

Lab Request Form

Adapted from MedEd Third Year slides

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What is this question?

In this task, you're asked to request an imaging investigation for a patient. This will depend on the situation, the presenting complaint of the patient, and your interpretation of what the most important imaging investigation is.

This question does rely on you having some knowledge of what imaging is appropriate for certain conditions. This can be tricky, and students find that the best way to split imaging for any condition/presentation is: First Line (for example, Chest X-Rays are quick and simple so are often done first line for many presentations) and Gold-Standard (for example, MRCP is diagnostic for many gallbladder pathologies).

Step 1: Fill out patient details

It's important that you double check this after you've written all this information, and then check once again when you've finished the question.

All the information needed should be given in the question stem, or at the front of question booklet.

Step Two: Extra Patient Information

Here, there is a chance to fill out more information regarding patient details. The point of this section is to give safety information for those doing the imaging.

Here there are sections on:

- Previous X-Ray: If there is any information on previous scans, note them down here.
- Walk/Chair/Trolley/Bed: Outpatient would be walk or chair, in emergencies this will be trolley or portable, in inpatient this will be bed
- Oxygen/Drip: These should be stated in the question
- Is the patient pregnant/last LMP: This should be stated in the question, if it is not best practise would be to state that this information is not known at present
- Diabetic/Creatinine level: This should be stated in the question
- Infection Control: COVID, C-Diff

Step 3: Reason for Request

In this section, you are asked to give your reasons for requesting an image. There will be a lot of information to write in this box, so it's important to have a system that can be used to pick out the most clinically relevant parts.

One method is **SPOT-I-CAR**

Situation: Patient demographics, background, main complaint

Presentation: The presenting complaint, any other symptoms, history summary, scoring systems – this is essentially a handover

On examination: Examination findings

Tests Already Done: What investigations have been done so far? Any bloods? Any other imaging?

Indication: What is telling you that this patient needs this image?

Contraindications: Any metal in the body, renal disease, diabetes, pregnancy etc. that may mean that this patient cannot have the first line or gold standard imaging.

Answering your Query: What do you want to know? Are you ruling something out? Are you diagnosing? Are you totally stuck with your diagnosis and just want some more information?

Request: “Please can I request a XYZ in order to ZYX”

Step 4: Your Request

In this box, you will be asked to write the image you think is appropriate. It is important that this is written clearly and is completely legible. Therefore, it might be worth leaving this box until the end, just so you minimise the chance of having to cross things out over and over again!

At this point it's important for you to go back and check your work.

Additional Information for this question

Choosing the scan:

How urgent?

How many views?

Is the patient fit enough for this scan?

Below is a list of common imaging types that you may be expected to request, and some extra points regarding them.

Chest X-Ray

Abdominal X-Ray

MSK X-Ray – you should request 2 views in this instance

CT/USS KUB

Low Resolution CT – for suspected tumours

High Resolution CT – for interstitial lung disease

CTPA

Coronary Artery Angiography

Transthoracic/Transesophageal echocardiogram

There are many more, and the best way to go about researching them is to think about your core conditions in terms of “first line” and “gold-standard”.