

BOX 30–3 Guidelines for Cardiac Auscultation

1. Locate the major auscultatory areas on the precordium (see Figure 30–11).
2. Choose a sequence of listening. Either begin from the apex and move upward along the sternal border to the base, or begin at the base and move downward to the apex. One suggested sequence is shown in Figure 30–11.
3. Listen first with the client in the sitting or supine position. Then ask the client to lie on the left side, and focus on the apex. Lastly, ask the client to sit up and lean forward. These position changes bring the heart closer to the chest wall and enhance auscultation. Carry out the following steps when the client assumes each of these positions:
 - a. First, auscultate each area with the diaphragm of the stethoscope to listen for high-pitched sounds: S_1 , S_2 , murmurs, pericardial friction rubs.
 - b. Next, auscultate each area with the bell of the stethoscope to listen for lower pitched sounds: S_3 , S_4 , murmurs.
 - c. Listen for the effect of respirations on each sound; while the client is sitting up and leaning forward, ask the client to exhale and hold the breath while you listen to heart sounds.