OSCE checklist for IV cannulation

An OSCE checklist for IV cannulation covers consent, equipment, vein choice, a clean or aseptic technique, safe insertion and dressing, then flushing, documentation and aftercare. Practise on a model arm and say each safety point aloud.

OSCE checklist for IV cannulation: steps to practise

1. Check there is a clear order for a cannula. Confirm the reason and the patient's identity, and ask about allergies.
2. Wash or rub your hands and prepare a clean tray: cannula, flush, dressing, tourniquet, wipes, gloves and sharps bin.
3. Introduce yourself, explain and gain consent. Ask which arm is dominant and if there are any past problems.
4. Apply the tourniquet and choose a vein. Avoid joints, an affected limb or areas of infection.
5. Release it, clean your hands, and put on gloves.
6. Clean the skin as your policy says and let it dry. Do not touch it again.
7. Reapply the tourniquet, insert the cannula, and watch for blood in the chamber.
8. Advance the cannula and release the tourniquet. Apply pressure and withdraw the needle into the safety device.
9. Dispose of the needle in the sharps bin. Flush to check the cannula works and the patient feels no pain.
10. Secure with a dressing, label it with date and time, and record the site and who inserted it.
11. Explain what to report: pain, redness or swelling.

What candidates commonly forget

- Not touching the clean site again after cleaning.
- Hand hygiene before and after.
- Releasing the tourniquet.

- Dating the dressing and documenting.
- Saying how often the site will be checked.

Local policy comes first

This is our own practice checklist. Your college, hospital or country may do some steps differently. Where local policy and this list disagree, follow local policy. Hospitals differ on gloves, skin cleaning agents, dressing types and how the site is scored, so follow your own policy. You can practise with an AI patient, and try one station free with no sign-up. See also the general OSCE nursing checklist.

Common questions

What equipment do I need for IV cannulation?

A cannula, flush, tourniquet, skin wipes, gloves, dressing, sharps bin, and a clean tray. Check each item before starting.

Where should I avoid cannulating?

Avoid joints, injured or infected areas and limbs your policy lists. Say which you avoided.

What do I check afterwards?

Check the site for pain, redness, swelling and leaks, and record it according to your chart.

Sources

- WHO guidelines for the prevention of bloodstream infections associated with intravascular catheters: peripheral catheters
- NICE QS61: Infection prevention and control
- WHO guidelines on hand hygiene in health care

Checked 2026-11-13. Fees and rules change, so confirm them with the regulator before you book.