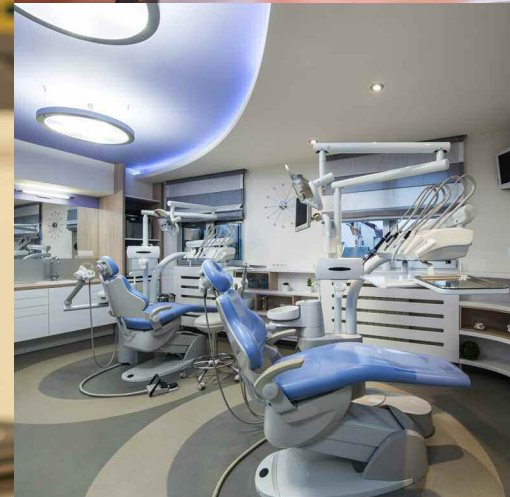


Dental School Admission: Timelines, Costs and Tips

adea.org/GoDental



Making the decision to go to dental school is both exciting and intense— and definitely a wise move on your part. Have you heard? *U.S. News and World Report* ranked dentist as #1 on its “100 Best Jobs” list of 2015, and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics expects 23,300 new dentist jobs through the year 2022! Congratulations on choosing to pursue both a rewarding and challenging career. Your next step is to prepare for and successfully apply to dental school.

Where do you START?

Which COURSES do you need to take?

How do the APPLICATION AND TESTING processes work?

The following guide, developed by the American Dental Education Association (ADEA), will answer all of these questions, and more, to help prepare you for the dental school application process.

WANT MORE INFORMATION? Check out our website at adea.org/GoDental.



Let's Start With a General Timeline for an Undergraduate Student.

Keep in mind that this timeline should be used as a guideline and not as a concrete checklist. Talk with a health professions advisor about your needs, so he or she can help you develop a timeline more tailored to you.

FRESHMAN YEAR

- Meet with a health professions advisor.
- Enroll in either biology or chemistry courses, as recommended by your advisor.
- Join a pre-dental or pre-health professions club at your school. This is a great opportunity to meet other like-minded students, network, become involved in community service and form study groups for your courses. Meeting junior and senior pre-dental students also gives you a great opportunity to learn about the dental school application process firsthand.
- Learn more about careers in the dental profession. Speak with your own dentist and learn about the advantages and challenges of the profession. Based on what you learn, consider why a career in dentistry appeals to you.
- Start exploring scholarship and fellowship opportunities so you can begin budgeting now for your continuing education.

FRESHMAN YEAR—SUMMER

- Participate in a summer academic enrichment program like the Summer Medical and Dental Education Program (SMDEP). SMDEP is a free six-week summer medical and dental school preparatory program that offers eligible students intensive and personalized medical and dental school enrichment and career experiences. Housing and meals are provided. Visit smdep.org for more information.
- Not able to participate in SMDEP? That's okay. Check out other summer enrichment opportunities, or work or volunteer in the health care environment within your community. Ideally, work in a dental office or clinic. Learn as much as you can about what dental professionals do and the issues impacting the profession. Also, ask your dentist or oral surgeon to share his or her philosophy of providing dental care.

SOPHOMORE YEAR

- Start thinking about selecting a major. Remember, you do not have to be a science major to attend dental school, but you do need to complete specific science courses.
- Work with your advisor to identify special opportunities for the upcoming summer. If you qualify and were unable to attend the previous summer, consider applying to SMDEP or other preparatory programs. Many universities and dental schools offer summer workshops to enhance study skills, expose undergraduates to the profession and prepare for the Dental Admission Test (DAT). Be sure to check application deadlines for these programs.
- Become actively involved in your pre-dental club. Sign up for committee work, help organize events and participate in activities.
- Start putting together a financial plan for applying to dental school. Take into consideration fees for the DAT, the ADEA Associated American Dental Schools Application Service (ADEA AADSAS®), supplemental application fees to the dental schools, plus the cost of participating in on-site interviews.



WHICH PREREQUISITE COURSES SHOULD I TAKE?

Traditionally, dental schools have selected candidates for admission who included the following coursework in their undergraduate curriculum:

- ✓ Two semesters (three quarters) of biology with lab
- ✓ Two semesters (three quarters) of general chemistry with lab
- ✓ Two semesters (three quarters) of organic chemistry with lab
- ✓ Two semesters (three quarters) of physics with lab

How Much Does It Cost to Apply to Dental School?

DON'T FORGET THAT APPLYING TO DENTAL SCHOOL ISN'T FREE.

We've outlined the costs to apply to help you budget accordingly.

DAT Fees: The DAT fee is \$415 and includes the exam and the sending of your score report to dental schools listed during registration.

ADEA AADSAS® Application Fees: The ADEA AADSAS application fee for your first dental school is \$245. Each additional school you apply to is \$93. ADEA AADSAS offers application fee assistance to those who demonstrate extreme financial need.

