

ADEA'S QUICK GUIDE

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ADVISING

PRE-DENTAL

STUDENTS

ADEA'S QUICK GUIDE TO ADVISING PRE-DENTAL STUDENTS is intended for individuals who advise for the health professions, and provides the information needed to accurately discuss careers in dentistry in a brief, easy-to-reference format.

We are here to help you answer the most common questions about dental school and dentistry. ADEA's Quick Guide includes facts about the profession, tips to share with students when they are ready to apply, information for minorities and much more. We want to enable you to better prepare your students to become thoughtful, well-prepared and viable dental school applicants.

For more detailed information about advising for careers in dentistry, visit the Prehealth Advisors section at [adea.org/GoDental](https://www.adea.org/GoDental).

Thank you for all you do for your students and for our profession!



## IS DENTISTRY THE RIGHT CHOICE?

We know that students come into your office seeking information on which health professions they should consider. No one can know all of the details about all of the choices available to students. This Quick Guide assists you specifically with questions about the profession of dentistry and the many career opportunities it provides.

### WHAT DO DENTISTS DO?

The mouth is the mirror to the rest of the body. Dentists lead teams to **provide preventive and restorative care** to keep people healthy, alleviate pain and treat patients' oral health needs. They are at the **forefront of research and developments** in a wide range of innovative procedures to enhance dental and overall well-being. Dentists are **instrumental in the early detection** of oral cancers and systemic conditions that manifest in the mouth and that can affect the overall health of patients.

When discussing dentistry as a possible career option, use the following checklist to ascertain whether a student might be a good fit.

### ARE YOU:

- » Comfortable with close, personal contact?
- » Caring and considerate of how others feel?
- » Comfortable making decisions on your own?
- » Detail-oriented?
- » Highly perceptive of aesthetics?
- » A problem solver?
- » Passionate about transforming the lives of people in need?
- » A good communicator?
- » Excited to be on the forefront of diagnosing health conditions?

### DO YOU ENJOY:

- » Working in small spaces?
- » Seeing the immediate results of your work?
- » Accuracy in your work?
- » Experiencing new challenges each day?
- » Working with your hands?

## FACTS ABOUT DENTISTRY:

# 7000 B.C.

DENTISTRY IS ONE OF THE OLDEST MEDICAL PROFESSIONS

# 23,300

NEW DENTIST POSITIONS EXPECTED THROUGH 2022 ACCORDING TO THE U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS

# 1 OF TEN

DENTISTRY IS ONE OF THE TEN MOST TRUSTED AND ETHICAL PROFESSIONS IN THE U.S.

GENERAL DENTISTS WITH OVER FIVE YEARS OF EXPERIENCE CAN MAKE OVER

# \$200K PER YEAR

SPECIALISTS WITH OVER FIVE YEARS OF EXPERIENCE CAN MAKE OVER

# \$300K PER YEAR

## WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO GET INTO DENTAL SCHOOL?

It's much more than just grades and test scores. Dental schools look at a **range of factors** when considering whom to interview and ultimately accept into their programs.

### SNAPSHOT OF A VIABLE APPLICANT

- » Social skills
- » Interpersonal skills
- » Empathy
- » Dependability
- » Multitasking ability
- » Academic competency
- » Professionalism
- » Problem-solving skills
- » Maturity
- » Cultural competency
- » Ability to handle adversity/conflict
- » Attention to detail

### NINE DENTAL SPECIALTIES:

- Dental Public Health
- Endodontics
- Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology
- Oral and Maxillofacial Radiology
- Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery
- Orthodontics and Dentofacial Orthopedics
- Pediatric Dentistry
- Periodontics
- Prosthodontics

## TIPS FOR APPLYING TO DENTAL SCHOOL

Applying to dental school is not a mystery, nor is it a marathon. The key is to prepare. ADEA AADSAS® (ADEA's Associated American Dental Schools Application Service) simplifies the process by allowing students to submit one single application to all of the dental schools to which they apply.

**ADEA AADSAS** is available to individuals applying to **first-year entering classes at all U.S. dental schools and select Canadian dental schools**. The program collects and disseminates verified application information, **DAT** (Dental Admission Test) scores and letters of evaluation to the schools chosen by the applicant.

Additionally, all applicants must take the DAT, which includes the following six areas:

### IN SHORT, THE DAT IS...

- » In English
- » \$415 each time you take it\*
- » Multiple choice
- » Computer-based
- » Given most days of the year
- » Required by all U.S. dental schools
- » Over four hours in length
- » Taken at specified testing centers throughout the country

Advise students to visit the American Dental Association website ([ada.org](http://ada.org) under the education/careers tab) for more detailed information on preparing for the DAT.

- 1 Biology
- 2 General Chemistry
- 3 Organic Chemistry
- 4 Reading Comprehension
- 5 Perceptual Ability
- 6 Quantitative Reasoning

*\*subject to change*

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO APPLY, STUDENTS SHOULD VISIT [ADEA.ORG/GODENTAL](http://ADEA.ORG/GODENTAL).

The dental school application process can leave students feeling overwhelmed if they don't prepare. The following **six tips** will ease students' worries and help them become viable dental school applicants.



### REMINDE STUDENTS TO:

- 1. APPLY EARLY.** ADEA AADSAS opens in June for applicants who are planning to begin dental school the following year. Individuals are strongly encouraged to submit their applications **by the end of August**.
- 2. BUDGET APPROPRIATELY.** Be sure to advise students to set aside money for application fees, supplemental fees for individual dental schools, interviews and a deposit to hold a spot at a dental school.
- 3. THOROUGHLY PREPARE FOR THE DENTAL ADMISSION TEST (DAT).** A critical and sometimes daunting component of the dental school application process is preparing for and taking the DAT. Study preparation can take as long as three to four months.



