

Medical School Interviews and After

Logistics and Planning

Medical schools make interview offers after some initial screening of your application materials. You should feel great when you get an offer! Offers go out as early as September and as late as March and April. You can ask a school's admissions office about their particular cycle this year.

If you are offered an interview, you may be given some choice of dates or little choice at all. It is all right to *politely* ask to change your interview date once. It is fair to try to concentrate interviews in the same geographic location around the same time, but it is difficult to do this either early or late in the interview season, e.g.: if offered an interview by one school in the Philadelphia area, you can call other Philadelphia schools to which you applied, tell them when you plan to fly to the area, and ask if there is anyway to discern if you might interview there around the same time. Key: don't be pushy - it's not worth it to shoot yourself in the foot.

Clothing: Women - wear a suit, pantsuit, or dress and jacket. Men - wear a suit or jacket and tie. Avoid anything too outrageous or distracting - you want the interviewers to see you as a professional and concentrate on the conversation, not your attire or accessories.

Avoid any fragrance - too many folks have allergies to risk it bothering someone in a closed room.

Before you make travel plans, be sure you have the location of the interview and time it would take to get there from an airport, train station, etc. Admissions personnel can be very helpful with this. Some schools have current students who act as hosts, making your stay cheaper and easier, and maybe more fun, too.

Research the schools - know the web site and view book at a minimum. Come in with informed questions.

Preparation:

Once your first interview is scheduled, imagine an actor or actress preparing for opening night; she wouldn't just read her script silently and then arrive on stage; she would practice her lines *out loud*. You will be able to present your ideas much more eloquently if they have come out of your mouth before your big day. Practice, practice, practice! Try practicing with a friend, in front of a mirror, or whatever works for you.

Check out <http://www.studentdoctor.com/interview/index.asp> for feedback from other applicants.

Know your application and your essays hands-down. Anything you have submitted is fair game, though the interviewer may or may not have read your file yet.

The Interview - Helpful Hints:

Be sincere, courteous, use tact, and show enthusiasm. It's okay to use humor, but don't be a wise guy.

Display an interest in the interview. Treat every question as important.

Be honest and consistent in responses.

Listen carefully to the question or comments being made. Ask for clarification if a question is vague. "Did I understand your question to be...," "As I understand the question..."

Use the thinking/pause method when you need to regroup or organize thoughts.

Don't be passive regarding the content of the interview. The interviewer will ask specific questions. Your responses should address the question and can also make reference to an area or subject that you want to talk more about. Before the interview, make a mental list of five things you want to get out about yourself sometime during the interview.

Don't try to second-guess the interviewer's politics when asked your opinion about some issue. It is the way that you have arrived at your opinion that is of interest to him/her.

Avoid negative comments about professors of classes where your grades are lower, about fellow students, former employers, co-workers, etc.

Be prepared to respond to questions about your weaknesses as well as your strengths.

Respond to any questions about your personal life tactfully, especially if you indicate that you do not understand the relevance to your motivation, qualifications, etc.

Keep the interviewer's attention by varying the tone of your voice: lower/ raise, vary the tempo, speed up/slow down but always be articulate. Speak loudly enough.

Maintain good eye contact and positive body language.

A key component of the interview is to understand the fit between the med school and the applicant. Find out why this is the right school for *you*.

Enjoy! Believe it or not - many former applicants report that this was their favorite part of the application process.

Also:

Send a thank you note to your interviewer within a week of the interview. It is the polite and professional thing to do, and it gives you a chance to reiterate a point you feel you might have missed in the interview. A neatly hand-written note or a short business letter is acceptable.

Try not to be intimidated by your competition, *think positively & believe in yourself*.

Acceptances, Rejections & Waitlists:

There is no set time between interview and notification of the admissions decision, though many schools will try to give you a time frame, e.g. six weeks. Your application may be put “on hold,” which feels like limbo, but at least it means that you are not rejected. Essentially the schools need to take many weeks to examine the entire pool, and lots of applicants who got everything in early in the cycle end up waiting for news. Be familiar with your responsibilities as an applicant, posted at <http://www.aamc.org/students/applying/policies/start.htm>.

It is also helpful to know about the medical school procedures, known as “traffic rules,” listed at: <http://www.aamc.org/students/applying/policies/recommendations04.htm>

Acceptances: (Our favorite outcome!)

Once admission is offered at University XYZ, you will be asked to declare if you accept the offer or not. Just because you accept the offer, you **DO NOT HAVE TO ENROLL THERE**. This just means that you hold onto it as a real possibility, given all other offers thus far. At any one time you should only hold two offers maximum for any length of time. No deposit will be required of you at that moment. This is your chance to get additional questions answered about financing, curriculum, moving to a new location, etc. As of May 15, you can only hold one offer.

Rejections:

Rejection is not easy to take in any form, but when you put the effort and money into this process that is required, it can be pretty disappointing. Hopefully you have a school list that is appropriate to your application and you will indeed be admitted somewhere soon. Please feel free to speak with Dean Bassett if you are receiving an unexpected number of rejections.

Waitlists:

Unlike we see with undergraduate school, the waitlist process at medical schools is a vital part of the process that you can feel hopeful about. Every year many Amherst grads go to med schools where they were once on the waitlist. Some schools can tell you if you are toward the top, middle, or bottom the waitlist, but some don't organize them that way or give out any such specifics. Schools will want to hear if you choose to remain on their waitlist or not. They often also want updates on specific and noteworthy developments; if you have any additional grades or publications to report, now is the time to send them in. A written note telling the school your appreciation and enthusiasm for being on the waitlist is in order. Also, you can remind them why the school is the right fit for you. You can check in again at a later time, but **PLEASE** don't make a pest of yourself. Do not call the admissions office every week to relay your continued interest. It is an urban myth that the obnoxiously squeaky wheel gets into med school. (Who wants an obnoxious student in a med school class, anyway?) Waitlists heat up after mid-May; most people who are offered a spot in the class from the waitlist are contacted in June or early July.