

INTERVIEW TIPS FOR PRE-HEALTH STUDENTS

Interview Tips for Pre-Health Students

As a Pre-Health student, you may be required to attend interviews for clinical and research positions to gain the experiences you need to become a competitive applicant. Here are important tips for how to make the most of your interviews and make a positive impression.

1. Preparation is Critical

- **Review your Resume and make sure it is up to date.** Double check that all dates and information are accurate and that you can speak intelligently about every experience on your resume. It is a good idea to tailor your resume to the specific position for which you are applying, so if you are applying for a research position, you should highlight the prior research experiences you have had (including lab courses) and indicate the science courses that you have taken that have prepared you for this specific opportunity.
- **Research the position to which you are applying.** Regarding a research position, you should read as much as possible about the work of the lab and the background of the PI. If it is a clinical position, read as much as you can about the practice and make sure you understand the position that you are applying for.
- **Know your Application and Resume.** Interviewers will ask you questions about what you wrote in your application and resume. If you applied for the position several weeks earlier, make sure to review what you wrote. Do not get tripped up on dates of experiences or the names of your supervisors. Be able to articulate what you wrote about in your application.

2. Practice Your Responses to Basic Interview Questions

- **The “tell me about yourself” question** is a frequent interview opener, so know what you want to say in advance. First, thank the interviewer for the opportunity to speak about yourself and then keep your response focused and short. You can speak for about a minute and no more than two minutes:
 - *Open with where you grew up and where your parents came from. Talk about the type of community in which you were raised and how that influenced who you are and what you are passionate about.*
 - *Talk about your values and passions and how you developed them*
 - *Speak about your academic interests and ultimate career goals*

- **Know why you are applying to this position and be able to articulate why you believe that you can fulfill the stated expectations of the position**
 - *Be able to speak about your activities and experiences and discuss what you have learned from them*
 - *Know your schedule and be certain that you can commit to the responsibilities of the position*
- **Additional common interview questions include:**
 - *Tell me about a challenge or setback you experienced and how you overcame it?*
 - *Tell me your best character trait, and a trait you hope to improve upon?*
 - *Tell me about a time that you had to handle multiple priorities. How do you manage your time efficiently?*
 - *Tell me about a time that you made a mistake. How did you handle it?*
 - *Tell me about a book that you read for pleasure.*
 - *Tell me how you work in a team setting. What would you do if one of the team members was not performing in accordance with professional expectations?*
 - *Tell me about a time that you had to stand up to a person in authority. How did you handle the situation?*
- **Be prepared to speak about current events and healthcare news**

3. Be Punctual

- **Being on time for your interview shows that you have strong time management skills and that you respect the schedule and time constraints of the interviewer.**
- **Confirm the place and time of the interview in advance.** Ask if there is anything you should bring with you in terms of identification or if there are special directions for locating the interview site.
- **If the interview is in person, you must Google the location of the building and determine the best mode of transportation to get there in advance.** Always leave yourself additional time for transportation to account for possible delays. If you arrive early, you will have a few minutes to check in and collect yourself before the interview.
- **Always bring the contact information of the office or lab with you** in the event of unforeseen circumstances, such as accidents, so that you can contact the staff and let them know of the emergency and the extent of your delay.
- **If the interview is virtual,** check your Internet connection in advance and make sure that there are no other computer or power issues. Check the virtual platform that you will be using (eg. Skype, Zoom, Webex, Blackboard, etc.) and ensure

that you have downloaded the software and know how to use it in advance. **See Virtual Interview Tips below**

4. Dress Appropriately

- It is best to dress conservatively
 - Make certain that your outfit is clean and pressed
 - Try on your outfit in advance to ensure that it still fits
 - No bold prints or colors. No gaudy jewelry
 - No jeans or sneakers
 - For virtual interviews, avoid giant headphones and we recommend wearing your full interview outfit just in case your interviewer asks you to stand up.
- See Virtual Interview Tips below**

5. Other interview tips for an In-Person Interview

- Do not bring friends or family with you to the interview location---if someone accompanies you, they should wait in another location.
- Do not bring food with you and eat while waiting to be called---a bottle of water is fine.
- Do not chew gum
- Remove headphones and silence your cell phone
- Google directions to the interview location in advance.
- Plan your transportation
- Leave additional time to travel to the location
- Carry the contact information of your interviewer in case of unforeseen delays

6. Practice your Communication Skills

- Become aware of the sound of your voice
- Do not mumble, whisper, or speak too quickly or loudly
- Show enthusiasm in your voice
- Make eye contact
- Smile from time to time
- Do not be too serious or stiff

7. Body Language is equally as important as your Verbal Skills

- Maintain good posture
- Be aware of nervous habits like playing with your hair or beard, or cracking your knuckles, and take steps to manage these actions
- Focus your eyes on the interviewer instead of darting around the room or looking down
- Look engaged by nodding when the interviewer is speaking

8. VIRTUAL INTERVIEW TIPS

- Choose a suitable background for the interview

- A blank wall
- A bookshelf
- An appropriate virtual background
- **Check your Internet connection**
- **Make sure your laptop is fully charged**
- **Make sure that you have downloaded the software that will be used for the interview (eg. Zoom, Skype, Webex)**
- **Set up your laptop so that it appears as if you are sitting across the desk from the interviewer; you do not want to look down at the interviewer**
- **Check your posture and make sure that you are not moving around in your chair**
- **Elevate your energy level to show your enthusiasm, which tends to be lessened in a virtual setting**

