

ACING THE COLLEGE INTERVIEW

INCLUDING BS/MD AND BS/DMD

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TRADITIONAL INTERVIEWS VS MMI

BS/MD candidates may be invited to complete either a traditional interview or a Multiple Mini Interview (MMI), depending on the school's selection process. Each type has distinct formats and objectives.

Traditional Interview

- **One-on-One Setting:** The candidate answers questions in a single-session, one-on-one or panel format, focusing on motivations, experiences, and character.
- **In-Depth Discussion:** Allows for deeper exploration of the candidate's personal journey, goals, and understanding of the medical field.
- **Flexible Format:** Traditional interviews can be conducted in person or via Zoom, allowing for flexibility based on the school's preference or logistical needs.

Multiple Mini Interview (MMI)

- **Series of Stations:** Candidates rotate through multiple stations, each with a unique question or scenario designed to evaluate specific skills.
- **Timed Responses:** At each station, candidates have a limited time to read the prompt, think, and respond, encouraging concise and focused answers.
- **Diverse Skills Assessment:** Each station targets different skills, such as ethical reasoning, communication, teamwork, and critical thinking.
- **Standardized Evaluation:** The MMI provides a more objective format, allowing interviewers to assess candidates consistently across various competencies.

MMI is intended to measure skills beyond academic knowledge, while traditional interviews focus more on personal depth and motivations.

This guide centers on the traditional interview format. For detailed guidance on the MMI format, please refer to *Moon Prep's Guide to MMI*, available on Amazon, or resources on the Moon Prep website (www.MoonPrep.com).

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.

Attire:

A suit isn't required, though it's acceptable if you prefer a more formal look. Business casual attire is recommended, with a focus on conservative styles to ensure a professional appearance. Neutral colors and subtle patterns work best, helping you create a polished and approachable impression.

Male

- dress pants, khaki pants, collared shirt, tie optional, blazer optional, belt, dress shoes.

Female

- dress pants, knee-length skirt or dress, collared shirt or cardigan, dress shoes.

Avoid: Denim, athletic wear, t-shirts, bright or distracting colors, open-toed sandals, revealing or tight clothing, short skirts, wrinkled clothing, loud patterns, and fragrances.

Arrive early:

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 Zoom or similar) make sure you are in a quiet location with a strong internet connection. Be familiar with the software before the interview day. It is recommended to use a headset instead of the speaker on your computer; your voice will sound sharper.

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 the interviewer's face; not at the floor, table, or ceiling.

Do your homework:

- Go to the college website (and social media) 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.
- Be familiar with the specific department your major falls within.
- 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 stress during interviews, but thorough preparation and practice are the best ways to manage it. Practicing responses in advance helps you communicate clearly and confidently, minimizing surprises.

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.

Sample questions to ask the interviewer:

- What inspired you to choose your major? Reflecting on your career experience, would you still choose the same major or minor? (for alumni interview)
- Could you describe a typical day for you on the campus of "University A"? (for alumni interview)
- In your experience, what are the strengths of "University A's" alumni network?
- What advice would you offer me as I prepare to start my freshman year?
- I came across information about (mention a well-known campus event or tradition). Have you participated in this event? Could you share what the experience was like?
- What resources or support services did you find most valuable at "University A," either academically or personally?

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.

Practice Questions:

- 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, that 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.

Next Steps:

- Write out bulleted responses to the questions below. Reflect on whether each response offers insight into your personality and showcases your positive traits.
- A mock interview with targeted feedback is an excellent way to practice. Additionally, reviewing your bulleted responses will also be beneficial for your preparation.

Top 20 interview questions (with tips on answering them):

1. Could you tell me a little about yourself? (most common question)

- **Relevant Background:** Share an overview of your background, emphasizing experiences or traits relevant to the college environment.
- **Key Interests and Goals:** Highlight your main interests and how they align with your academic or personal goals, providing insight into what motivates you.

2. What three adjectives best describe you?

- **Adjectives with Examples:** Choose adjectives that reflect your strengths and provide specific examples to illustrate each one.
- **Alignment with School Culture:** Ensure the adjectives you select highlight qualities that align with the college's values or culture, showing why you'd be a good fit.

3. What do you consider your greatest strengths?

- **Specific Skills or Qualities:** Focus on skills or traits relevant to the college experience, such as adaptability, creativity, or leadership.
- **Application in Academic or Social Settings:** Describe how these strengths have helped you in school or extracurricular activities, demonstrating their value.

