

# Interventional Radiology Tips and Tricks

# Interventional Radiology (IR) Student Guide

Last updated: 12/17/25; for questions, contact Aaron at 501-499-0908

## General Information

- ❖ IR is an amazing career path. After six to seven years of residency, trainees are eligible for board certification in two specialties: diagnostic radiology and interventional radiology.
- ❖ When wearing a lead vest, pull the waist straps as tightly as possible. Doing this will prevent your shoulders from bearing as much weight.
- ❖ If you are doing a month-long IR rotation, or multiple month-long IR rotations, ask Mrs. Lacie Covington if you can borrow lead glasses. It's important to protect your eyes from radiation too.

## Getting Experience

- ❖ If you would like to spend more time in the IR department at UAMS, contact Mrs. Lacie Covington, [lfcovington@uams.edu](mailto:lfcovington@uams.edu), and she will get you acquainted with UAMS IR.
- ❖ [Teaching IR](#) and [Learn IR](#) are two free IR learning resources.
- ❖ Central venous catheter (CVC) placement and percutaneous nephrostomy (PCN) catheter exchanges require fundamental IR skills. Observe a few, then ask if you can “back-table.”
- ❖ “Back-tabling” is a term used to describe the act of scrubbing into and helping facilitate IR procedures. This might involve filling and refilling syringes with contrast / heparinized saline, handling / preparing micropuncture kits, sheaths, guidewires, catheters.
- ❖ If you want a deep understanding of procedures, introduce yourself to the radiation technologist prior to the procedure and observe setup, “back-tabling,” and cleanup. Radiation technologists are extremely well-versed in IR devices and can provide invaluable education if you give them the opportunity.

## Adaptability, Medical Devices, and Other Resources

- ❖ IR requires development of ingenuity and resilience.
- ❖ It is essential to learn the fundamental applications of seemingly intuitive devices such as [Sheaths](#), [Drain adapters](#), [Flow-switches](#), [Tuohy-Borst Sidearm adapters](#), [Torque Devices](#).
  - These are used in almost every procedure and their function can easily be overlooked.
  - Once you understand the intended function of a given device, you can begin to develop a sense of how it might be used in non-traditional circumstances.

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- ❖ [The National Comprehensive Cancer Network \(NCCN\)](#) has a free library of cancer treatment guidelines that only requires you to create a free account.

## Away Rotations

- ❖ Visiting Student Learning Opportunities (VSLOs) AKA “Away Rotations” are encouraged for IR applicants.
- ❖ The standard recommendation for IR applicants is to perform 2-3 Away Rotations.
- ❖ VSLO has a website maintained by the American Association of Medical Colleges (AAMC).
  - Before applying, the UAMS M4 coordinator, currently Mrs. Jessica Cannon, [jscannon@uams.edu](mailto:jscannon@uams.edu), will notify you when the AAMC shares a token to create your account.
  - Last year this token was shared by the AAMC, [aamc\\_registration@aamc.org](mailto:aamc_registration@aamc.org), on 01/10/25.
  - Once you have created your account, programs accept applications on a rolling basis.
  - Unfortunately the best way to track programs of interest is to check the VSLO website daily to see if your program of interest is accepting applications yet.
  - Because of the rolling application cycle, It is extremely important to have as many documents prepared as possible **before** you receive your VSLO token, ideally before the first week of January.
  - Here is a list of requirements from my applications; requirements are not the same for every program, but hopefully this list includes most of the documents you might be asked for:
    - Professional headshot
    - Letter of recommendation
    - Cover sheets / personal statements
    - Transcript
    - Resume
    - BLS/ACLS confirmation
    - HIPPA training confirmation
    - Respirator mask fit test confirmation
    - [NPI number](#)
    - Health insurance verification
    - Malpractice insurance verification
    - Vaccination records with titers
      - COVID
      - MMR, Varicella
      - Hepatitis B
      - TB skin vs. blood test
- ❖ Each VSLO application costs around \$15 dollars.

