

HEALTH PROFESSIONS INTERVIEWS: RESOURCES (SPRING 2020)

Commonly Asked Interview Questions (shared by Lafayette students/alumni):

- Why medicine? Why do you want to become a doctor?
- What is the biggest challenge we face in medicine?
- Tell me about your health care experiences. How would you handle giving bad news to a patient?
- What if one of your patients didn't speak English?
- You seem to have a lot on your resume - what do you do for fun?
- Describe yourself using a four letter word.
- Why now? Why not wait to go to med school?
- What will you provide to our medical school that another applicant won't?
- What is the role of humanism in medicine?
- Can physicians be both caring and competent?
- Tell me about how service has impacted your decision to pursue a field in medicine.
- What was the most difficult challenge you faced, and what was your biggest failure/how did you learn from it? (Very difficult/important question)

Questions available to you for Virtual Practice Interviewing @ Lafayette.InterviewStream.com:

Question Set #1:

1. Why do you want to be a doctor?
2. What do you think is the most pressing issue in health care today?
3. What do you do in your spare time?
4. How are you a match for our medical school?
5. There are a thousand applicants that are as qualified as you. Why should we choose you?
6. What will you do if you don't get accepted to medical school?
7. Tell me about a pressure situation you were in that would demonstrate your ability to work under pressure.
8. Give an example of a failure or disappointment that you've experienced and what you learned from it?
9. Today's healthcare venues serve a diverse population of patients from all walks of life, economies, and cultures; tell me about any experience you have had that you feel has prepared you to interact and serve this diversity effectively.
10. How would you describe the relationship between science and medicine?

Question Set #2:

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Tell me about something that you accomplished that required discipline.
3. What is the most important thing you have learned in service to others?
4. What exposure have you had to the medical profession?
5. What have you learned about having empathy for a patient?
6. What is your view of managed healthcare and changes in the US healthcare system?
7. What you think about ethics and healthcare (e.g., abortion, cloning, euthanasia)?
8. Tell me why you see yourself as a good fit for this medical school.
9. What do you think will be your greatest challenge in completing medical school or learning how to be a doctor?
10. Name three adjectives that describe you.

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Sample Questions to Ask the Interviewers

- Are there opportunities for students to design, conduct, and publish their own research?
- Is there flexibility in the course work (the number of electives) and the timing of the courses (accelerating, decelerating, and time off) during the pre-clinical and clinical years?
- How do students from this medical school perform on National Board Examinations? How does the school assist students who do not pass?
- How are students evaluated academically? How are clinical evaluations performed?
- What kind of academic, personal, financial, and career counseling is available to students? Are these services also offered to their spouses?
- Is there a mentor/advisor system? Who are the advisors--faculty members, other students, or both?
- How diverse is the student body?
- Tell me about the library and extracurricular facilities.
- What type of clinical sites — ambulatory, private preceptors, private hospitals, rural settings — are available or required? Does this school allow for students to do rotations at other institutions or internationally.
- Is there budgeting & financial planning assistance?
- What medical school committees (e.g., curriculum committee) have student representation?
- Are students involved in (required or voluntary) community service?
- What are typical residency programs to which recent graduates were accepted?
- What would a typical 1st year academic work load look like?
- Do you have an orientation/mentoring program for 1st year students?

ANSWERING BEHAVIORAL BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS USING THE STAR METHOD

The STAR method is a structured manner of responding to a behavioral-based interview question by discussing the specific situation, task, action, and result of the situation you are describing.

Situation: Describe the situation that you were in or the task that you needed to accomplish. You must describe a specific event or situation, not a generalized description of what you have done in the past. Be sure to give enough detail for the interviewer to understand. This situation can be from a previous job or internship, from a volunteer experience, a specific athletic experience or role, from a class project or any relevant event.

Task: What goal were you working toward?

Action: Describe the actions you took to address the situation with an appropriate amount of detail and keep the focus on YOU. What specific steps did you take and what was your particular contribution? Be careful that you don't describe what the team or group did when talking about a project, but what you actually did. Use the word "I," not "we" when describing actions.

