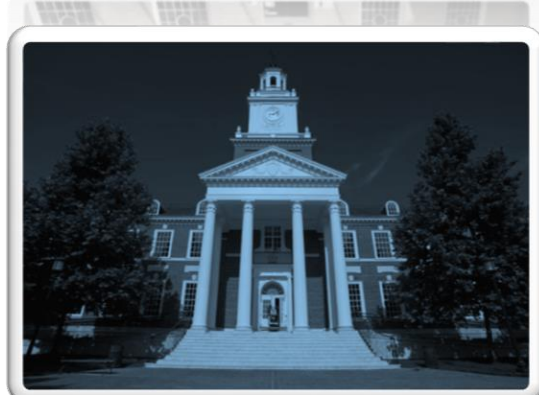


GUIDE FIVE

The Pre-Med/Pre-Dental Interview Process

Johns Hopkins University



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Preface

This guide provides important details for Johns Hopkins University undergraduates and alumni who are in the process of applying to allopathic (MD), osteopathic (DO) and dental (DDS, DMD) school. Reference in this guide to “medical school” refers to allopathic (MD), osteopathic (DO) and dental (DDS, DMD) school.

Focus of Guide Five

Guide Five: The Pre-Med/Pre-Dental Interview Process answers applicant questions related to medical school admissions interviews. In Guide Five, we have chosen to present information in a Q&A format, under specific categories. Please keep in mind that some of your questions also may be addressed in [Guide Four: The Ongoing Application Process](#), so it is important to review both documents for a complete picture of the medical school interview process. The ongoing medical application process is a marathon, not a sprint. It requires endurance, considerable attention, organization, and professionalism. We wish you the best of luck in the months ahead!

Professionalism

It is critical that you are professional throughout the entire medical school application process, particularly with respect to how you approach, provide information to, and express appreciation for the efforts of those members of Johns Hopkins University and medical school communities involved with the admissions process. Be mindful of your verbal and non-verbal communication, including eye contact, handshake, interview attire, and courtesy. Remember that you are representing yourself as well as Johns Hopkins University, and that professionalism is a key ingredient of a successful applicant and successful medical career!

If you are granted an interview, take the first available appointment and make plans to keep this appointment. Canceling an interview or not showing up greatly inconveniences a medical school, and negatively impacts our current and future applicants to that school. It also impacts your Pre-professional advisor, who will likely receive a phone call from the medical school's admissions dean asking for reassurance that other Johns Hopkins applicants will not cancel interviews. Therefore, if an emergency occurs, we encourage you to contact a Pre-professional advisor immediately to discuss the circumstances and to devise an appropriate strategy.

Professionalism is essential in both virtual and in-person events. It is crucial to attend events that you accept an invitation to, as this shows respect for the organizers and other participants. If you receive funds for these events, it is important to use them solely for their intended purpose. Adhering to these guidelines not only reflects your commitment to ethical standards but also fosters a culture of integrity and respect within your professional community. Maintaining ethical behavior throughout the process is vital for building trust and credibility in all professional interactions.

Overview

Interviews are an opportunity for the admissions committee to learn more about you and understand your goals. Before the day of your interview, review both your primary application and the secondary application for that school. You should review the material the school has sent you, look closely at their website, and be prepared to discuss why you are interested in their program.

Each professional school will approach the interview process in different ways, but they will all generally be working to understand your experiences and preparedness in following areas:

- **Interpersonal skills.** You must demonstrate throughout the interview day the interpersonal skills needed to be successful in practice. Strong communication skills, awareness of the needs of others, and the compassion to respond to those needs must be evident.
- **Problem-solving skills.** Interviewers will want to know how you approach decision-making. They may ask about your problem-solving, attention to detail, flexibility, and acceptance of opinions that differ from your own. When asked a question around a complex issue, do not simply answer "yes" or "no" but give the interviewer insight into how you have arrived at that decision.
- **Challenges.** What challenges or obstacles have you faced, and how have you overcome them? How have you dealt with academic difficulties, challenges in the lab, a failed leadership situation, or overcome a personal conflict? What mistakes have you made, what did you learn, and how did you change as a result of the issue?
- **Diversity.** Many medical schools want to know how you will bring diversity to the medical class. For some applicants, the answer may be their race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. But other applicants need to think in broader terms. It may help to give thought to your volunteer experiences within the community, including time spent working with underserved or underrepresented populations.
- **Teamwork.** A career in health will require you to work in teams for the betterment of your patients. Medical schools will want to hear your beliefs about what constitutes good teamwork, as well as examples of teamwork that went awry and what you learned from those experiences.
- **Leadership.** Certainly, you may reflect on a formal leadership position within a club or organization. But leadership doesn't always equate to serving on the executive board. Think of situations in which you have led, supervised, or organized others, or taken the lead on coordinating an event or other initiative.
- **Commitment to your chosen profession.** You must convince the interviewer that you have made a mature, well-informed decision to pursue a career in medicine. You must demonstrate an understanding of the daily demands and realities of that profession and of your emotional, intellectual, and physical ability to rise to the challenge.
- **Academic readiness.** The admissions committee will need to be assured that you will be successful in the school's curriculum. If there are questions related to your academic record, be prepared to answer them openly and honestly.



