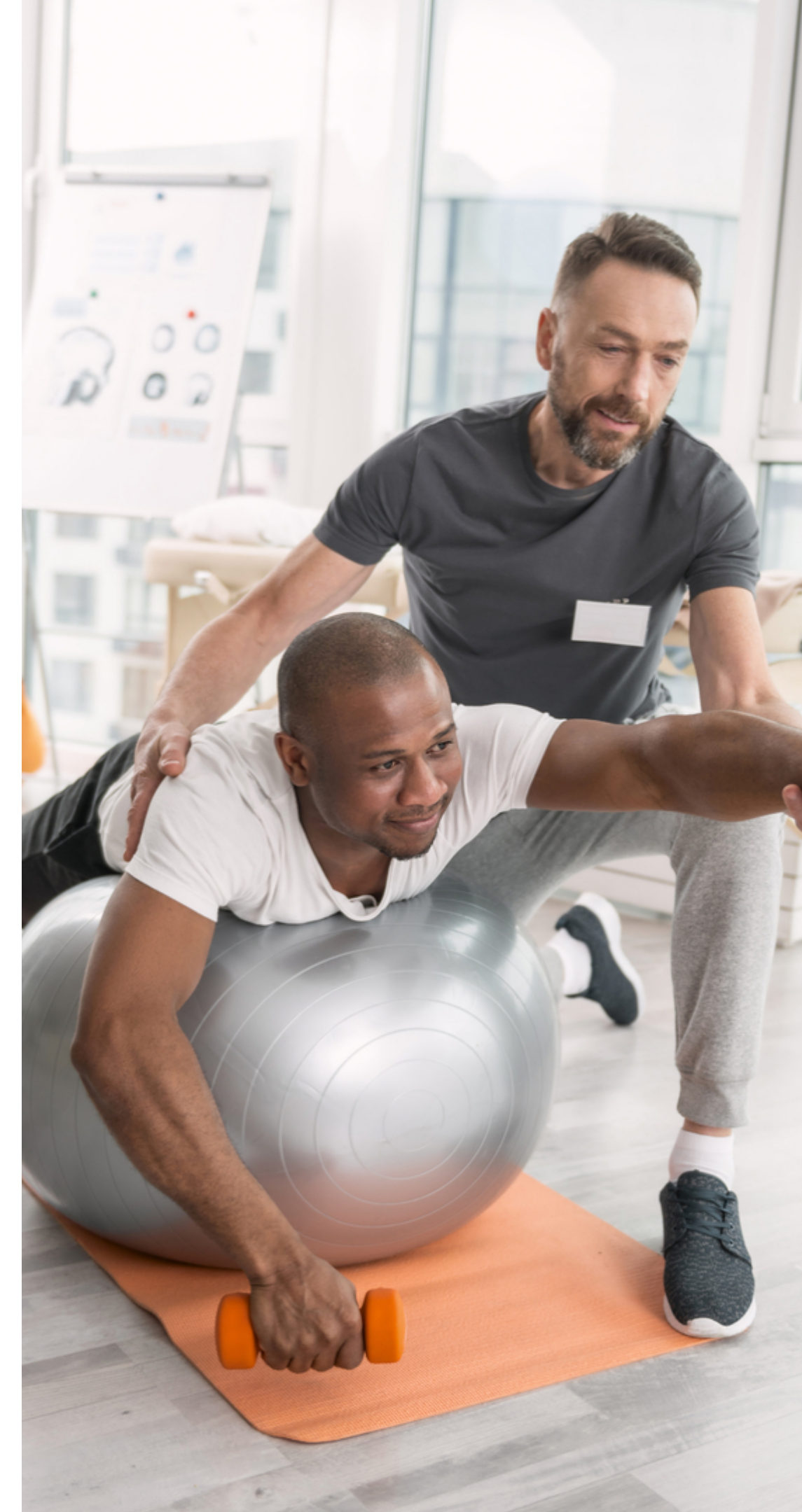
Achieved

Performed

Demonstrated

Lacks coordination

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Meet Tim



PTProgress

Tim Fraticelli, DPT helps PTs and OTs save time and money with documentation strategies and career development resources through the blog PTProgress.com.

After saving 30-60 minutes a day with the documentation templates he created for himself, he realized how other therapists could benefit from a better way to write notes too.

He believes that therapists should be able to eat lunch without hunching over a laptop and to go home to family, not more documentation.

Ready to speed up your documentation with the proven templates and formulas used by thousands of therapists?

PTProgress.com/Efficient

Efficient Documentation Course

Save 30
Minutes
a Day



Time Saving
Templates
& Training
for PTs & OTs