Result: Describe the outcome of your actions and don't be shy about taking credit for your behavior. What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn? It would be helpful if the results were positive, but if the example you are using did not end in a positive result be sure to explain what you learned from the negative result. A negative result could potentially highlight your strengths in the face of adversity.

Make sure that you follow all parts of the STAR method. Be as specific as possible at all times, without rambling or including too much information. Oftentimes students have to be prompted to include their results, so try to include that without being asked.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR A BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW

Recall recent situations that show favorable behaviors or actions, especially involving course work, work experience, leadership, teamwork, initiative, planning, and customer service.

Prepare short descriptions of each situation; be ready to give details if asked.

Be sure each story has a beginning, middle, and an end, i.e., be ready to describe the situation, including the task at hand, your action, and the outcome or result.

Be sure the outcome or result reflects positively on you (even if the result itself was not favorable).

Be honest. Don't embellish or omit any part of the story. The interviewer will find out if your story is built on a weak foundation.

Be specific. Don't generalize about several events; give a detailed accounting of one event.

Vary your examples; don't take them all from just one area of your life.

EXAMPLES:

“Describe a task or project you were in charge of and how you set it up and followed through.”

Answer using the STAR method:

Situation/Task - As a member and captain of my ___ team I was asked by my coach to coordinate activities that spanned the first and second semesters to integrate our new first year team members as part of the group.

Actions - I first decided to interview sophomores and juniors about their transition to Lafayette and to our athletic team. I gained information about the challenges they faced and the situations that helped them to feel comfortable and gain confidence. I set meetings with the seniors on the team to share the information and make a plan. I developed a plan for twice monthly team activities separate from practice time during the fall semester, and a once monthly team activity during the spring semester. I divided the sessions, matched seniors, and delegated the responsibilities of creating the activities for the sessions. I also facilitated the matching of each first year student with a senior, to serve as a mentor.

Results - I created an end of the year interview with each first year student to ask about the year as a whole and the transition to Lafayette and their goals for next year. I found that the first year athletes had not only developed friendships within their class but with other older members of the team which was something that had not happened in past years. The first years shared that they felt more confident to speak up, ask questions, and participate as part of the team as a result of shared experiences outside of practice.

“Describe a conflict you had with a person or group and the process you used to resolve it.”

Answer using the STAR method:

Situation/Task - Last semester, I was working with a group on a project for a class. We needed to decide on a topic and determine the data that needed to be analyzed. A number of people in the group became argumentative and we could not come to a consensus as to what direction to take.

Actions - I decided to take the lead and suggested that we first think individually to process our own ideas and then sit down together to outline all of our options so we could determine exactly where we actually disagreed. I suggested each member come to the meeting with ideas in writing, ready to present, for the data we needed to find. We each presented our ideas and found commonalities and only subtle nuances.

Results- Once we saw the points of contention, we were able to discuss the matter more productively and make a decision. Having presented our unique ideas actually gave us more variety in the project and more perspectives. We split up the work and in the end, were able to work well together and pulled off a great project.



SAMPLE SCENARIOS

MMI Scenario #1:

You have just completed your residency in internal medicine and are relocating to a small farming community in rural Iowa where you plan to open a private practice clinic. The town consists of mostly low-income farmers from Eastern Europe. The town hasn't had a regular doctor in 17 years; hence, the townspeople used to travel 23 miles to a neighboring town to receive medical care and/or to fill a prescription.

Explain how you would go about opening such a clinic in this town and what factors and considerations you would have to keep in mind to ensure success.

MMI Scenario #2:

You are a resident in the emergency room of a large hospital. Miguel, a 25-year-old male from a rural area, has fractured his jawbone. He drives for two hours to the emergency room to seek treatment. Miguel has no health insurance and is unable to pay for the \$12,500 surgery that could realign his jawbone and sets it into place. If he leaves and elects a surgery at a later time, the fracture would most likely set in the wrong position and would need to be carefully broken again and reset in the correct position. This procedure, however, would cost \$48,000. Your attending physician states that the hospital won't be able to afford a \$12,500 pro-bono surgery.