Preparing for Interviews

Mock Interviews

- Medical school applicants are invited to participate in the Pre-Professional Office' [Virtual Mock Interview Program](#). Applicants must have at least one scheduled interview with a medical or dental school to be eligible to participate in the mock interview program. Applicants must have at least one scheduled interview with a medical or dental school to schedule a mock interview.
 - Practice and prepare but do not memorize! Review your application, be familiar with your application – questions can be asked about anything you've written in your application
 - Use your network for extra practice! Ask a colleague, friend, or family member to conduct a mock interview with you. We suggest you share with him/her the list of interview questions in this Guide (see Appendix). We also suggest reviewing the interview preparation materials on EY26 Committee Page.
 - Know the type of interview. In addition to information received from the program in the interview invite, you can find helpful information about interviews in the [Medical School Admissions Requirements \(MSAR\)](#).
 - [Preparing for the Interview](#)
 - [MD/PhD interview](#) tips – typically MD/PhD candidates interview one day with the medical school and one day with the graduate program. Pro tip: practice discussing your research with your PI and other researchers.



General Interview Prep Tips

There is no one right way to prepare for a medical school interview. You must maintain a balance between (1) preparing for anticipated interview questions (2) reviewing your responses on primary and secondary applications and (3) formulating in your mind some very clear and distinct points that you would like the interviewer to remember about you and your candidacy. Be sure to prepare thoughtful questions to ask your interviewers. Make sure you have carefully reviewed the website of the school and ask only those questions that are not already obviously answered online. Asking questions that are specific to a particular school will be more impressive than asking generic questions. To start thinking about appropriate questions for your interviewers, go to: [Selecting a Medical School: 35 Questions I Wish I Had Asked](#).

Do Not Memorize “Canned” Answers

Practice and prepare but do not memorize! Review your application, be familiar with your application – questions can be asked about anything you've written in your application. Engage in conversation and enjoy the opportunity to discuss your vision and goals.

Interview Etiquette

Q. What are the benefits of staying overnight with a medical school student host?

A. Students volunteer to host applicants because they are genuinely interested in sharing information about their school and community. Staying with a student host is a great way to gain insight into a medical school. Be pleasant, polite, and gracious. Why spend money on a hotel when you can instead take the opportunity to get an insider's perspective?

Q. Must applicants dress in dark suits for their interviews?

A. No. It is important to dress appropriately, but it is not necessary for everyone to be dressed in the same conservative uniform. Be yourself. Do not wear jeans, but there is nothing wrong with a red sweater and black skirt or gray suit with a pink tie. Ladies—make sure your dress or skirt is an appropriate length, and that you can walk comfortably in your shoes. In the end, remember it's better to err on the side of dressing conservatively.



Q. During the interview day, may I make small talk? Can I ask unsolicited questions?

A. Yes. The interview day will not be conducted only in a question-and-answer format. It should be a series of conversations that provide the opportunity to get to know some interesting people and for the school's representatives to get to know you. Hopefully, there will be a comfortable exchange of questions and answers. Enjoy the day and approach your interviews with an open and engaging attitude.

Q. Since we are competing against each other, is it appropriate to be sociable with the other applicants who are interviewing with me?

A: Yes! You should not think of fellow interviewees as competition. They may become your future classmates. Successful applicants are the individuals who can look beyond their own anxiety and reach out to make everyone in the group feel more relaxed and comfortable. Medical schools are looking for people who are confident enough to care about the comfort of others and who have the soft skills to build a rapport even among people who are in competition with one another.

