



# Getting Into Medical School

## Applying to Medical School

### Selection Process

A medical school admissions committee is likely to be made up of teaching physicians from the clinical faculty, research faculty from the biological sciences, and medical students. Alumnae or community physicians may also serve on admissions committees.

In considering an applicant, a committee will take into such factors as:

- Overall academic record
- Scores on the MCAT
- Evaluations from faculty members who had the applicant in class
- Quality of the personal statement
- Impressions made during the personal interviews
- Volunteer experience, leadership positions, extracurricular activities
- Exposure to medicine and reason for pursuing a career in medicine
- State of residence
- Stated specialty choice
- Physician specialty needs in the state

### Types of Programs

The Medical School Admissions Requirements (MSAR) (<https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/requirements/msar/>) has a complete listing of medical programs in the country along with individual program requirements. This resource should be studied carefully for selection factors and guidelines for admissions.

- **Allopathic Medicine:** Allopathic schools, the most widely available type of medical training, confer the MD degree on their graduates. The traditional model of training consists of two years of basic science courses followed by two years of clinical rotations. Allopathic schools focus on the “systems-based” approach to medicine. The program is organized around physiologic systems, such as the endocrine system or the nervous system. Many schools employ case studies and teach through clinical vignettes. Allopathic training will give you the option to practice in any of the medical specialties and is universally recognized as the medical degree, including international practice.
- **Osteopathic Medicine:** Osteopathic physicians, who receive the DO degree, consider the whole person, including physical, emotional and spiritual components, instead of focusing on specific symptoms or illnesses. They regard your body as an integrated whole and focus on preventive health care. They also use a hands-on system of diagnosis and treatment known as osteopathic manipulative medicine. The course work for osteopathic medicine includes two years of basic science courses followed by two years of clinical training. DOs can specialize in any medical field and practice the full scope of modern medicine.

The American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM) (<http://www.aacom.org/>) also has a video (<http://data.aacom.org/video/AACOMv14.wmv>) about osteopathic medicine and a helpful timeline (<http://www.aacom.org/InfoFor/applicants/Documents/Undergraduate-Timeline.pdf>) (3-page PDF) for applying to osteopathic medical school.

*The best way to decide which path is right for you is to spend time with both MDs and DOs and talk to them about their practices.*

### SEE ALSO

- Pre-Med Student Tip Sheet (<http://www.aafp.org/content/dam/AAFP/docu>)
- Pre-Admissions Checklist (<http://www.aafp.org/content/dam/AAFP/docu/checklist.pdf>)

### RELATED LINKS

- Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) (<https://www.aamc.org/>)
- American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM) (<http://www.aacom.org/Pages/default.aspx>)
- Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) (<https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/mc>)

- **Early Decision Programs:** Some medical schools make provisions for students to submit their applications and be admitted in advance of the standard deadlines. This is referred to as an Early Decision Program (EDP) ([https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/programs/138218/msar\\_collection\\_medschool\\_programs.html](https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/programs/138218/msar_collection_medschool_programs.html)). The application deadline is usually in the month of August and a decision is made by October 1. You may only apply to one school offering an EDP and, if admitted, you are obligated to attend that school. Therefore, you should only apply to a school of your first choice. If you are not admitted under this program, you will be notified in sufficient time to make the deadline for regular application to other medical schools. It is sometimes possible for a rejected EDP applicant to be admitted to the same school during the regular admissions process. Check with the admissions department in the medical school for specific requirements of their Early Decision Programs.
- **Joint Degree Programs:** Some medical schools offer students the opportunity to earn the MD or DO degree plus another professional degree. Visit the individual medical school websites to see what joint degree programs they offer. If you are interested in BA/MD, MD/PhD, MD/MPH, DO/MBA or MD/JD or other specific programs offered by various schools, contact that school for application materials.

For those interested in MD/PhD dual degrees, the Association of American Medical Colleges (<https://www.aamc.org/students/research/mdphd/>) can help you make an informed decision.

## Secondary Application

If an applicant is not rejected in the preliminary screening, medical schools require a secondary application, which will be mailed upon receipt of the AMCAS or AACOMAS application. Most schools require an additional application fee, which must be mailed to the school with the completed secondary application. There is usually a deadline date for filing the secondary application. This deadline date should be carefully observed. Check with individual schools for specific requirements and deadlines.

Most secondary applications include:

- Biographical Information
- Dual Degree Program (optional)
- Test Scores
- Clinical Health Experience
- Essay Questions
- Statement of Disciplinary Actions
- Statement of Nondiscrimination
- Letters of Evaluation

## Personal Statement

The personal statement is the last part of the application process, but preparation for this essay should begin as early as possible. This is one part of the admissions process in which applicants have a direct influence and should submit the best product possible. While admissions committees often emphasize that they do not advise students about what to write, there are specific themes and topics that can be included. You want your personal statement to reflect your goals and the qualities that are unique to you, so that you stand out. As you start your essay, take the time to carefully reflect on the academic foundation you have built and the experiences that have contributed to the development of your character and led to your decision to pursue a career in medicine.

Possible themes to include in a personal statement:

- Reasons or motivation behind choosing medicine as a career
- An experience that influenced your career choice
- Qualifications and accomplishments that make you stand out
- Personal values that reflect commitment to a service-oriented career

Ten tips for writing a personal statement essay:

1. Develop a theme for your essay and write about a topic that you know about and that also excites you.
2. Use concrete examples and personal details.
3. Be concise. Every word counts and "fluff" is easily detected.
4. Address any weaknesses in your application, but don't dwell on them.
5. Pay attention to good writing skills, including use of the active voice, sentence structure, vocabulary, and transitions. Avoid the use of clichés.
6. Focus on capturing the reader's attention.
7. Revise your essay multiple times.
8. Have multiple people review your essay, including professors, friends and family for an outside viewpoint.
9. Do not use the essay as an autobiography. Avoid listing information.
10. Be authentic.

## Interviews

Most medical schools require a personal interview, though the specific processes differ among schools. Interviews may take place on or off campus. Interviews may be conducted by an admissions committee member, by multiple members of the admissions committee, or by off-campus interviewers, such as practicing physicians and/or current students. Generally, the interview assessments are added to the admissions file.

During the interview be prepared to answer questions in the following topical areas:

- Critical thinking skills and problem solving
- Ethical questions and scenarios
- Grades and test scores
- Personal attributes and experiences including philosophical viewpoints
- Career choice - be prepared to verbalize the answer to "Why do you want to go into medicine?"
- Attributes that make you a great fit with the medical school

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<http://www.aafp.org/medical-school-residency/medical-school/getting-in.html>

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