

ACING THE MEDICAL SCHOOL INTERVIEW

MOON PREP



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Before The Interview	Page 1
What To Wear To The Interview	Page 1
When To Arrive	Page 1
What Does The Interview Test	Page 2
How To Prepare For The Interview.....	Page 2
During The Interview	Page 3
Questions For The Interviewer	Page 4
Questions To Avoid	Page 5
Practice Questions	Page 6
Interview Tips	Page 7
Thank You Notes	Page 8



ACING YOUR MEDICAL SCHOOL INTERVIEW

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

An interview provides you with an opportunity to explain, in your own words, the ways in which your experiences, knowledge, skills, and aspirations combine to make you a desirable candidate for the given college. Additionally, the interview allows you to demonstrate your interpersonal skills, professionalism, and personal style.

WHAT TO WEAR TO THE INTERVIEW

- A suit is not necessary; business casual is recommended. It is best to dress conservative/preppy.
- Male
 - dress pants, khaki pants, collared shirt, tie optional, blazer optional, belt, dress shoes.
 - avoid: bright colors, flashy jewelry, wild patterns, baseball caps, polo shirt, facial hair, long hair, cologne.
- Female
 - dress pants, knee-length skirt or dress, collared shirt or cardigan, dress shoes.
 - avoid: short skirts, tight-fitting clothing, flashy jewelry, heavy makeup, very high heels, open toe shoes, perfume.

WHEN TO ARRIVE

- Plan to arrive 15-20 minutes early on the day of the interview. Make sure to give yourself plenty of time to account for traffic or delays. You can always sit in your car for a few minutes and read over your answers to the common interview questions.
- If the interview is online (via Skype or similar) make sure you are in a quiet location with a strong internet connection. Be familiar with the Skype (or other) software before the interview day. It is recommended to use a headset instead of the speaker on your computer; your voice will sound sharper.



ACING YOUR MEDICAL SCHOOL INTERVIEW

WHAT DOES THE INTERVIEW TEST?

- Critical thinking
- Maturity
- Leadership
- Common sense
- Perseverance
- Self-confidence
- Empathy
- Ability to articulate in a clear, concise manner
- Cultural competency
- Cooperates well with others
- Good attitude
- Ethical responsibility to others and self

HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE INTERVIEW

- Work with a partner to answer the specific questions and talk about current healthcare issues.
- Review current topics or trends in healthcare. Good resources include:
 - The Affordable Care Act: <https://www.hhs.gov/healthcare/about-the-aca/index.html>
 - Center for Disease Control: <https://www.cdc.gov>
 - Medline Plus: <https://medlineplus.gov>
 - National Institutes of Health: <https://www.nih.gov/>
 - PubMed: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/>
 - WebMD Health News: <https://www.webmd.com/news>
 - National Public Radio's Health section: <https://www.npr.org/sections/health/>
 - New York Times Health section: <https://www.nytimes.com/section/health>



ACING YOUR MEDICAL SCHOOL INTERVIEW

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

- Go to the medical school website and make sure you are familiar with the programs offered, clubs, activities, and special events hosted by the school.
- Be able to discuss the clubs you are interested in joining. Know them by name.
- Type your answers to the common interview questions listed below. Full sentences and paragraphs are not needed; bullet points and short-hand is fine.
- Read over your answers a few times so you are comfortable discussing them at length.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

Everyone experiences some type of stress during the interview process. The best way to combat this stress is to be prepared and practice your responses.

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

- You are being evaluated on more than what you say. Be mindful of your gestures, posture, facial expressions, and eye contact.
- Do not play with your pen or your fingernails while talking.
- No gum chewing.
- Look at interviewer's face; not at the floor, table, or ceiling.



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QUESTIONS FOR THE INTERVIEWER:

- Prepare 4 - 6 questions to ask the interviewer.
- People love talking about themselves; the interviewer is no different. Do not spend the whole time talking about yourself and answering questions; get the interviewer talking.
- When asked: "Do you have any questions for me?" The answer is always yes.
- Do not interrupt the interviewer; always wait for them to finish their sentence before responding.
- Try to find commonality between you and the interviewer; spark a conversation from this.
- Try to ask a question based on something the interviewer has told you during the interview; it shows you are listening.