Q. During the interview, will I be asked why I have chosen to pursue the field of medicine?

A. This question may not be asked directly, and even if it is not asked the answer to this question must be shared at some point during the interview. If the question is asked and you are unable to articulate a clear and legitimate response to this question, this will certainly negatively impact your chances. If your interviewer does not ask you this question directly, you must find a way to work your motivations into the interview.

Q. One must be nice to the doctors and deans during the interview day, but is it acceptable to "let your hair down" with the students and support staff?

A. Committees want you to be yourself, but you should of course avoid behaving in a disrespectful or inappropriate manner to anyone you encounter on your interview day. If you are disrespectful,

unprofessional, or exhibit rude behavior, the admissions staff will assume that you respond to patients in the same manner and this behavior will negatively impact your chances of admission.

Q. During an interview should I discuss any difficult life experiences I have faced?

A. Admissions committees appreciate students who have learned from an experience of failure or frustration. A demonstrated ability to rebound after a setback is an important quality for future physicians. Be straightforward about any challenges, and then explain how you've overcome them, what you have learned from the experiences, and how the experience will ultimately make you a better physician in the future.

Q. During an interview, is it acceptable to admit that I am not knowledgeable about a particular subject, or should I fake my way through a vague response in hopes that the interviewer will move on from the question?

A. Just as a physician needs to say "I don't know" at times, so does a medical school applicant. Be honest about the limits of your knowledge. Perhaps, you can express an interest in researching the answer after the interview, but never simply pretend to know something about an issue. That strategy will undoubtedly backfire.

Q. If an interviewer asks inappropriate questions during an interview, should I tell someone at the school or would reporting the incident hurt my application?

A. Committees are aware that even the most experienced interviewers can sometimes ask questions that candidates may believe to be inappropriate. You can and should share specific and immediate concerns if the school provides an evaluation form for you to rate your interview experience. In many cases, it's best to first discuss the scenario with a Pre-professional advisor so that we can offer guidance on the appropriate way to express your concerns with the medical school admissions staff in a professional manner. The medical schools genuinely want their interview process to be fair and would appreciate receiving the feedback so that they may address your concerns.

Q. If the name of my interviewer is shared with me in the interview invitation, should I contact him/her prior to the interview?

A. No, it is not necessary or appropriate to contact your interviewer prior to your interview. If you have specific questions about your interview day, please contact the admissions staff at the medical school.

Q. Do you have any tips for group interviews with multiple applicants being assessed at the same time?

A. Be aware of group dynamics. Acknowledge and recognize others in the group, treat your fellow applicants as a team, and demonstrate your teamwork skills.

Q. How do I handle interviews with medical students?

A. It is important to take all interviewers seriously, regardless of their position or background. Each interviewer brings a unique perspective that can provide valuable insights. However, the nature of the questions you might ask can vary depending on the interviewer's role. For example, students are often in the best position to discuss their experiences, such as their engagement with services, collaboration with peers, and other student-related scenarios. By acknowledging the

different perspectives and focusing on relevant topics, you can ensure a productive and meaningful dialogue with each interviewer.

Q. How should I answer a medical school interviewer who asks, “What other schools have you applied to?”

A. In general, medical schools should not ask you this question. However, if someone does ask, be thoughtful about your reply. It is best to avoid listing the schools to which you applied; however you can give information about the types of schools you are interested in attending such as opportunities for research, community service, and other learning opportunities. These are reasons you may also have for applying to their program. If you feel pressured to answer, however, be honest, but diplomatic and courteous in your reply.

Q. How should I follow up with a medical or dental school following an interview?

A. After an interview, send thank you notes or emails to everyone you have interviewed with. When sending a thank you note, it is your responsibility to know the mode of communication preferred by each school. Remember to (a) appropriately greet the person, (b) express your appreciation for the interview, (c) refer to something specific or personal about your visit to the school, (d) reiterate your appreciation, and (e) sign off. Be careful when emailing multiple schools that you do not state a specific school name.



The Multiple Mini Interview

The Multiple Mini Interview (MMI), developed by McMaster University, is an interview format that consists of a series of 6-10 interview stations, each focused on a different question or scenario. The MMI is designed to measure competencies like oral communication, social and nonverbal skills, and teamwork that are important indicators of how an applicant will interact with patients and colleagues as a physician. In addition to admissions officers, interviewers may include community members, professors, and physicians practicing in the local area.