Miguel is sitting in the patient room, unaware of what will happen. What would you say to Miguel?

MMI Scenario #3:

You are a resident working at a clinic associated with your program, and over a few weeks, you become very close to a particular patient. This patient is a single mother and currently works in a restaurant as a server. You first saw her as a patient when she received a 2nd degree burn to her hand while she was at work. Since the accident, she has been unable to work and she also does not have health insurance. The bills are very burdensome for her and not being able to work is compounding this situation. One day, at the clinic, she asks you if you can take some bandages and other materials from the clinic supplies for her because she cannot afford to buy them on her own. What do you say and what is your course of action?

(<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.474.4991&rep=rep1&type=pdf>) . Eva KW, Rosenfeld J, Reiter HI, Norman GR. (2004).

- Appendix 1 includes a sample MMI question, description of what the question is designed to convey, and prompt questions. "Validating a multiple mini-interview questions bank assessing entry-level reasoning skills in candidates for graduate-entry medicine and dentistry programmes" by Chris Roberts, Nathan Zoanetti, & Imogene Rothnie in *Academic Medicine* 2009, 43: 350-359 (<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com.proxy.lib.pdx.edu/doi/10.1111/j.1365-2923.2009.03292.x/full>) . Article is available by signing in to the Millar Library.
- The Department of Physical Therapy in the School of Medical Rehabilitation at the University of Manitoba published a PowerPoint on the MMI. Descriptions of the types of stations (discussion, acting, collaboration, and written) and suggestions for responding can be found on slides 11-16 (http://umanitoba.ca/rehabsciences/media/pt_mmi_presentation.pdf) .
- Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine provides a video that outlines the Multiple Mini Interview process (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SYZc-rIyRw&feature=youtu.be>) .

News

Leena Shrestha, Advising & Career Services, receives the 2018 Dan Fortmiller Award for Excellence in Advising »

PSU career counselor Louise Paradis receives Esther Matthews Award from the Oregon Career Development Association »

Becki Ingersoll, Advising & Career Services, receives the 2017 Mary H. Cumpston Award for Service to Students »

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Events

Monday, Feb 18
Graduate School Focused
Event: Writing a Personal
Statement »

Tuesday, Feb 19
Graduate School Focused
Event: Applying to Graduate
School »

Tuesday, Feb 26
Career Workshop: Writing
Resumes & Cover Letters »

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Profile



Advising & Career Services
Student Employees »

These student employees are the friendly smiles that you see when you come into the ACS office.

[go to profiles](#)

(From the University of Florida)

Thank you notes are a useful, clever final move in your interview experience. However, like all acts of communication, they can be better or worse. Better thank you notes help you succeed; worse ones do not. To be effective, a thank you note should be sent within 24 HOURS of the interview. Submission can be paper or electronic. The note should have the following parts:

- Appropriate greeting
- Thank you for time
- Specific experience from the interview
- Final pitch for good qualities
- Appropriate close

You will send a thank you note to one of the interviewers following your interview – you do not have to send it to Dr. Schafer, but she MUST have a copy of it for grading purposes! You may send an email or hand-write a note.

Anatomy of a GOOD EXAMPLE

Dear Dr. Schafer,

I would like to thank you for taking the time to ask me a few questions and getting to know me a little better during our interview. I especially enjoyed your question concerning my experience in food service. In the medical field it is imperative to evaluate what is best for the patient, and your question made me consider a relationship between food and health I had not considered before. I appreciate your interest in my application, and I am excited to hear from the University of Florida's Physician's Assistant Program. Through my integrity, ambition, and hard-work ethic, I hope to contribute to the already dynamic, focused, and devoted program here in Gainesville. Have an excellent day, and thank you again for your time.

Sincerely,
Brittney C.

