



Venipuncture: cultures, light blue, red/gold, green, lavender/pink, gray. Each tube sits where the additives drawn before it cannot change its results.

#	Tube	Additive	Invert	Common tests
1	 Blood culture bottles (aerobic + anaerobic)	Culture media	Per bottle instructions	Blood cultures
2	 Light blue	3.2% sodium citrate	3–4 times	PT/INR, aPTT, fibrinogen, D-dimer
3	 Gold / red-gray (SST) or red	Clot activator (SST also has gel)	5 times	BMP/CMP, lipid panel, serology, drug levels
4	 Green / light green (PST)	Lithium heparin (PST also has gel)	8–10 times	STAT chemistry and electrolytes, ammonia (many labs)
5	 Lavender (or pink)	K2EDTA	8–10 times	CBC, hemoglobin A1c, type and screen (pink)
6	 Gray	Sodium fluoride / potassium oxalate	8–10 times	glucose, lactate, blood alcohol

Remember

Mnemonic: “Boys Can See How Every Game” — Blood cultures, Coagulation (citrate), Serum, Heparin, EDTA, Glycolytic inhibitor (gray).

Why the order matters: additive carryover. EDTA carried into a chemistry tube falsely raises potassium and lowers calcium; clot activator carried into a citrate tube falsely shortens PT and aPTT.

Butterfly + light blue first: draw a discard tube first (non-additive or another coagulation tube) so the citrate tube fills to its line and keeps the 9:1 ratio.

Blood cultures with a butterfly: fill the aerobic bottle first, then the anaerobic bottle.

Capillary order is different (CLSI GP42-Ed7): blood gases, EDTA (lavender), other additive tubes, then serum last.

Invert gently, never shake. Glass red tubes have no additive and need no inversions.



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Based on CLSI PRE02-Ed8 (2025) and the BD Vacutainer chart. Tube colors and choice vary by lab: follow your facility's manual.

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