[AAMC – What is the MMI?](#) – adapted from AAMC

- The MMI consists of a series of short, timed interview stations in an attempt to draw multiple samples of the applicant’s ability to think on their feet, critically appraise information, communicate ideas, and demonstrate that they have thought about some of the issues that are important to the medical profession.
- The interview is an opportunity for the medical school to assess the applicant in a live (virtual) setting. Applicants have reached this stage because of their sufficiently high academic standing, strong MCAT verbal reasoning or critical analysis and reasoning score, and/or by presenting themselves as highly suitable on their [CASPer*](#) test. It is the combination of these assessments that is used to select applicants for this next stage of selection.
- The purpose of the interview is therefore to collect information concerning the personal qualities of those applicants selected for an interview.
 - [AAMC](#)

- [New York University School of Medicine](#)
- [Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine](#)
- [Prep for the Multiple Mini Interview](#)
- [NY Times article on MMIs](#)

Haven't Been Invited for Any Interviews?

Q. What should I do if I have not received any invitations to interview?

A. If your file was complete by August or September, and you have not been invited for an interview by mid-November, it may be acceptable to send an update to schools that states (1) includes any updates (2) and why you are a good fit for their program(s). Examples of significant update are new experience, publication, updated transcript, among others. Be sure to know communication preferences (portal, email, does not receive updates) to receive supplemental materials and updates. **If you have not received an interview by December, we also strongly recommend you make an appointment with a Pre-professional advisor to discuss your application cycle.**

Q. What if I am “on-hold”?

A. If you have a “hold” status, it means that your application is being set aside for the time being and that you may be reconsidered for an interview at a later date. Unfortunately, medical schools typically do not offer many interviews to applicants who are on “hold.” When you are notified of a “hold” status, you should send a follow-up letter to express your continued interest in the school.

Q. What should I do if I am rejected from a school where I was sure I would receive an interview?

A. Determining how a particular medical and dental school makes its admissions decisions can be bewildering. Even the strongest applicant should prepare to receive rejections in the medical school application process. While it is very difficult to accept not receiving an interview to a particular school, you must keep this process in perspective. This is a very competitive process, and success is not guaranteed even for the strongest applicants. Sometimes students can be invited for multiple interviews only to be placed on hold or rejected from the very school they believed to be their best option. Focus on schools that show interest in you and follow up where appropriate.

Q. At what point in the process should I be concerned that I might not be accepted to medical school?

A. If a few months have passed and you have not moved off of a waitlist or hold, or if you have had no interviews, we strongly recommend that you speak with one of the Pre-Professional advisors to help you assess the strengths and weaknesses of your application. We consider each applicant on a case-by-case basis, so we will discuss next steps and possible plans for reapplication in an individual advising meeting.

More information about update letters, letters of interest, and letters of intent can be found in [Guide Four](#).

In Closing

Navigating your way through academic requirements at Johns Hopkins is, in itself, a challenge that takes careful planning and great patience. If you are in the process of completing pre-medical or pre-dental curricular requirements, the academic planning process requires precision, adaptability, and flexibility. Each student's academic path is unique and the one you set for yourself should take into account your ability to handle multiple science classes, a broad range of extracurricular activities, and an appropriate timeline that is yours alone. Most of all, we encourage you to seek input from your academic and pre-professional advisors to make sense of your unique situation and to devise a plan that is most appropriate for your emerging academic and professional goals.

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APPENDIX

Sample Interview Questions

As with any interview, it is important to be well prepared for whatever questions may come your way. Here are some typical interview questions that you should be prepared to answer (provided by the National Association of Advisors for the Health Professions). Remember, preparation is important, but you don't want your answers to sound over-rehearsed.

- Tell me about yourself.
- Where do you see yourself in 10 years?
- Why have you chosen medicine/dentistry as a career?
- Why did you choose to major in _____?
- What has been the most rewarding experience of your college (or post-college) years?
- What have you recently read for fun?
- Why do you want to go to this school?
- Why do you think you are a good candidate for medical/dental school?
- What do you consider your greatest weakness?
- Tell me about your research.
- What would you do if you were not accepted to medical/dental school?
- Tell me about your job/internship from last summer?
- What was your most enjoyable course in college, and why?
- What do you like to do in your spare time?
- What do you see as the greatest problem facing our healthcare system today? (In general be prepared to discuss current events in healthcare.)

Although this is not an exhaustive list, it gives you some idea of what to expect from your interviewer.

We also suggest you review the extensive interviewing resources found on AAMC.org.