# Tips for New Docs

# How To:

## Request radiological investigations.

You will be doing this *literally* hundreds of times starting from the first day you start as an FY1. Whether it’s an electronic or paper (if your hospital is still in the Stone Age), your request will be vetted by radiologists or radiographers who decide if and when to do it, so you need to know how to write a good, succinct request for a radiological investigation, whether it’s just for a chest x-ray or an urgent MRI spine.

### Thou shalt justify thy scan requests:

For whatever scan you’re requesting you need to be pretty clear on three things:

1. What do you think is going on?
2. Why do you think it’s going on?
3. How will the results of this scan guide your management?

Remember you’re exposing a patient to radiation so you need to have a good reason for doing it. Requesting a scan because the registrar said so isn’t good enough. You need a specific clinical question that the scan will help you to answer. If it’s urgent, make that clear in your request. If it’s life and death urgent, speak to the radiologist as well. (Don’t worry, there’s a Tips for New Docs section on that too.)

### Keep it brief:

Whoever is reading that request needs to see a clear reason for why the patient needs the scan you’re requesting and they aren’t going to be thrilled if they have to wade through a “3rd Year Medical Student” medical history to find it. If it’s a paper request you’ll probably only have a small box to write in anyway. Keep it brief and to the point. “Mr A has these symptoms and bloods show this. Request for scan to rule out X”.

### If there’s a potential complication or contraindication, mention it:

For electronic requests there may be a tick-box checklist to go through when requesting your scans, but if there isn’t then make sure you mention it.

Your patient with CKD who needs an urgent contras CT? Mention that you’re aware of the low eGFR and it’s been discussed to go ahead with the scan and they’re having dialysis tomorrow anyway. State how the patient needs to be transported, so you don’t end up wasting everyone’s time when the porter turns up with a wheelchair for the bedbound patient. If it’s an MRI, you’ll get absolutely nowhere if you haven’t gone through their safety checklist regarding metalwork and implants. If the patient is isolated for an infection, put that in the request so they can be put last on the list or so the team in radiology know the room might need to be cleaned afterwards.

You get the picture. If it might affect the scan in ANY way, it’s best to let them know in advance.