



Career Center

FAQ's For Pre-Medical and Pre-Dental Students

(Note: This Document has been Adapted from [University of Syracuse](#), [St. Mary's College in California](#), [Stony Brook State University of New York](#) and [Providence College](#) pre-Health Advising websites.)

Do I need to have a 4.0 GPA to get accepted to medical/dental school?

No. The average GPA for admitted students to medical school is approximately 3.5 and to dental schools are approximately 3.3. You should aim to get A's and B's in your courses. Remember too, that every grade you get in college will be looked at by medical schools, so any poor grades on your transcripts will also be taken into account when considering your application.

I know that admissions committees look at how much volunteer experience I have. How much time should I spend doing volunteer work?

Quality is more important than quantity. You should commit at least four to six hours each week for the year prior to application. You should select at least one activity where you are making an impact and the work is making an impact on you. It is important to take an active role in your volunteer work.

What does it take to enter and succeed in medical/dental school?

1. Motivation and intelligence
2. Well-rounded college education
3. Completion of college prerequisites for medical school entrance:
 1. Good academic performance
 2. High grade point average--usually, between 3.3 and 3.6 on a 4-point scale
4. Preparation for the medical college admission test (MCAT) or dental admission test (DAT)
5. Timely and successful performance on the MCAT or DAT. Competitiveness of MCAT and DAT scores varies with the institutions that you are applying to and the strength of your other credentials
6. Evidence of motivation for the profession
7. Evidence of interest in service
8. Evidence of leadership
9. Strong letters of recommendation
10. Well written personal statement
11. Timely applications to medical schools
12. Good communication skills

Do I have to major in science to become a competitive candidate for medical/dental school?

Many students planning to apply to medical school think they should major in science and they will be less competitive candidates as humanities or social science majors. This, however, is not the case. Premedical/pre-dental students should use the same criteria for choosing a major that other students use: What discipline is most interesting and most challenging? Which field draws best on your talents and abilities? Premed/pre-dental course work can fit into a non-science major with careful planning and advice from the premed adviser and program faculty advisers.

When deciding on a major, several points are worth noting:

- Medical schools are interested in applicants who are challenged in the sciences and have demonstrated their abilities in science. They also want to attract candidates who have a broad background. According to the Association of American Medical Colleges, in the 2000-2001 entering class for medical schools nationwide, 43% of all Biology majors, 48% of all Physical Science majors and 49% of all non-science majors who applied to medical schools nationwide were accepted.
- Successful medical school and dental school applicants demonstrate both ability in science and that broader understanding through a strong academic record. Premedical students have majored in English, history, engineering, and psychology, as well as the more traditional science fields. Those with equally strong records have been equally successful in gaining admission.

I have heard Organic Chemistry is a “weed out” course for premedical/pre-dental students?

Organic chemistry is a very challenging class that covers a lot of material, and so it is similar to the kinds of classes you will encounter in medical schools and that is why the admissions committee will look closely at these grades. In addition organic chemistry is required before you take the MCAT/DAT.

What are the steps to applying to medical/dental-school?

The primary medical school application you will submit is through the **American Medical College Application Service (AMCAS)** for MD schools, American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine Application Service (AACOMAS) for DO schools and for dental school it is the American Association for Dental Schools Application Service (AADSAS). Your AMCAS/AACOMAS/AADSAS application will contain your personal information, college transcript, MCAT/DAT scores, volunteer work, awards, and personal statement. The same information is sent to all of the schools to which you wish to apply. If you are applying to one of the non AMCAS/AACOMAS/ AADSAS schools it's best to contact the school directly for application details.

Complete required coursework:

1. Take the MCAT/DAT
2. Obtain strong letters of recommendation (including a letter from a DO if you're applying to osteopathic colleges)
3. Write your personal essay
4. Submit primary application
5. Submit secondary application (if requested)
6. Submit letters of recommendation (if requested)
7. Interview (if requested)

When do I take the medical school or dental admission test?

The Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) examinations are usually taken in the spring of the junior year. The admission test must be taken the year before the individual wants to begin attending medical or dental school. The MCAT is offered in April and August. It is recommended that you take the Spring MCAT because of the rolling admission nature of medical schools. Similarly, you should plan to take the Dental Admission Test (DAT) in the spring of your junior year or the summer before you apply to dental schools.

How do I select a medical/dental school?

Before you apply to medical and dental school, it is crucial that you do your research as it is time consuming and expensive to apply. Begin the process by narrowing down the list. Review the medical and dental schools admissions information. Some schools only accept in-state residents so if you are not a resident in that state then it is not worth your time and money to apply there. Your best chances of acceptance into medical or dental school are in the state schools where you claim legal residence. State schools are supported by tax dollars and, therefore, are obligated to accept students from that state. Some states do not have medical or dental schools. If you live in such a state, your state has a contract with public or private schools in other states that require them to treat you as an in-state student. Generally, out-of-state applicants to a state-supported medical or dental school need to present credentials superior to those of state applicants. Private schools place less emphasis on state of residency.

Since schools differ in their admissions requirements, you will need to determine those schools that you are qualified to attend. Competition to get into medical and dental schools is intense. You need to be realistic about your admission chances. Look at the average GPA and admission test scores of the people that are getting accepted to the various schools. Check to see where students from your college with your GPA and admission test scores have been accepted.