4. What is a weakness you're working to improve?

- **Self-Awareness:** Choose a real, manageable weakness that won't raise red flags, and acknowledge its impact.
- **Action Plan:** Emphasize your efforts to improve, showing that you're proactive about personal development and open to growth.

5. Describe an obstacle you faced and how you overcame it.

- **Challenge and Resilience:** Briefly outline the obstacle, focusing on how it tested your resilience or adaptability.
- **Problem-Solving:** Highlight the strategies you used to overcome the challenge, demonstrating perseverance and critical thinking.

Top 20 interview questions (cont):

6. Which activities or pursuits do you find most rewarding?

- **Passion and Commitment:** Talk about an activity that truly excites you, showing dedication or passion.
- **Personal Growth or Impact:** Explain how this activity has helped you grow or positively impact others, providing insight into your values.

7. Why are you interested in attending our college?

- **School-Specific Appeal:** Identify specific programs, resources, or values that attract you to the college, showing you've done your research.
- **Alignment with Goals:** Describe how these offerings align with your academic or career aspirations, indicating a thoughtful connection.

8. What makes our college stand out to you compared to others?

- **Unique Programs or Opportunities:** Focus on unique aspects of the college that resonate with you personally, such as specialized programs or campus culture.
- **Personal Connection:** Explain how these unique factors support your growth and ambitions, showing why this college is an ideal match.

9. What inspired you to choose this major?

- **Interest and Influence:** Share what initially attracted you to this field, such as a particular class, project, or mentor.
- **Career or Personal Goals:** Explain how the major aligns with your future aspirations, demonstrating a sense of direction.

10. How do you plan to contribute to our campus community?

- **Skills or Interests:** Discuss specific skills, talents, or interests you'll bring to campus, such as leadership or creativity.
- **Active Involvement:** Mention any activities, clubs, or initiatives you plan to join or start, reflecting your eagerness to make a positive impact.

Top 20 interview questions (cont):

11. What is your favorite book, movie, or TV show?

- **Personal Connection:** Choose a book, movie, or show that resonates with you deeply and explain why it's meaningful, highlighting a connection to your interests or values.
- **Relevant Themes:** Discuss any themes or lessons that have influenced you, reflecting insight and thoughtful engagement with media.

12. Can you describe a time when you demonstrated initiative and innovation?

- **Challenge and Action:** Describe the situation that called for your initiative, focusing on what you did to solve a problem or improve a process.
- **Results or Impact:** Share the outcome of your efforts, highlighting positive results and your ability to think creatively and take action.

13. Which high school subject did you find most challenging?

- **Growth Mindset:** Be honest about the subject and describe the difficulties you faced, showing humility and self-awareness.
- **Efforts to Improve:** Explain the steps you took to overcome the challenge, demonstrating perseverance and a willingness to learn.

14. What was your favorite subject in high school?

- **Interest and Passion:** Describe why this subject captured your attention, showing genuine enthusiasm and curiosity.
- **Connection to Future Goals:** Relate how this subject might connect to your college studies or career aspirations, highlighting purposeful learning.

15. If you could, what would you change about your high school experience?

- **Constructive Reflection:** Mention a specific aspect of your high school experience you'd alter, demonstrating thoughtfulness and a critical yet balanced perspective.
- **Positive Takeaway:** Explain what you learned from the experience and how it's helped you grow, showing resilience and adaptability.

Top 20 interview questions (cont):

16. What do you want to do immediately after graduating from college?

Short-Term Goals: Share a specific goal you have for after graduation, demonstrating foresight and planning.

Alignment with Degree: Explain how your college experience will prepare you for this goal, showing intentionality in your education choices.

17. Where do you see yourself in 5 years, 20 years, etc? (career projection)

Long-Term Vision: Describe your career or personal goals over the next decade or two, showing ambition and clarity.

Personal and Professional Balance: Mention any personal values or goals alongside your career aspirations, emphasizing a balanced and grounded approach.

18. Who is someone you admire and why?

Positive Traits and Influence: Highlight specific traits that make this person admirable and how they have inspired or influenced you.

Connection to Your Values: Discuss how you aim to embody similar qualities, showing alignment with admirable values and character.

19. If you had \$5,000 to give away, how would you use it?

Generosity and Impact: Describe how you'd use the money to make a positive impact, showing thoughtfulness and empathy.

Connection to Your Values: Explain how this choice reflects what's important to you, providing insight into your values and priorities.

20. How do you define success?

Personal and Meaningful: Provide a unique and personal definition of success, reflecting your values and perspective.