Dental School Supplemental Fees: Most dental schools require applicants to pay a supplemental application fee. Fees range from as little as \$35 to as much as \$100 and can change from year to year. Check with specific schools to determine their application fees.

Interviews: Keep in mind that if you secure an interview with a dental school, you may have to travel and stay in a hotel near the school. Consider the cost of travel, hotel and food while you are interviewing. You may also have to purchase an outfit for the interview if you do not already have one, so be sure to factor in that cost as well.

Deposit: When you are accepted to a dental school and decide to attend, you will have to give the school a deposit to hold your spot in the first-year class. This deposit is often applied to your first-year tuition and is usually nonrefundable, even if you decide last minute not to attend the school. These deposits tend to range from \$500 to \$2,000.

JUNIOR YEAR

- Complete biology and chemistry courses in preparation for taking the DAT in late spring of your junior year.
- Review the dental school application process and create a timeline for the submission of your application materials. All U.S. dental schools participate in ADEA AADSAS, the centralized dental school application service offered through ADEA. Look over the application and begin formulating your application information.
- Meet with your advisor to find out how your school handles letters of recommendation. Identify individuals to write letters of recommendation on your behalf and communicate submission deadlines to them. Make sure you document your dental office observation experiences.
- Participate in campus visitations from dental school admissions officers, visit dental schools and talk to dental students and admissions officers.
- Continue to actively participate in pre-dental organization activities.
- Identify a strategy to prepare for the DAT. Obtain a sample DAT from the American Dental Association (no charge).
- Register for the DAT with the American Dental Association. The ideal time to take the DAT is at the end of your junior year, spring semester, or immediately after you have completed your organic chemistry courses. After submitting your application, you will receive instructions to schedule your test date. The DAT is a computerized examination and can be taken at a date and time of your choosing. Your registration is valid for six months.

ADEA GoDental offers many resources for students considering dental school.

Visit our website at adea.org/GoDental.

You can also check us out on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube.

JUNIOR YEAR—SUMMER

- Submit your ADEA AADSAS application, indicating the dental schools to which you want your application materials sent. The ADEA AADSAS application cycle generally opens on or around June 1. An early application significantly enhances your chances of having your application reviewed early. Don't procrastinate and let application deadlines sneak up on you!
- If possible, work, volunteer or participate in a summer pre dental program at a dental school.

SENIOR YEAR

- Complete advanced science courses. Although most schools only require a year of biology, most dental students will tell you that additional courses, particularly in the biological sciences, prepare you better for the fast-paced dental school curriculum.
- Finish up all course requirements for your degree.
- Prepare to go on interviews. Participate in mock interviews offered by your pre dental organization or career center.
- Dental schools typically begin making offers of admission after December 1. Depending on the date of an offer of admission, you will have a specific response time. Most (but not all) schools require a deposit to reserve a space in the class at the time you accept the offer of admission.
- Once you receive an offer of admission, initiate the financial aid application process to the dental school you choose to attend. Don't procrastinate! Many financial aid awards are based on the date of application. Work with your dental school's financial aid office to stay on top of the application process.

SENIOR YEAR—SUMMER

- Prepare for your enrollment in dental school. This could mean participating in a pre-freshman experience, working and earning a few more dollars before starting school, or traveling and relaxing. Have fun!
- Brush up on your reading. Once you are in a dental program, the amount of reading that you will do will be different from what you have done as an undergraduate student. Try reading more books, magazines, newspapers, etc. Anything that will help you work on reading speed and comprehension will help you prepare for dental school.
- Keep working on your hand skills. Continue to play an instrument, participate in sports, knit, or whatever other activities you enjoy that will keep your hand skills sharp.



Now About the DAT ...

All U.S. dental schools require applicants to take the Dental Admission Test (DAT). The DAT is designed to measure general academic ability, comprehension of scientific information and perceptual ability. Here are the DAT basics.

The DAT is ...

- In English.
- Multiple choice.
- Computer based.
- \$415 each time you take it.
- Given most days of the year.
- Required by all U.S. dental schools.
- Half-day-long test: over four hours in length.
- Taken at specified testing centers throughout the country and administered by the American Dental Association (ADA).

What are the sections of the DAT?

- Natural sciences (biology, general chemistry and organic chemistry).
- Perceptual ability (two- and three-dimensional problem solving).
- Reading comprehension (dental and basic sciences).
- Quantitative reasoning (mathematical problems in algebra, numerical calculations, conversions, etc.).

When should you take the test?

- Once you have completed your prerequisites in biology, general chemistry and organic chemistry.
- It is recommended that you take the test at least one year before you want to go to dental school. Most students who take the DAT do so after their third year of college.

How do you prepare for the test?

- Review the content and outline of the exam itself.
- Study the key principles you learned in biology and chemistry.
- Take practice tests to gauge your abilities before the exam and try to improve each time you take one.
- Check out all of the DAT information on the ADA website, such as the DAT Candidates Guide and online tutorial.

