

Preparing for Medical School Interviews

One of the most important phases of the application process is your interview. There are different kinds of interviews, such as standard one-on-one interviews or multiple mini interviews (MMIs). This is also an opportunity for you to tour the campus and ask questions.

What should I wear and bring to an interview?

For both men and women, it's best to wear a neutral colored suit and comfortable shoes as you likely will go on a walking tour of campus. Don't wear any distracting accessories or strong scents. Dress as you would for any professional job interview or visiting a house of worship. It's okay to bring a water bottle, but it's a good idea to keep your phone turned off and inside your pocket or bag. Randee Reid, admissions and residency officer at University of North Carolina School of Medicine adds, "There is nothing wrong with an applicant using color to accentuate their suit and/or dress, in fact, they should be able to express themselves; but, also bear in mind that you are applying to a graduate professional school. As the saying goes, 'dress for the part.'"

What are some questions that typically are asked during an interview?

Each interview is different, but it's common to be asked, "Why do you want to be a doctor?" To answer, you may want to tell a story about an experience or series of experiences that have led to your decision. You also may be asked, "Why do you want to attend our school?" Make sure you're ready to explain why that school is a good fit for you and your goals.

What do I do if I feel I have been asked a question that is inappropriate?

Although an interview typically is used to get to know an applicant better, some interviewers want to assess how well you function under stress and may purposely ask challenging questions to observe how you respond under pressure. How you communicate will be a critical part of the encounter; however, this does not give an interviewer the right to ask you inappropriate questions in an attempt to challenge you during the interview.

Although interviewers are instructed by admissions officers and guided by federal statutes on what are unfair or discriminatory pre-admission inquiries, there may be an occasion when an interviewer asks an inappropriate

question. You have the responsibility to report this to help prevent further occurrences. Medical schools have the responsibility to establish procedures that enable applicants to report such incidents in a confidential manner, and they should inform applicants of these procedures prior to interviews and assure them that reporting an incident will not bias the applicant's evaluation.

If a medical school did not inform you of its procedure and an incident occurs, report the interviewer's name and the interview question(s) that was asked to an admissions officer, in confidence, during the interview day. If that is not possible, email this information to an admissions officer within 24 hours of the interview noting the date and time of the incident. Furthermore, you have the right to ask for another interview to ensure an unbiased evaluation of your application to that medical school.

How can I practice or prepare to interview?

It's a good idea to practice answering interview questions with a friend or mentor, but be careful not to memorize answers to the point where they sound rehearsed and no longer genuine. You also should review your application so what you wrote is fresh in your mind, and do your research on each school and their mission. Be sure not to ask any questions that are easily answered by reading the school's website or in materials already provided to you. It's okay to bring notes with you so you remember what you wanted to ask and also to keep information for later to help you differentiate one school from another.

After the interview is over, should I send an email or thank you note?

It's always a good idea to email or write to your interviewers to thank them for their time. A legible, handwritten note is a nice personal touch that makes a good impression. It is also a good way to keep you fresh in their memory and differentiate yourself from other applicants.

Examples of inappropriate questions:

- What is your race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, political affiliation, marital status, opinion on abortion and/or euthanasia, income, value of your home, credit score, etc.?
- Are you planning on having children during medical school?
- Do you have any disabilities?
- Will you require special accommodations?
- Have you ever been arrested?
- Have you ever done drugs?
- How old are you?

Sample response to inappropriate questions:

- Q. What are your plans for expanding your family during medical school?
- A. Can you please clarify your question? I want to make sure that I'm providing information that is most relevant to my candidacy.
- Q. Have you ever done drugs?
- A. I am uncomfortable discussing my medical history and possible use of prescription medications during this interview.

