

Dental School Interview Guide

How to prepare

Preparing for an interview is important, and can help you reduce stress and increase confidence for your actual interview. Try mock interviews with friends and family in place of the interviewer. Review example questions to prepare for content, but also for formatting responses. You want to be able to put a logical answer together that flows well, and practice is the best way to do this.

Before your interview, take a few minutes right before to breathe, and relax. Shake out the tension in your shoulders, let go of some deep breaths, and remind yourself you can do this.

What to wear

The rule of thumb for dressing for an interview is you want to be as formal as the person who is interviewing you. This likely means you are at least in business casual. Stick to neutral tones as much as possible, and try to avoid any clothes, accessories, or hair styles that are too crazy. That being said, you should still reflect the kind of person you are in the way you dress. Make sure you still dress like you! Try to find a way in which you can meet formal expectations, and still convey yourself through your clothes. We recommend picking your outfit out before the morning of the interview, that way you are not as stressed about clothes the day of your interview.

FAQ

- Why did you choose your undergraduate major?
- How have the jobs, volunteer opportunities, or extracurricular experiences that you have had better prepared you for the responsibilities of being a dentist?
- What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
- Thinking of examples from your recent past, how would you assess your empathy and compassion? Tell us about one of these examples.
- What is “success” in your opinion?
- What do you believe to be some of the most pressing health issues in the field of dentistry today? Why?
- What do you consider an important/the most important social problem facing the US today and why?
- What are the biggest challenges facing healthcare?
- Have you personally encountered any moral dilemmas to date? Tell us how you responded.
- If you are a minority candidate, how do you feel your background uniquely prepares you to be, and will influence your role as, a dentist?
- What special qualities do you feel you possess that set you apart from other candidates? What makes you unique or different as a candidate, and how will that make you a better dentist?
- What will you do if you are not accepted?

What should you ask?

- What are my strongest application points?
- What are my weakest application points?
- If you were applying to this program, is there anything you would want to know?
- What do you think I could improve on?
- Are there any special programs or curriculum for which this school is noted?
- How are students evaluated academically? How are clinical evaluations performed?
- What kind of academic, personal, financial, and career counseling is available to students? Their families?
- Tell me about the library and extracurricular facilities?
- What is the campus life and campus culture like? What are the general demographics of the school?
- What are a few things that tend to surprise new students about this program?
- What type of person is most successful in this program?

Common Types of Interviews

One on One Interview: Usually one to two interviews with a single individual for 30 to 45 minutes

Multiple Mini Interview (MMI): Consists of six to ten stations. At each station you will be asked a question. You will have a specific time frame to answer the question. Then you and the interviewer will move onto discussion.

Group Interview: May be one applicant interviewed by multiple individuals, or one individual interviewing multiple applicants.

Virtual Interview: An interview that leverages video technology to allow the interview to take place remotely.

Virtual interview

A lot of schools have started conducting virtual interviews, because of COVID or distance. It is important to know etiquette and guidelines for virtual interviews, as many of us have never had to do one.

Make sure that you triple check the time zone your interview is taking place with, and if needed adjust accordingly. You have to show up on time, and that time might be different for you!

Make sure you clear your schedule and find a place to set up that you will not be interrupted. Interviews may take more time than you think, and you deserve the full amount of time for your interview. Make sure your interview environment is free from distractions as well!

Make sure that you have a stable internet connection, and that the lighting in the room is adjusted to you. Your main light source should be in front and slightly above you, but should be balanced by the light in the rest of the room. You should be at eye level with your interviewer. Make sure you are not looking down or looking up at your camera.

Be prepared to sort out and troubleshoot issues, like glitches, a microphone malfunction, a video link that doesn't work, etc. There is no perfect interview, and I'm sure we all know how hard it is to get technology to work sometimes. Be patient, stay calm, and fix what you can!

It's a good idea to run a test interview to ensure that you are comfortable with the technology you will be using. Make sure you practice using the videoconferencing technology that will be used in your interview. This means that if the interview is using Zoom, use Zoom in your practice run. Not only will this allow you to become more comfortable with the technology, but it will allow you to get a feel for the setup of the room you will be using. It is a good idea to actually meet with someone during this time. Have them ask you questions that you may be asked, give you feedback on the way you look, sound, and how you answer questions. Take advantage of a practice run, and do more than once if you think it will be beneficial to you.

Try to communicate with your interviewers and other faculty outside of the interview. This will allow for better connection, and give them a chance to get to know you better. You lose a lot of the personal connection in a virtual setting, so do what you can to make up for that.

Make sure to write thank-you notes to your interviewer and send them a couple days after your interview. This can be an email, but should still be formal and personal like a card would be.

Tips and tricks

Consider using the career center on campus to practice and prepare for your interview, whether it's a virtual or in-person interview.

Be nice to yourself! Interviews, especially virtual interviews, are stressful and difficult. Make sure you take time for yourself, and practice self-care before and after the interview. Along with this, make sure you are nice to others that are involved in the process. Everyone deserves kindness and empathy, including yourself!

Make sure to breathe during your interview! You will likely be nervous, breathing should help calm some of your nervousness and will help you give your answers more clearly. It is better to take a moment after being asked a question to think than it is to rush into an answer, just don't take too long!

Ask yourself "Would I be happy at this school for at least the next four years?"

Ask for feedback! This will cast you in a good light during the interview, but will also help you improve the way you conduct yourself in interviews in the future.

Resources

ISU Career Center: <https://www.isu.edu/career/>

ADEA Interview Dos and Don'ts: <https://www.adea.org/godental/interviews/>