Balanced Perspective: Emphasize a balance between achieving goals and maintaining personal happiness or well-being, showing a mature outlook.

BS/MD focused questions:

1. What motivates you to pursue a career in medicine?

- Focus Points:
 - Explain personal experiences or values that drive you to become a physician, demonstrating a deep-rooted commitment.
 - Connect your motivation to the qualities required for the profession, such as empathy, resilience, and a desire to serve others.
 - Avoid generic reasons and show genuine reflection on why medicine, specifically, is your chosen path.

2. Why are you specifically interested in our BS/MD program?

- Focus Points:
 - Research the unique features of the program and explain how they align with your career goals and academic interests.
 - Highlight specific program attributes, such as curriculum structure, mentorship opportunities, or research access, that appeal to you.
 - Show that your interest in the program is personalized, not just a generic preference for BS/MD programs.

3. What has been your most impactful medical-related experience?

- Focus Points:
 - Choose a meaningful experience that had a significant impact on your perspective of the medical field.
 - Describe specific lessons you gained and how they influenced your desire to pursue medicine.
 - Avoid general descriptions; focus on one powerful story that conveys your enthusiasm for medicine.

BS/MD focused questions (cont):

4. What have you gained from your research experience?

- Focus Points:
 - Explain the specific skills you developed, such as critical thinking, data analysis, or scientific curiosity.
 - Reflect on how the experience helped shape your interest in medicine and broadened your understanding of medical research.
 - Share insights that demonstrate an appreciation for research and its role in medical advancements.

5. Can you tell me about your shadowing experience and what insights you gained from it?

- Focus Points:
 - Share what you observed about patient care, medical teamwork, or a physician's daily challenges.
 - Describe any skills or lessons you learned, such as the importance of empathy, effective communication, or professionalism.
 - Avoid overly technical details; focus on meaningful takeaways that influenced your desire to become a physician.

6. Describe your community service experience. What did you learn from it?

- Focus Points:
 - Highlight specific experiences that demonstrate compassion, service, and a commitment to helping others.
 - Share how these experiences prepared you for patient care, emphasizing empathy and communication skills.
 - Connect your volunteer work to your interest in medicine, illustrating how it reinforced your career choice.

BS/MD focused questions (cont):

7. A BS/MD program requires a significant commitment. Why are you confident medicine is the right career for you?

- Focus Points:
 - Emphasize experiences or traits that have prepared you for the demands of a medical career, like resilience, dedication, and compassion.
 - Reflect on your long-term vision and how you see yourself contributing to the medical field.
 - Avoid vague reasons; show genuine certainty in your decision by sharing thoughtful reflections on the responsibilities of the profession.

8. What do you think is a significant challenge physicians face, and how would you address it?

- Focus Points:
 - Identify a real, relevant challenge in healthcare, such as time constraints, emotional stress, or managing patient expectations.
 - Discuss how you would prepare to handle this challenge, demonstrating adaptability, empathy, and problem-solving skills.
 - Show awareness of the complexities of medicine and realistic strategies you could implement to overcome them.

9. Why is teamwork crucial in the medical field?

- Focus Points:
 - Highlight the importance of collaboration for patient outcomes and the role of interdisciplinary teams in effective care.
 - Discuss specific teamwork skills, like communication and cooperation, and how you've practiced these in past experiences.
 - Share an example where you were part of a successful team, demonstrating your commitment to working well with others.

BS/MD focused questions (cont):

10. Can you describe a time you faced an ethical dilemma and how you handled it?

- Focus Points:
 - Share an example that demonstrates your ability to weigh different perspectives and make thoughtful, ethical decisions.
 - Explain how your values guided your decision-making process and reflect on what you learned.
 - Avoid overly complex situations; focus on a clear, relatable example that highlights integrity and responsibility.

BS/DMD focused questions:

1. Why do you want to become a dentist?

- Focus Points:
 - Describe specific experiences or observations that sparked your interest in dentistry, emphasizing a personal connection.
 - Explain why you chose dentistry over other healthcare professions, highlighting your passion for patient care and oral health.
 - Show understanding of the profession's demands, including both clinical and patient-centered aspects.

2. What experiences have prepared you for a career in dentistry?

- Focus Points:
 - Share relevant experiences, such as shadowing dentists, volunteering, or working in a dental clinic.
 - Reflect on what you learned, like the importance of precision, empathy, or effective communication with patients.
 - Discuss any skills you developed that are essential in dentistry, such as manual dexterity or attention to detail.

