1. You need **medical history + a physical exam**
   Medical history can come from:
   - Family,
   - Doctors,
   - law enforcement, and/or
   - medical records.

2. **Red flags** to pay attention to:
   - any history of trauma (no matter how remote),
   - epidural/subdural/subarachnoid hemorrhage,
   - fractures,
   - thermal/chemical burns,
   - hypo-/hyper- thermia, and/or
   - a positive toxicology screen.

3. Make sure that the listed cause and manner of death **tell the story** of how/why the death occurred. Think about why the death certificate is so important and what it is used for.

4. Avoid **mechanisms of death** and list instead the **CAUSE** of death!
   Example:
   
   *Cardiopulmonary arrest and multiple organ failure are common mechanisms of death that can be caused by many conditions: hypertension, drug overdose, etc.*

5. **Cardiopulmonary Arrest** really just means death. It isn't a cause of death!

6. The **contributing causes** section of the death certificate is not just a place to list medical conditions. Some common contributing causes for many causes of death are:
   - Diabetes,
   - Chronic alcohol use,
   - Obesity, or
   - An immune disorder.

7. Common things to look for to determine if a case is a **suicide** (as manner of death):
   - Note or letter,
   - Prior attempts.
   
   **Remember, if there are competing equally likely explanations, “undetermined” may be used.**

8. **Proofread!** Medical terms can be tricky, so check the spelling of medical terms to ensure that reporting is correct.