

Practice Questions and Strategies

The questions asked by the interviewer will likely stem from a handful of basic categories. For each category, arm yourself with a few points you would like to communicate about yourself and think of one or two specific details to support each. This, in turns, puts you into control of the conversation.

Open Ended Questions:

1. What are three things this school should know about you?
2. Tell me about yourself.
3. When did you decide that you wanted to be a doctor?
4. What is your greatest strength/weakness? Success/failure?
5. What did you like about college?
6. What is your favorite book? What are you reading now?
7. Who are you?
8. How would a friend describe you?
9. How are you unique?
10. What was your toughest subject?
11. Tell me about a significant event in your life and how it shaped you.
12. What is your favorite class?
13. Who do you not get along with and why?
14. Which of your qualities would you pass down to your children?
15. What about yourself would you change if you could?
16. What three material objects are most important to you?
17. What people have influenced you and how?
18. Do you have any heroes?
19. How do you handle stress?
20. Give me an example of a time you contributed to a group effort.
21. Tell me about a cross-cultural experience you've had.
22. What do you do in your free time?
23. What are your hobbies?
24. What is your number one accomplishment?
25. Tell me about a time you helped someone and how it affected you.
26. Describe a challenge or conflict you faced and how you dealt with it.

These types of questions can be among the easiest to answer. They are so broad in scope you have unparalleled freedom in how you respond to them and they concern a subject with whom you should be intimately familiar— yourself. Before answering, consider the subtext or purpose of the question. Take full advantage of any open-ended questions you may be asked by giving specific, focused answers. This will allow you to make your case to the interviewer. For example, if the interviewer asks you to tell him/her about your time at Hamilton, focus on how your undergraduate experiences helped you grow as a person and influenced your decision to become a doctor.

Motivation/Dedication

1. Why have you decided to pursue medicine as a career?
2. Where else have you applied? Why do you want to go here?

3. Why medical school?
4. Why do you want to be a doctor?
5. What other careers have you explored?
6. Do you feel that you have a realistic view of medical school?
7. Do you understand what the life of a doctor entails?
8. What will you do if you don't get into medical school?
9. Why do you want to attend this school?
10. Why do you want to work with sick people?
11. Is this school your top choice?
12. Would you consider a foreign medical school?
13. What area of medicine are you interested in?
14. Where do you see yourself in ten/twenty/thirty years?
15. What do you hope to get out of medicine?
16. Do you have any concerns about this school?
17. Do you have any ideas about your residency?
18. Have you considered the advantages/disadvantages of living in this area?

The interviewer wants to confirm that you understand the difficult journey that awaits you in the study and practice of medicine and that your knowledge of the medical profession is rooted in actual first-hand experience and not what you've seen on TV. Furthermore, the interviewer wants to understand why you want to study at his/her school and that you are sincere in this interest.

Reflect on the ways that you have explored and learned about the health professions in general and medicine in particular. Why have you chosen to pursue medicine? Why is it the best fit? What makes this school a good fit for you?

Qualifications/Experience

1. What leadership roles have you assumed?
2. What clinical experience have you had?
3. Why should we accept you?
4. What work experience have you had?
5. What healthcare experience have you had?
6. Tell me about your research experience.
7. How have you prepared yourself for a career in medicine?
8. What work experience do you wish you had?
9. How have you contributed to your community?
10. Tell me about a time that you helped someone.
11. What volunteer experience have you had?

Be ready to talk about the experiences you mentioned in your. Why did you pursue each and how did they help shape and prepare you for medical school and the practice of medicine? Your answers should make clear why you, among all the other talented and accomplished applicants out there, deserve a spot in medical school. Furthermore, learn how to put a positive spin on any shortcomings in your credentials. For example, if you feel that you're weak in clinical experience, explain if there is a good reason for it and then move on to talking about indirect experience and the benefits gained from it instead.

Knowledge of Medical Field

1. What is the biggest problem/challenge facing medicine today?
2. What do you think the role of the government should be in health care?
3. How do you feel about socialized medicine? The Canadian and British health systems?
4. What do you think about current efforts at U.S. health care reform?
5. Do you know what an HMO is? A PPO? Medicare? Demonstrate your knowledge of third-party providers.
6. Are you aware of the shortage of primary care doctors? How do you feel about it?
7. How would you fix the health care system?
8. How do you feel about the debate over the hours residents are forced to work?
9. How would you advise patients who are interested in visiting an acupuncturist or chiropractor?
10. What do you think about alternative medicine or the role of spirituality in healing?
11. What do you think about medical advice being available on the Web?
12. Should drug companies be allowed to advertise on TV?
13. Should drug representatives be allowed in hospitals to speak with doctors? What limits should be put in place?
14. What is the future of technology in medicine?
15. What is your opinion on the high cost of healthcare?
16. Do you think doctors' salaries are fair?
17. What are your thoughts on hospice care?
18. What do you know about palliative care?
19. Should malpractice awards be capped?
20. Why do you think there is unequal access to health care? How would you fix it?

These types of questions can be difficult to answer because you are not yet an expert on medical matters; nevertheless, you should have a basic understanding of (and opinions on) the health care system. The interviewer's goal is to see if you're familiar with current events and to further test your sincerity, dedication, and intellectual ability and curiosity. Perhaps the best way to prepare for these sorts of questions is to do research on any current events in medicine and the basic workings of the health care system. Read a newspaper, go on the internet, read the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, or talk with a doctor you are shadowing to research these topics.