### HELP STUDENTS TO:

- 4. CONNECT THE DOTS ON MANUAL DEXTERITY.** Precision is key to the work of a dentist. Procedures must be performed by hand on an extremely small scale. Understanding the significance of manual dexterity to a dental career will help students confirm if dentistry is the right fit.
- 5. PREPARE FOR DENTAL SCHOOL INTERVIEWS.** A successful interview can be the deciding factor in a student's acceptance to dental school. Be active in helping students practice and prepare for their dental school interviews by hosting mock interviews.
- 6. DEVELOP A COMPELLING AND COMPREHENSIVE PERSONAL STATEMENT.** Dental schools look for students to communicate their passion for dentistry and their commitment to becoming a dentist in their personal statement.



## ADVISING THE REAPPLICANT

In your time as an advisor, you will likely need to assist students who did not get into dental school the first time, but who intend to apply again. What should you tell them?

Start by asking these essential questions:

- 1 Why are you **reapplying**, and **why now**?
- 2 What's **different** in your application now compared with the last time you applied?
- 3 Have you considered where you applied last time and **evaluated** if those schools are still the best fit this time around?
- 4 If you had interviews, have you **assessed** how your interviews went and **considered** what could have been done differently?
- 5 You will be asked to explain in your application and during interviews why you have decided to reapply to dental school. What **self-assessment** have you done to help you know you are ready to **reapply** now?



## STRENGTHENING THE APPLICANT POOL

### SEEKING DIVERSITY

Ensuring a diverse dental workforce is critical to the success of the profession. When dentists are men and women from all types of backgrounds, races and ethnicities, it makes the care the profession provides better for everyone.

#### THE HOLISTIC PERSPECTIVE



**Actively encourage** minorities with an interest in dentistry to apply to dental school. Remind them of the rewards of being part of a great profession and efforts to eliminate health care disparities.

When discussing diversity in dentistry, ethnicity, race, gender and sexual orientation are only a few factors dental schools consider. In recent years there have been more people **applying to dental school later in life**, sometimes after pursuing another career, starting a family or just waiting a few years. We categorize these as **nontraditional students** and they generally reside within three categories:

- Career changers
- International students
- Gap year students



## WHAT DENTAL SCHOOL ADMISSIONS OFFICERS WANT YOU, THE ADVISOR, TO KNOW.

If admissions officers could **directly counsel** all potential applicants on successfully navigating the dental school application process, they would emphasize the following:


- 1 **Passion is vital** to producing a winning personal statement. Grammar and creativity are important, but demonstrating both why a student chose dentistry and a passion for the profession are the critical components to a captivating **personal statement**.
- 2 Highlight **critical thinking skills**. Students must illustrate that they can successfully problem solve and deal with conflict in a calm, collected manner.
- 3 First comes general dentistry. Help students understand they must become a **general dentist** before they can become a **specialist**.
- 4 **An informed applicant is a successful applicant**. Potential applicants who thoroughly research the application process and spend time carefully and candidly evaluating dental schools as they relate to their individual career goals will stand out from the crowd.





QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS  
**AND MORE  
QUESTIONS**

From time to time, you will encounter students who might be considered “challenging” to advise. Maybe the student is set on pursuing dentistry but doesn’t have a strong science GPA. Maybe a student is blindsided by one career option and is unwilling to consider options that might better fit his or her personality and ultimate career goals. Whatever the situation, knowing what to say to help guide students will be critical.

Following are some questions to ask your students to help them better identify their ideal career match—whether it be dentistry or another health profession. 

## HELP YOUR STUDENTS:

- Know more about the profession of dentistry.
  - » What are the pros and cons of being a dentist?
  - » In your opinion, what makes dentistry different from other health professions?
  - » What did you learn about dentistry from your experience shadowing a dentist?
- Recognize if dentistry is the right fit for them.
  - » Why do you want to be a dentist?
  - » If you are not accepted to dental school, what other career options would you consider?
  - » Do you solve problems by weighing alternative solutions?
  - » Are you willing to do work that may expose you to disease and infection?
  - » Are you willing to keep up-to-date with new procedures and techniques?
- Ask the right questions of the dentist during their shadowing experiences.
  - » *“If you had to choose a career in dentistry again, would you?”*
  - » *“What makes you excited about going to work every day?”*
  - » *“What changes do you think we will see in the profession in the future?”*
- Match their academic interests with their professional goals.
  - » Which classes are you enjoying the most and why?
  - » How are your prerequisite classes coming along?
  - » What courses do you find personally relevant to your future career plans?
- Identify potential obstacles to success.
  - » What did you do about any “bumps” you’ve had so far in your academic career, and what did you learn from them?
  - » How have you handled challenges that you’ve had to face?

FIND MORE QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR STUDENTS AT [ADEA.ORG/GODENTAL](https://www.adea.org/godental).

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

ADEA GoDental  
[ada.org/GoDental](https://ada.org/GoDental)

American Dental Education Association (ADEA)  
[ada.org](https://ada.org)

American Dental Association (ADA)  
[ada.org](https://ada.org)

ExploreHealthCareers (EHC)  
[explorehealthcareers.org](https://explorehealthcareers.org)

American Student Dental Association (ASDA)  
[asdanet.org](https://asdanet.org)