3. What challenges do you anticipate in dental school, and how will you handle them?

- Focus Points:
 - Show awareness of dental school's intensity, including the academic workload, clinical training, and lab work.
 - Describe strategies for managing stress, staying organized, and maintaining a work-life balance.
 - Demonstrate resilience and commitment to the field, explaining how you will adapt to the demands of dental school.

BS/DMD focused questions (cont):

4. Describe a dental-related community service experience. What did you learn from it?

- Focus Points:
 - Focus on an experience where you contributed to dental or oral health education, especially for underserved populations.
 - Reflect on the impact of the experience, showing empathy and a desire to address disparities in oral health care.
 - Discuss what this experience taught you about patient education, public health, or accessibility.

5. Why are you interested in this specific BS/DDS (or BS/DMD) program?

- Focus Points:
 - Identify specific features of the program, such as research opportunities, clinical exposure, or unique coursework.
 - Explain how these features align with your goals, demonstrating a well-researched understanding of the program.
 - Show genuine enthusiasm and clear reasons for choosing this program over others.

6. What do you think is the biggest issue facing the field of dentistry today?

- Focus Points:
 - Identify a current challenge, such as access to care, patient anxiety, high treatment costs, or advancements in technology.
 - Explain why you believe this issue is important and discuss its impact on both dentists and patients.
 - Consider how you might address this issue as a future dentist, showing a proactive and solution-oriented mindset.

BS/DMD focused questions (cont):

7. How do you handle situations that require both patience and precision?

- Focus Points:
 - Describe a time when you maintained focus and attention to detail in a challenging task, linking it to dentistry's requirements.
 - Highlight your manual dexterity or any fine motor skills relevant to the field.
 - Emphasize your ability to stay calm, work carefully, and ensure quality, all crucial traits for a dentist.

8. What specific skills do you think a dentist needs, and how have you worked on developing these?

- Focus Points:
 - Identify essential skills, like empathy, communication, manual dexterity, and problem-solving.
 - Share relevant experiences where you practiced these skills, such as shadowing, clinical volunteering, or team projects.
 - Show self-awareness by identifying areas where you excel and areas where you continue to grow.

9. Describe an ethical dilemma you might encounter in dentistry and how you would handle it.

- Focus Points:
 - Discuss a realistic situation, such as a patient refusing necessary treatment or a financial conflict with care options.
 - Explain how you would balance patient autonomy with professional responsibility, showing respect for patient rights and ethical guidelines.
 - Emphasize integrity, empathy, and sound judgment in handling sensitive situations.

BS/DMD focused questions (cont):

10. What aspect of dentistry are you most excited to learn about, and why?

- Focus Points:
 - Share specific areas of dentistry that fascinate you, like oral surgery, pediatric care, or cosmetic dentistry.
 - Explain why this area interests you, showing curiosity and excitement for the profession.
 - Connect your interest to career goals, like becoming a specialist, working with certain populations, or advancing research in the field.

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.

Sending a thank-you note after an interview is an important step in the job or college application process. It shows professionalism, gratitude, and interest in the position or program, which helps you stand out as a thoughtful and detail-oriented candidate.

Here are some key reasons why thank-you notes are valuable:

- **Reinforces Your Interest:** Expressing appreciation shows that you genuinely value the opportunity and are enthusiastic about the position or school. It also reinforces to the interviewer that you are still engaged and interested in pursuing the role.
- **Provides an Opportunity to Clarify or Add Information:** The thank-you note gives you a chance to address anything you may have missed during the interview or to reiterate points you made, helping to solidify your qualifications and key strengths.
- **Leaves a Positive, Lasting Impression:** A well-written thank-you note shows respect and professionalism, which are qualities many employers and academic programs highly value. This final interaction can leave a memorable, positive impression.
- **Can Differentiate You from Other Candidates:** In a competitive environment, the small gesture of a thank-you note can set you apart from other applicants who may overlook this step. It's a simple way to make a lasting impact.

Follow up Tips:

- Send a thank-you email within 24 hours of your interview. Acting quickly reinforces your enthusiasm and professionalism; don't delay, as waiting more than a day can lessen the impact of your message.
- Personalize your message to make it meaningful. Thank the interviewer specifically for their time, and reference particular points from your conversation that were insightful or impactful. Mentioning details from the interview shows you were engaged and helps reinforce your connection to the role or program.
- Before sending, review your email for spelling and grammar errors. A polished, well-crafted note reflects your attention to detail and leaves a positive impression.