SIX QUESTIONS TO ASK THE INTERVIEWER:

1. How do students like X curriculum? How often is the curriculum updated? Does it focus on group-based and/or active learning?
2. Is the preclinical curriculum 1 year, 1.5 years, or 2 years long?
3. How many hospitals do students rotate in?
4. What advice would you offer me as an incoming first year?
5. What opportunities are available for students to get involved in research?
6. What do you love most about this college? What do you love the least?



ACING YOUR MEDICAL SCHOOL INTERVIEW

AVOID THESE TYPES OF QUESTIONS:

- Don't ask about your chances of gaining admission.
- Don't ask about any information that can be easily obtained from the college website or by a simple Google search.
- Don't ask about rankings or the college's "prestigious" reputation.
- Don't ask anything too personal; keep your questions strictly focused on the college.

QUESTIONS FOR THE STUDENT:

- There are many variations to the questions below. These questions are a good starting point for preparing for your interview and feeling comfortable talking about yourself.
- Keep in mind, you are trying to show your value. You want to highlight how you are an asset to the university and how you will make a positive impact on campus.
- Do not panic if you cannot think of an answer immediately. Take a moment and formulate your response. You can also ask the interviewer to rephrase the questions. Silence is not a bad thing, and it is a natural part of the conversation.



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TOP 20 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Why did you pick your undergraduate major?
3. What are your strengths?
4. What is your biggest weakness?
5. Describe an obstacle you have faced and how did you get through it?
6. What activities do you find most rewarding?
7. Describe a time you expressed compassion or empathy in the past.
8. How has your undergraduate research experience better prepared you for a career in medicine?
9. What excites you about medicine?
10. What do you know about the current trends in the national healthcare system?



TOP 20 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (CONT):

11. What do you think are the most serious health issues today?
12. What are the social responsibilities of a doctor?
13. What subject in college did you find the most challenging?
14. What are some of the current controversies regarding medical ethics?
15. How would you feel about treating a patient who had tested HIV-positive.
16. What is your opinion on euthanasia or medically assisted suicide?
17. What kinds of medical schools are you applying to, and why?
18. When did you decide to become a doctor and why?
19. If you had a thousand dollars to give away, what would you do with it?
20. How do you define success?



ACING YOUR MEDICAL SCHOOL INTERVIEW

INTERVIEW TIPS

- **Stay calm.** Interviewers want you to be as relaxed as possible so you can portray your character as accurately as possible. Try and take a deep breathe while reading the prompts, and remember, no one is out for you to fail. If you don't answer one question as well as you might have hoped, it is okay because you have the next question to prove yourself.
- **Take your time to answer.** It is better to take a few extra moments to put together a thoughtful response than to rush into an answer with cliched phrases that don't say anything. into an answer with cliched phrases that don't say anything.
- **Show empathy.** Portray your intellectual adaptability and situation analysis skills. into an answer with cliched phrases that don't say anything.
- **Don't force a story.** Not every station will have a parallel between the question and your life. Don't try to tell a personal story in every question if it isn't a good fit. Drawing a non-relevant parallel about an anecdote can weaken your case, and cause the interviewer to think you did not understand the question. You are not being judged by your experiences, but instead, your ability to think and communicate. However, if you have a story that is related to the situation, share the insight into your life and how you have reacted in similar scenarios. into an answer with cliched phrases that r with cliched phrases that don't say anything.
- **Practice!** Without answering as many sample questions as possible, you might not know what to expect when you go to an interview. If possible, get professional medical school prep coaching or someone who has the expertise to set up a mock interview with you.



AFTER THE INTERVIEW

You are done with the interview. Your first response might be to feel relieved. Your second response should be to send a thank you note.

SEND A THANK YOU NOTE

- Send a thank you email within 24 hours of your interview. Do not delay and wait a week to send it.
- The email should not be generic. Thank the interviewer for their time. Mention specific items you discussed, during the interview, that you found enlightening. Make it personal.
- Always check for spelling and grammar before sending the email.