Callouts:
- Appropriate greeting: Dear Dr. Schafer,
- Begins with "thank you": I would like to thank you...
- Incorporates specific experience from interview: I especially enjoyed your question concerning my experience in food service...
- Appropriate close: Sincerely, Brittney C.
- Specific pitch for qualities: Through my integrity, ambition, and hard-work ethic...
- Extra polite final line a nice touch: Have an excellent day, and thank you again for your time.

Dr. Schafer,

Thank you so much for taking your time to make my interview at Vanderbilt University Medical School so enjoyable today. I especially enjoyed talking with you about your son and possible ways to calm an "unsoothable" child in the medical practice. In addition, I appreciate the information you gave me about the possibilities available for medical students who would like to work with the pediatric critical care center at the Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt. I look forward to attending Vanderbilt Medical School in the fall.

Sincerely,
Kara L.

Dear Dr. Arnold,

I really enjoyed my visit to Stanford. I want to thank you, your Dean of Admissions, and first year medical student, for taking the time to interview me. I especially enjoyed the opportunity to discuss my experience with the Shand's Cuddler volunteer program, which has been a unique hands-on learning experience for me, and my volunteering as a tennis coach assistant through which I honed leadership and interpersonal skills. I am a self-motivated, dedicated student who is steadfast in meeting my goals, and I know Stanford can use an asset like me. I am excited that you offer such great volunteer opportunities such as the SMSA (Stanford Medical Student Association) and women in medicine, which I will definitely take advantage of. However, I am most impressed with Stanford's unparalleled opportunities in clinical patient care. I am looking forward to being part of your program in the fall.

Sincerely,
Jessica S.

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Excerpt from *MSAR: Getting Started*:

Know What Type of Interview to Expect

It will also be helpful to be ready for any number of different interview formats. At some schools, interviews are held with individual admission committee members; at others, group interviews are the norm. In addition, while most interviews are typically held on the medical school campus, some schools have designated interviewers in different geographic regions to minimize time and expense for applicants. (Information about a school's interview policies and procedures is usually provided to applicants in the initial stages of the selection process.)

Be Comfortable with Different Interviewing Styles

You've probably had some experience interviewing for summer and part-time jobs (and possibly for your undergraduate school), so it won't surprise you that interviewers have their own styles and follow different formats. Some follow a structured design, asking questions from a predetermined list and assigning numeric scores to each answer. Others prefer a more free-flowing arrangement and provide the applicant with a greater degree of open input. Still others fall somewhat in the middle. Again, be ready for any approach.

Do Your Research

Investigate the school thoroughly by reviewing its profile on the MSAR Online, its web site, the information packet sent to you, and any articles you can get your hands on. Try to talk with current students to get an accurate sense of what the school is like from a student perspective. You'll want to impress your interviewer with not only your potential for success but also your interest in his or her specific institution. You can demonstrate these qualities through the answers to the interviewer's questions as well as by the questions you ask.

Practice

Since most admission committee members are experienced interviewers who want to learn about the "real" person, you should be forthright and open in your meeting and not try to "game" the interviewer. If you're apprehensive about the process, find a trusted advisor or friend with whom you can conduct mock interviews to help build your confidence.

Remember, the interview provides applicants with opportunities to discuss their personal histories and motivation for a medical career and to draw attention to any aspects of their application that merit emphasis or explanation. Make certain you present yourself in the best possible light by preparing thoroughly for your meeting. Think about how you conduct yourself among current students and staff during informal meetings, too. These interactions still create an impression of who you are and how you present yourself may come up during a post-interview discussion.

Know Your Interview Rights and Responsibilities

Although interviewers are instructed by admissions officers and guided by federal statutes on what are unfair or discriminatory pre-admission inquiries, there may be an occasion when an interviewer asks an inappropriate question. (See examples below.)

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You have the right not to answer what you sense is an inappropriate question. If such a question is asked, try to relax and provide a thoughtful and articulate response (two essential characteristics of a good physician). You may also respectfully decline to answer the question and explain that you were advised not to answer questions that you sensed were inappropriate.

