PDI.

INTERVIEW PREPARATION

Preparing for Dental School Interviews

A structured approach to traditional interviews, behavioral questions, ethical scenarios, MMIs, virtual interviews, and school-specific preparation.

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GUIDE OVERVIEW

What this guide covers

A structured approach to traditional interviews, behavioral questions, ethical scenarios, MMIs, virtual interviews, and school-specific preparation.

01	Know the format - then verify it
02	Build an evidence bank, not a script
03	Answer behavioral questions with reflection
04	Approach ethical and MMI scenarios
05	High-frequency questions to prepare
06	Questions to ask the program
07	In-person and virtual day-of checklist

Educational guidance only. Admissions requirements, testing policies, and timelines can change. Always verify requirements with ADEA, the ADA, and each dental school before acting. PDI is not affiliated with or endorsed by ADEA or the ADA.

SECTION 01

Know the format - then verify it

ADEA notes that dental schools may use one-on-one, group, or multiple mini-interview formats. Programs can change formats, timing, and virtual requirements, so verify every invitation directly.

- Traditional or panel: application-based, motivational, behavioral, and situational questions in a conversation with one or more interviewers.
- MMI: a series of short stations that may assess communication, ethical reasoning, teamwork, or role-play skills.
- Group activity: applicants may discuss or solve a task while observers evaluate listening, collaboration, and communication.
- Virtual or asynchronous: live video or recorded responses require the same preparation plus reliable technology and a controlled environment.
- Open-file and closed-file formats call for different assumptions; follow the school's instructions instead of guessing what the interviewer knows.

SECTION 02

Build an evidence bank, not a script

Prepare a small set of experiences you can adapt to different questions. Memorized paragraphs often sound rigid and break down when an interviewer asks a follow-up.

- Why dentistry and why now.
- A meaningful patient-facing or shadowing observation.
- A setback, conflict, or failure and the behavior that changed afterward.
- A time you worked on a team, received criticism, or handled competing responsibilities.
- A service, leadership, research, or employment experience that reveals your values.
- A thoughtful reason for applying to that specific program, based on current official information.

SECTION 03

Answer behavioral questions with reflection

A simple structure can keep answers focused: situation, your responsibility, what you did, the result, and what you learned. The reflection is usually the most important part.

- Use one concrete example rather than several shallow examples.

- Own your decisions and avoid portraying every difficult outcome as someone else's fault.
- Explain your individual contribution while recognizing the team.
- Name what you would repeat or change in a similar situation.
- Keep answers concise enough for follow-up conversation.

SECTION 04

Approach ethical and MMI scenarios

Most scenarios are designed to reveal your reasoning and communication, not your ability to guess one hidden answer.

- Identify the central problem before proposing a solution.
- Clarify missing facts and avoid assumptions about motives.
- Consider the people affected, patient autonomy, safety, privacy, fairness, and professional responsibilities.
- Explain reasonable options and tradeoffs, then state a proportionate next step.
- Recognize the limits of a dental student's role and when guidance or escalation would be appropriate.
- In role-play, listen and respond to the other person rather than delivering a speech.

SECTION 05

High-frequency questions to prepare

Do not memorize perfect wording. Prepare the evidence, reflection, and school-specific research behind each answer.

- Why dentistry? What experiences made your decision informed?
- Tell me about yourself. What three ideas connect your past, present preparation, and future direction?
- Why our school? Which specific curricular, clinical, service, or community features fit your goals?
- Tell me about a failure, conflict, or criticism. What changed in your behavior?
- How have you demonstrated service, cultural humility, teamwork, or resilience?
- What challenge facing oral health care interests you, and what have you done to understand it?

SECTION 06

Questions to ask the program

Use the interview to evaluate the school. Ask questions that require lived perspective rather than facts copied from the website.

- How does clinical responsibility progress from simulation to patient care?
- How do students receive feedback and support when they struggle academically or clinically?
- How would current students describe collaboration within the class and with faculty?
- What patient populations and practice settings shape the clinical experience?
- What recent curricular change has had the greatest effect on students?
- How do students pursue service, research, leadership, or advanced clinical interests without losing balance?

SECTION 07

In-person and virtual day-of checklist

Follow the invitation first. When instructions conflict with general advice, the school's instructions control.

- Confirm time zone, location or link, check-in expectations, interview format, and required materials.
- Choose professional attire that is comfortable, clean, and conservative; test it in the setting or camera frame in advance.
- For virtual interviews, test audio, camera, lighting, power, internet, notifications, and a backup contact method.
- For in-person interviews, plan transportation and arrive early enough to manage delays without arriving excessively early.
- Afterward, follow the school's communication instructions. A brief thank-you may be appropriate, but some programs limit updates or additional contact.

REFERENCES

Official sources

These sources were reviewed when this guide was prepared. Re-check them for updates before applying or registering for an exam.

ADEA dental school admissions process
https://www.adea.org/godental/Apply/admissions-process

ADEA AADSAS applicant information
https://www.adea.org/godental/Apply/apply-to-adea-aadsas

ADEA AADSAS resources and FAQs
https://www.adea.org/godental/Apply/resources-and-faqs

Practice out loud before the real interview

PDI mock interviews focus on clarity, reflection, follow-up questions, and school-specific preparation. We do not provide memorized scripts or claim access to confidential interview content.

Explore application mentorship at predentalinstituteofchicago.com

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