Ethics

1. What are your views on abortion?
2. Do you have an opinion on stem cell research?
3. How would you feel about treating a patient infected with HIV?
4. Would you work in an AIDS clinic?
5. What are your views on euthanasia?
6. How do you feel about treating uninsured or indigent patients?
7. You are treating a terminally ill patient who is being kept alive by life support.
8. You feel he should be taken off the machines. What do you do?

9. A pregnant teenager comes to you to discuss her options. She hasn't told her parents about her pregnancy. What do you do?
10. Do you think healthcare is a right or a privilege?
11. What do you think about genetic engineering?
12. Would you prescribe birth controls to a minor without parental consent?
13. Have you ever cheated or helped a friend to cheat?
14. How will you deal with know-it-all patients?
15. Should clean needles be provided to drug addicts?
16. Should schools supply condoms to students?
17. What are your thoughts on animal research?

The interviewer will not expect you to be an expert on these matters, but you should have thought about them and have something reasonably intelligent to share. While these types of questions can be among the hardest to answer, there are only a limited number of controversial issues for the interviewer to pick from. You don't have to have a specific stance on these issues, but do show that you've given them some thought and that you understand both sides of the debate.

The interviewer won't judge you on your actual opinion, but he/she will pay attention to the thoughtfulness and maturity of your answer. Remember that ethical dilemmas are often complex issues that typically demand more in-depth examination and consideration than you will be able to give them in a 30-minute interview. Remember to be sensitive when talking about them. If you have a different opinion on a subject than the interviewer, you may openly recognize the complexity of the issue, briefly summarize the arguments made by the other side, and acknowledge the legitimacy of that side's concerns before politely expressing your disagreement and presenting your reasons for holding the opposite viewpoint on the issue.

Other Types of Questions You May Be Asked

Illegal

There may be rare instances in which you are reluctant to answer a question because they're personal, inappropriate, irrelevant, or illegal. Your first reaction to such questions may be embarrassment, discomfort, or annoyance. There are several ways to deal with these types of questions.

Perhaps the best way is to accept the situation gracefully and answer the question as briefly and as straightforwardly as possible in a way that is favorable to you without affecting your integrity. On the other hand, if you feel personally slighted or deeply offended by the question, then you may feel compelled to not answer or to point out the inappropriateness of the question. Should this be the case, keep in mind that you don't have to answer any question you don't want to. You may state that you feel uncomfortable answering the question and/or ask the interviewer how the issue in their question relates to your performance as a medical student. You need to do this in a non-confrontational manner if you wish the interviewer to back off and continue.

Bear in mind that it is rare for interviewers to ask an inappropriate question with malice intended or with conscious awareness that he/she is wading into inappropriate territory. As a physician, the interviewer may be used to asking personal questions of his/her patients every day

and may not even realize he/she is doing the same to you. The interviewer may also be inexperienced or even testing how you deal with uncomfortable situations.

Curveballs

No matter how thoroughly you've prepared, you may get a "curveball question" that you weren't expecting and that doesn't fit any of your prepared talking points. The key is to not panic. You'll need to be able to think on your feet and be creative. The best response that comes to mind is usually appropriate, and a bit of well-chosen humor is usually welcome. If you're stumped for any reason, ask the interviewer if you can take a moment to consider the question, take a deep breath, pull your thoughts together, and then answer. You can't prepare for curveball questions. Just try to get to a place where you are comfortable with a range of topics and potential questions and where you are intimately familiar with your application and can discuss it with ease. If you're sincerely dedicated to becoming a doctor, and confident that you have prepared yourself well, then your sincerity and dedication will be obvious to the point that even the most awkward answer will not undermine the overall impression you made.

Questions You May Want to Ask on the Interview Day

Questions for a faculty interviewer:

1. How much of the curriculum will be lecture and how much will be small group sessions?
2. Where and what are typical alumni doing now?
3. Do alumni tend to stay in the area after graduation?
4. What are the schools strengths/weaknesses?
5. When do students have their first contact with patients?

Faculty members probably won't be very familiar with specific details about the school outside their own department and classes, so reserve those questions for staff members. Instead, ask faculty members questions about the school's character, its strengths/weaknesses, the aspects of it that drew them there, the type of student that excels there, faculty member accessibility outside of class, etc.

Questions for a student interviewer:

1. How would you rate the faculty here?
2. In your opinion, do the students like it here?
3. What sort of clinical and/or research opportunities are available?
4. What is a typical day like for first-year students?
5. What makes your school unique?
6. What do you like/dislike about this school?
7. How would you describe the students here?

Students can tell you what the school is really like and give you their opinion on the curriculum, professors, housing, class dynamics, extracurricular/volunteer activities, and student life. They can also tell you where students live, eat, and hang out and what they do for fun. Don't be afraid to ask them tough questions like "Do you like it here?" or "What would you change about the school?" The student tour guides and hosts will probably belong to the group of students who like the school the most and want to share their love of it with applicants. Consequently, you should take the time to survey a broader segment of the school population. Walk around the school on your own and ask the students you bump into their thoughts on the school. Furthermore, pay attention to the "vibe" you get from students. Do they

seem happy or do they seem stressed out? Can you see yourself studying and hanging out with these people?

Questions For Admission Staff:

1. Are classes primarily lectures, small-groups, or a mixture of both? When do students encounter their first patient?
2. What percentage of students receives financial aid?
3. Of this aid, how much of it consists of scholarships and how much of loans?
4. Is on-campus housing provided to students?
5. If not, does the school offer any assistance towards finding a place to live?