You have the responsibility to report being asked an inappropriate question to help prevent further occurrences. Medical schools have the responsibility to establish procedures that enable applicants to report such incidents in a confidential manner. Medical schools should inform applicants of these procedures prior to interviews and assure them that reporting an incident will not bias the applicant's evaluation.

If a medical school did not inform you of its procedure and an incident occurs, use these guidelines. If possible, report in confidence the interviewer's name and the interview question(s) that was asked to an admissions officer during the interview day. Otherwise, e-mail this information to an admissions officer within 24 hours of the interview noting the date and time of the incident. Furthermore, you have the right to ask if another interview is deemed necessary to ensure an unbiased evaluation of your application to that medical school.

Some interviewers use the interview to assess how well you function under stress and may purposely ask challenging questions to observe how you respond under pressure. How you communicate will be a critical part of the encounter; however, this does not give an interviewer the right to ask you inappropriate questions in their attempt to challenge you during the interview.

Examples of inappropriate questions:

- What is your race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, political affiliation, marital status, opinion on abortion and/or euthanasia, income, value of your home, credit score, etc.?
- Are you planning on having children during medical school?
- Do you have any disabilities?
- Will you require special accommodations?
- Have you ever been arrested?
- Have you ever done drugs?
- How old are you?

Sample response to an inappropriate questions:

Q. What are your plans for expanding your family during medical school?

A. Can you please clarify your question? I want to make sure that I'm providing information that is most relevant to my candidacy.

Q. Have you ever done drugs?

A. I am uncomfortable discussing my medical history and possible use of prescription medications during this interview.

How Do I... Prepare for My Medical School Interview?

One of the most important phases of the application process is your interview. There are different kinds of interviews, such as standard one-on-one interviews or multiple mini interviews (MMIs). This is also an opportunity for you to tour the campus and ask questions.

What should I wear and bring to an interview?

For both men and women, it's best to wear a neutral colored suit and comfortable shoes as you likely will go on a walking tour of campus. Don't wear any distracting accessories or strong scents. Dress as you would for any professional job interview or visiting a house of worship. It's okay to bring a water bottle, but it's a good idea to keep your phone turned off and inside your pocket or bag. Randee Reid, admissions and residency officer at University of North Carolina School of Medicine adds, "There is nothing wrong with an applicant using color to accentuate their suit and/or dress, in fact, they should be able to express themselves; but, also bear in mind that you are applying to a graduate professional school. As the saying goes, 'dress for the part.'"

What are some questions that typically are asked during an interview?

Each interview is different, but it's common to be asked, "Why do you want to be a doctor?" To answer, you may want to tell a story about an experience or series of experiences that have led to your decision. You also may be asked, "Why do you want to attend our school?" Make sure you're ready to explain why that school is a good fit for you and your goals.

What do I do if I feel I have been asked a question that is inappropriate?

Although an interview typically is used to get to know an applicant better, some interviewers want to assess how well you function under stress and may purposely ask challenging questions to observe how you respond under pressure. How you communicate will be a critical part of the encounter; however, this does not give an interviewer the right to ask you inappropriate questions in an attempt to challenge you during the interview.

Although interviewers are instructed by admissions officers and guided by federal statutes on what are unfair or discriminatory pre-admission inquiries, there may be an occasion when an interviewer asks an inappropriate question. You have the responsibility to report this to help prevent further occurrences. Medical schools have the responsibility to establish procedures that enable applicants to report such incidents in a confidential manner, and they should inform applicants of these procedures prior to interviews and assure them that reporting an incident will not bias the applicant's evaluation.

If a medical school did not inform you of its procedure and an incident occurs, report the interviewer's name and the interview question(s) that was asked to an admissions officer, in confidence, during the interview day. If that is not possible, email this information to an admissions officer within 24 hours of the interview noting the date and time of the incident. Furthermore, you have the right to ask for another interview to ensure an unbiased evaluation of your application to that medical school.