9. Always follow up with a Thank you Note

- **It is critical** that in addition to thanking the interviewer and everyone who assisted you in the office/lab on the day of the interview, **you send a thank you note via email.**
- **Do not ask the interviewer for their email address directly.** Instead, you can ask the person at the front desk or their assistant, or you can look at the website for their contact information.
- **The thank you note should be sent via email preferably in the evening following the interview or the next morning at the latest.**
- **The note should be short and concise:**
 - Thank the interviewer for taking the time to speak to you
 - Reiterate your interest in the position
 - If there was a particular part of the conversation that you found interesting, you can personalize your note by mentioning it

10. Tips on Following Up after the Interview

- **Unless the interviewer informs you when they expect to make a decision and you do not hear back by that date, do not send multiple emails to follow up.**
- **Due to busy schedules and the need to interview other applicants, you may not hear back regarding the position for several weeks.**
- **If a month passes by and you do not hear back, you should contact the office/lab and inquire if the position has been filled.**
- **If you obtain the position, please remember to thank the people who helped you along the way through application review, interview prep, etc.**
- **If you do not obtain the position, this will still be a learning experience that you can use to your advantage when applying for the next position.**

11. The Medical School Multiple Mini Interview Format (MMI)

- **What is the MMI**
 - MMI stands for Multiple Mini Interview and consists of a series of short interview stations that are independent of one another.
 - Together, the 6-10 stations test your capabilities in the following areas: Teamwork, Communication, Self-Awareness, Maturity, Empathy, and Critical Thinking
- **How to Prepare**
 - **Know the 4 Pillars of Medical Ethics**
 - **Beneficence-** In essence, means “doing good.” *Having the patients best interests in mind.*
 - **Nonmaleficence-** In essence, means “to do no harm.” *The benefits of treatment outweigh the risks.*
 - **Patient Self-Autonomy-** *The patient has the freedom to choose regarding treatment, provided they are competent and can provide informed consent*
 - **Justice-** Ensuring fairness and equality of care for all
 - **You need to understand the pillars of medical ethics and how they apply to ethical scenarios.**
- **How to Develop Medical Ethics Knowledge:**
 - **One of the best ways to develop your understanding of medical ethics** is to practice analyzing situations using ethical frameworks and ideologies. You can do this with a Pre-Health Advisor, and on your own using the resources below. Try to compare the outcomes given by different frameworks and consider the implications of this using an “**if this, then this**” framework.
 - **Make sure you stay up-to-date with the latest health news** – and see how these ethical frameworks apply to what’s currently in the news.
- **Helpful Resources:**
 - [Interview Generator \(savvypremed.com\)](http://savvypremed.com)
 - <https://www.shemmassianconsulting.com/blog/mmi-interview>
 - [How to Ace Medical School Interviews \(Questions Included\) — Shemmassian Academic Consulting \(shemmassianconsulting.com\)](http://shemmassianconsulting.com)

12. The Medical School Traditional Interview Format

- **How to Prepare:**
- **Do mock interviews and practice talking about yourself**
 - Ask friends, colleagues, doctors, research supervisors, professors, or anyone else you trust to help you do a mock interview. Try to simulate the real thing as well as you can. Try to do at least 2 or 3 mock interviews before you go into your first interview. In addition to mock interviews, make sure you are comfortable talking about yourself. You should be well aware of your personality, tendencies, accomplishments and experiences. Strangely enough, sometimes talking about yourself can be the hardest part about the interview.
- ***Research each school's interview format and tendencies***
- ***Know what to expect from each school before you interview.***

Generally there are three different interview formats with school specific variations. You should know what type of interview you are walking into. Also learn more about each school so that you can tailor your answers to be more appropriate for each school. The best way to learn more about a school is read the website and to talk to actual medical students who attend that school. Other ways would be to go on the Student Doctor Network.
- ***Have questions ready***
 - **Interviewers will always ask if you have questions for them.** Please do not say that you have no questions. Interviewers may take that as a lack of interest, creativity, or attentiveness. Have a list of different questions you can ask your interviewers. Try to avoid being too specific because your interviewer may not know the answer to your question.
 - ***Here are some good questions for you to ask:***
 - 1. What is your favorite aspect of this medical school program?
 - 2. How did you become affiliated with this medical school and what do you value about the program?
 - 3. What is your best advice for a first year medical school student?
 - 4. What is your favorite or least favorite thing about being a doctor? (if your interviewer is a doctor)

- ***Read through your entire primary and secondary application prior to the interview***
 - You must know every detail of your application before you attend your interview. Read over what you said and review why you said it for both your primary and secondary application. Your interview is the final part of your application story. As a result, if you cannot recall the previous parts of your story, your interview may appear disconnected from the rest of your application. For example, if you give a reason why you want to be a doctor in your personal statement but give a completely different reason on your interview, this may be a red flag.
- ***Take care of logistics***
 - You should be in your best mental and physical condition during your interview. This means you should get enough rest before the interview, schedule travel that gives you sufficient time to mentally and physically prepare and eat properly.