

Interview Tips

The interview is your opportunity to show the school that you are more than just a test score and a GPA. To be prepared to do this you need to practice! Below are some ideas. Also, visit University Career Services in 2410 WSC if you would like to schedule practice interviews.

Questions about *you*

- **Logical Thought:** Do you tackle a novel problem in a logical, step-by-step fashion? If so, provide an example. Do you recognize the consequences of each step and understand more than one side of the problem (the interviewer may use a hypothetical situation)?
- **Extracurricular Activities:** What have you done other than studying (e.g. traveling, honors program, choir)?
- **Leadership:** What experiences have you had leading large or small groups of people? How did you handle the responsibility? Did you enjoy it? What did you learn about people, situations, and yourself? What did you contribute as an organization leader?
- **Maturity:** What major decisions have you made on your own? What responsibilities have you had? How did you solve a difficult problem in your life? What have you learned by dealing with problems or disappointments in the past?
- **Open-mindedness:** Do you see both sides of a problem regardless of your personal opinion? Are you willing to change your mind if you learn more about a situation? Do you walk the path between ambiguity and rigidity?
- **Sensitivity and Compassion:** How have you shown your sensitivity to others' problems?
- **Goals:** What are your lifetime and professional goals? What have you done to reach them? How has your goal making abilities influenced your accomplishments?
- **Strengths:** What do you think you are best at? What are your personal interests and talents? How will you use your unique set of talents and skills to contribute to health care? If the school has twenty applicants of equal caliber, why should they choose you?
- **Weaknesses:** What are your faults or weaknesses and how do you try to overcome them? (Sometimes the schools will ask you to discuss three of your weaknesses)
- **Interpersonal Skills:** How are your abilities in communicating with peers, faculty, or patients?
- **Time Management:** What are your study habits? How do you utilize your time?
- **Knowledge of the Field:** Are you familiar with current controversies in dentistry? What are your opinions on these subjects? Can you support your position?
- **Perseverance:** Have you ever had to continue working on something despite setbacks or difficulties? If so, provide an example. What did you learn from this?
- **Intellectual Curiosity:** Do you enjoy learning? What's something you have undertaken to learn outside of the classroom?
- **Adaptability and Flexibility:** How do you cope with stressful situations? Have you had to deal with difficult people or those with different lifestyles and values?
- **Leisure Activities:** What do you do in your free time? What are some of your favorite books? What book did you most recently read?
- **Undergraduate Education:** Why did you choose your major? What was your toughest class?
- **Research (if applicable):** Explanation of research experiences and depth of involvement. What was the research question/hypothesis and the outcomes/findings? Can you explain the research process?

Questions about the field

- **Motivation:** Why do you want to become a health care professional? What and who influenced this decision? What activities or accomplishments exemplify your interest? How have you demonstrated self-motivation in other aspects of your life?
- **Positives and negatives** of the health care profession
- **Current events and ethical dilemmas** (see depts.washington.edu/bioethx for info on medical bioethics)
- **School:** How did you select this school and why do you want to attend? How are you a match for our school? What do you have to offer to our school?

- *Preparedness:* Do you know what you are getting into? Are you familiar with the lifestyles of health care students and health care professionals? Where did you get your information? Are you ready to commit yourself to a career at this time?
- *Hypothetical situations*
- *Medical or dental practice terminology*
- *Goals and expectations:* Personal and professional
- *Essential characteristics of a health care professional:* What makes a good doctor/dentist?

What *not* to do

If you have been asked to interview at the school, you know the school in you and not just your test score and GPA. In fact, the most frequent reasons for rejection after an interview have more to do with:

- Poor personal appearance
- Lack of interest or enthusiasm
- Failure to look at the interviewer when conversing
- Late for interview
- Asks no questions
- A know-it-all attitude
- Inability to express oneself
- Poor voice, diction, grammar- do not use the terms “like,” and “you know.”
- Lack of clear planning
- Does not know anything about the school
- Not being truthful and ethical, do not exaggerate!

Tips

- Do not plan your answers word-for-word because they will sound rehearsed; instead, have a good idea of what you are going to say.
- If the school is one of your top choices, consider going out to the interview a day early and attending school with a first-year student. You may learn a lot about the school, which will help you in the interview. Also, students sometimes can share tips specific to their school.
- Most interviewers will come to take you back to their office. So, be in a position to comfortably greet the interviewer and shake his or her hand. Take advantage of that time to talk to the interviewer. Ask what he or she teaches or does at the school, etc.
- It can be helpful to repeat the question in the beginning of your answer. This helps you to gather your thoughts and to answer the question directly. For example, if you were asked, “What is your biggest strength?” Then you would start your answer with, “Well, I feel that my biggest strength is . . .”
- Responding immediately to a question can make it seem like your answer is rehearsed and that you haven’t really thought about the question. Try waiting a few seconds or saying something like, “That is a good question. Do you mind if I think about it for a moment before I respond?” Don’t do this with every question, but sometimes it is appropriate.
- Never answer a question with just a yes or no. Expound on your answer, and maybe even relate a short experience. Questions are often just a platform for you to use to tell more about yourself.
- Be polite and respectful. Don’t interrupt your interviewers. Let them finish their questions.
- Smile and sit on the front of the chair—don’t lean back!
- Have a question or two ready for the interviewer to show your interest in the school. However, shy away from questions about the curriculum—it is a bit cliché because that is what every student asks about. Many times the curriculum isn’t that different because, to be accredited, schools need to teach the same information. Instead, ask what they like about living in that city, or what they like about the school, or why they chose to teach at that school. Be creative.
- After your interview, consider looking up your interviewer on the school’s directory and sending them a thank-you card. This can set you apart. Also sometimes you may interview in September, but the committee doesn’t meet until late November to decide on whom to admit. In this case, consider sending an email in November reminding your interviewer that their school is your top choice or that you really enjoyed the interview, etc.
- RELAX! You’ve worked hard for this opportunity—you deserve a chance to sell yourself.