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- ❖ Application updates are made on a rolling basis and can come as early as mid-March, maybe even earlier, and continue through June.

## Context for the Radiology Application

- ❖ There are currently three [pathways to IR](#).
- ❖ The terminology for radiology applications can become a little bit confusing:
  - **Advanced** residency: a program through which you begin specialty specific training as a PGY-2 (PGY AKA post-grad-year)
  - **Categorical** residency: a program through which the intern year (PGY-1) is built into the same program who has matched you for your “Advanced” training.
  - **Integrated** residency: a combined program that directly leads to a “subspecialty” certification, skipping the traditional pathway of completing general training first.
  - **Preliminary** year: a one year training program required for some “Advanced” residency training programs; can be internal medicine **or** surgery.
  - **Transitional** year: a one year clinical experience that provides broad exposure to a **combination** of specialties: internal medicine, emergency medicine, surgery.
- ❖ Diagnostic radiology (DR) is a 5 year training program and is classified as an “Advanced” specialty because the first year is not radiology exclusive training.
- ❖ Integrated interventional radiology (IR) is a 6 year training program and can either be “Categorical” or “Advanced,” so it is important to use the [Residency Explorer website](#) or to email the program directly to determine which type of residency they offer.
- ❖ Because “Advanced” residencies do not technically have a built-in PGY-1 year, it is also important to apply to “Preliminary Year” or “Transitional Year” programs through ERAS.
- ❖ Even though “Advanced” positions do not have a built-in PGY-1 year, many programs will communicate PGY-1 opportunities throughout the ERAS cycle.
- ❖ As an M4 interested in IR, you will most likely triple apply to DR, IR, and some sort of preliminary or transitional year.
  - Each program has different stipulations for your PGY-1 year, though preliminary surgery is generally the most widely accepted PGY-1 training for IR.

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## NRMP & ERAS

- ❖ The National Residency Matching Program (NRMP) is a standalone service that utilizes your ERAS information and matches you to a program.
  - NRMP registration began on 09/15/25 at 12 pm EST.
  - The NRMP registration fee is \$70. Your NRMP information is automatically populated within the ERAS website.
- ❖ The Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS) is what you will use to apply for residency.
  - ERAS, like VSLO, requires a token for account creation. This token was shared by [myeras@aamc.org](mailto:myeras@aamc.org) on 06/05/25 and our class was made aware by Dean Sharanda Williams, [williamssharanda@uams.edu](mailto:williamssharanda@uams.edu), on the same day.
  - Programs began accepting 2025 ERAS applications on Wednesday, 09/03/25.
  - The 2025 ERAS deadline was Wednesday, 09/25/25, at 9 am EST, which is also the date and time that programs can begin reviewing applications.
  - It is essential to have all application materials submitted by the deadline if possible.
  - I applied to 42 IR programs, 39 DR programs, and 19 preliminary surgery programs.
  - The price for applying follows a predictable scale; it is expensive:
    - \$80 one-time fee to share your NBME transcript with programs.
    - ≤30 programs within one specialty: \$11/program
    - >30 programs within one specialty: \$30/program
    - **NRMP + transcript + 42 IR + 39 DR + 19 preliminary surgery = \$1,649**

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## Interviews

- ❖ Most DR and IR interviews during the 2025-2026 cycle are virtual.
- ❖ Interview questions:
  - Why medicine?
  - Why radiology?
  - Why this program?
  - What do you like to do in your free time?
  - Give me an example of a time that you failed and what you did to take accountability and learn from your mistake.
  - What is the most difficult challenge you have faced in medical school?
  - What are three things that you're looking for in a residency program?
  - Tell me about your research.
  - Let's fast-forward and pretend we're at your retirement party. What do you want people to remember about you?
  - If you had to choose one characteristic to describe why you stand out as a candidate amongst the rest of the applicant pool what would that would be?