How can I practice or prepare to interview?

It's a good idea to practice answering interview questions with a friend or mentor, but be careful not to memorize answers to the point where they sound rehearsed and no longer genuine. You also should review your application so what you wrote is fresh in your mind, and do your research on each school and their mission. Be sure not to ask any questions that are easily answered by reading the school's website or in materials already provided to you. It's okay to bring notes with you so you remember what you wanted to ask and also to keep information for later to help you differentiate one school from another.

After the interview is over, should I send an email or thank you note?

It's always a good idea to email or write to your interviewers to thank them for their time. A legible, handwritten note is a nice personal touch that makes a good impression. It is also a good way to keep you fresh in their memory and differentiate yourself from other applicants.

Examples of inappropriate questions:

- What is your race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, political affiliation, marital status, opinion on abortion and/or euthanasia, income, value of your home, credit score, etc.?
- Are you planning on having children during medical school?
- Do you have any disabilities?
- Will you require special accommodations?
- Have you ever been arrested?
- Have you ever done drugs?
- How old are you?

Sample response to inappropriate questions:

- Q. What are your plans for expanding your family during medical school?
- A. Can you please clarify your question? I want to make sure that I'm providing information that is most relevant to my candidacy.
- Q. Have you ever done drugs?
- A. I am uncomfortable discussing my medical history and possible use of prescription medications during this interview.



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Lafayette-Specific Online Resources:

- InterviewStream: Lafayette.interviewstream.com
 - Set up your free account using your Lafayette email address
 - Conduct virtual mock interviews
 - Watch quick tutorials for strategies regarding how to respond to commonly asked questions
- Career Center Interviewing Webshops, Articles, & Other Resources:
 - <https://gateway.lafayette.edu/career-planning/interviewing/>
 - CareerSpot: Marquis' Favorites Resources (available via my.lafayette.edu)

Additional Helpful Links:

- AAMC Medical School Articles, Interview Worksheet & Other Key Resources:
 - <https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/applying-medical-school-process/deciding-where-apply/tools-medical-school-applicants/>
 - <https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/applying-medical-school-process/medical-school-interviews/>
 - <https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/selecting-medical-school-35-questions-i-wish-i-had/>
- Aspiring Docs (AAMC) Articles & Ask the Experts:
 - Preparing for Medical School Interviews: <https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/preparing-medical-school-interviews/>
 - "What's it like to participate in multiple mini interviews?": <https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/what-its-participate-multiple-mini-interviews-mmis/>
 - Ask the Experts: Preparing for Medical School Interviews: <https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/ask-the-experts/ask-experts-preparing-med-school-interviews/>
- University of Michigan MMI Interview Resources
<https://careercenter.umich.edu/article/mmi-resources>
- How to Prepare for MMIs (from StudentDoctor.net):
 - <https://www.studentdoctor.net/2018/08/08/preparing-for-multiple-mini-interviews/>
 - <https://www.studentdoctor.net/2017/08/30/multiple-mini-interview-mmi/>
 - <https://www.studentdoctor.net/2017/04/05/15870/>
- How to Ace Your Medical School Interview (presented by MedSchoolCoach):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hobbpRtbt8k>
- For Pre-Med Students:
 - The Premed Playbook Guide to the Medical School Interview (book)

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- To learn about different healthcare systems: <https://www.youtube.com/user/thehealthcatriage>
- Stay Up-to-Date on Current Events: The Daily: <https://www.nytimes.com/column/the-daily>
- For Pre-Dental Students:
 - The ASDA blog: <https://www.asdablog.com/category/pre dental/>
- For Pre-Veterinary Medicine Students:
 - <https://www.lifeinvetschool.com/2011/04/09/real-vet-school-interview-questions/>
 - <https://med.stanford.edu/content/dam/sm/compmed-eve/documents/prevet-applying/Questions2.pdf>
- To conduct a mock interview with a Gateway Counselor, call the Gateway Career Center (610-330-5115); schedule 1-2 weeks in advance.