What are the rules and regulations?

- You can only take the test once every 90 days.
- You can only take the test three times unless you get special permission from the ADA.

How do you sign up to take the test?

- Visit the ADA website to submit an application to take the DAT (nonrefundable fee is associated).
- You will be asked to create a DENTPIN, your Dental Personal Identifier Number, before you can complete the application to register for the DAT. This number will be used throughout the dental school application process and for any other testing conducted by the ADA.
- Receive your eligibility letter from the ADA. Once you have received the eligibility letter, you can schedule an appointment to take the test with Prometric testing. You should schedule the test 60-90 days in advance of the day you would like to test.
- If you require special testing accommodations, visit the Special Accommodations section of the Prometric website.



Congratulations!

After months of working hard on your applications and the DAT, you've finally gotten a well-deserved invitation to interview at a dental school.

What Happens During the Interviews, and How Do You Prepare?

Now you have a few weeks to arrange your travel and housing, not to mention a short trip to a store to select your interview attire.

Just as you have spent a lot of time preparing for the DAT by understanding the test format and timing, you need to also take some time to know how the interviews work.

Will the interviewers review your file before your interview?

Many schools will encourage their interviewers to conduct "open-file" interviews. This means that the interviewer (usually a faculty member) will have a chance to look over your ADEA AADSAS and supplemental application materials prior to meeting with you. This way, the interviewer can gain insight into what you bring to the table through your conversations and explore elements of your application in greater depth. Some schools will exclude any transcript or DAT scores when distributing your file so that an interviewer will avoid fixating on grades during the interview.

Other schools will conduct "closed-file" interviews. In this format, the interviewers interview each candidate without looking at the applicant's file. Because the interviewer is blind to your application, the conversation is expected to be more organic and exploratory.

Sometimes, an interviewer will have access to your file but will prefer to review it after interviewing you. This method allows the interviewer to interact with you without seeing any prior information. Technically such interviews are considered "open-file" even though the conversation is conducted "closed-file."

Who are the interviewers?

Interviewers at most dental schools are faculty who are taking their time to participate in the admissions process. Some schools select students or alumni who may be involved either formally with interview evaluations or informally to field general questions about their school. Admissions, student affairs and financial aid staff also occasionally interview applicants.

What is the structure of the interview?

Each admissions office determines how many candidates are scheduled for a specific interview day, so the structure of the interview may depend on how many interviewers are scheduled to meet with the candidates. Traditionally, interviews are conducted with one interviewer questioning one candidate for as brief as 15 minutes to as long as one hour. Sometimes interviews are conducted with a panel of two or three interviewers for each candidate for 30 minutes up to one hour. Panel interviews may also mix "open" and "closed" file formats, as one panel interviewer may have access to your file while the other is blind to your file.

More recently, interview formats have been created to allow interviewers to assess more group dynamics in an interview. As a result, group interviews, in which an interviewer asks questions to three or more candidates, are becoming more common. Sometimes there is a second interviewer who can help facilitate the discussion. These group interviews can last between 20 minutes and one hour.



It may seem like a lot to do and keep track of, but remember that the process happens in stages and you'll tackle it one step at a time.

There is a lot of support available to you, from your academic advisors and faculty to other students to online resources such as ADEA GoDental. At the end of the day, dentistry is a truly rewarding profession, and we look forward to welcoming you.

ADEA GoDental offers many resources for students considering dental school. Visit our website at adea.org/GoDental. You can also check us out on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube.

The style of an interview

Interviewers also often have the task of asking candidates similar or identical questions in order to allow the interviewer to fairly judge each candidate's responses. Common questions to be expected include, "Tell me about yourself," "Identify your greatest weakness," and "Why are you interested in dentistry?" Some interviewers have a predetermined set of questions that they are required to ask every candidate, while others employ a more conversational style where questions are asked spontaneously.

Can you bring something?

Many interviewing candidates like to bring notebooks and portfolios with them featuring papers they have published, photographs of creative work or an updated résumé. You may need to check with each school about its preferences in relation to bringing supplemental materials to the interview.

Multiple mini-interview format

Another format that is gaining popularity is the "multiple mini-interview" (MMI). In this case, candidates rotate between stations every 7-10 minutes where they are asked a new question. Some of the questions may be associated with hypothetical situations, while others may be task-oriented. Every candidate is given the same question or scenario, and each interviewer judges each candidate based on the answer to the specific question that is asked. The interviewer may also interact with the candidate through follow-up questions.

How do you find out what the format will be?

The best way to find out what format a dental school uses for its interview day is to ask the admissions office directly. Many admissions directors will be happy to give you a summary of their interview day and provide insight to the schedule or general format.

Practice, Practice, Practice

If you have access to a career services office at your undergraduate institution, you may want to schedule a session with a career advisor for a mock interview. Many offices have a subscription to Perfect Interview, a webcam-based program that can help you evaluate your own interviewing skills.

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