

10 Mistakes to Avoid During Your Medical School Interview

Admissions Officers Hate to See These Blunders!

1 Don't assume that the interviewer knows how serious you are about becoming a doctor.

- You must demonstrate that you are fully committed to this field, and convey a clear sense of purpose in your professional goals.
- Admissions officers have a job. For medical school admissions officers, that job includes vetting and selecting the best possible students for their program.
 - » *One of the most important criteria by which these admissions officers are judged is the dropout rate. If 20% of the students that they admit end up dropping out midway through medical school, it reflects terribly on the admissions officers who selected them.*
- Medical students are extremely expensive. Medical schools pour hundreds of thousands – if not millions – into training their students.
 - » *Every time a student drops out, that money is wasted. Even the wealthiest medical schools cannot afford too many dropouts.*

2 Understand how difficult medical school and practicing medicine can be – and be able to explain why this isn't a problem for you.

- Admissions officers want to make absolutely certain that applicants know what they are getting themselves into.
 - » **TIP:** *You might consider talking with some current residents or recent residency graduates to figure out what the absolute worst parts about becoming a doctor are. You should probably know this for your own sake, but for the purposes of the interview, being well-informed about the downsides of medical school and practicing medicine is a huge asset.*
- Bottom line: make sure that you take a moment in your interview – if at all possible – to show that you know something about the challenges you will face, and that you are fully committed to facing them head-on.

3

Compassion is key – don't forget to show that you're human

- Shockingly, many students go into the interview too scared or too hyped-up to demonstrate a critical characteristic: compassion.
- Make sure that you don't ignore the human element of your candidacy.
- Admissions committees (at least for many of the top-ranked schools) sit and debate whether an applicant should be admitted.
 - » *If you have failed to convey your compassion and amiability during your interview, chances are good that your interviewer will not fight too hard if other members of the committee decide to pass on your application.*

4

A Student Interviewer is not an excuse to relax.

- Student interviewers are more likely to be an “interviewer-from-hell” than their senior counterparts.
 - » *They are eager to prove how rigorous and devoted they are, and that might translate to a much more aggressive and rigorous interview style.*
- Admissions committees do not send in student interviewers with the expectation that they will perform a different job than any other interviewer.
- This is an interview, not a social interaction, and trying to act like you're talking with a friend on the street will only make you seem unprofessional and unqualified.
- *Bottom line: keep it professional.

5

Know your application.

- Many interviewers will have your application right in front of them.
 - » *If you put something in the activities/experiences section of the AMCAS application, and can't remember what you wrote when your interviewer asks about it, you are going to look foolish, if not dishonest. This happens surprisingly often.*
- You should be able to recall every part of your application, so that you can talk about it fluently if and when you are asked.

6

Be honest about your weaknesses.

- Honesty and candor can make the difference between a great response and one which will, at best, do nothing for your chances of admission.
 - » *Your biggest weakness is not that you work too hard, care too much, take on too many challenges, are too hard on yourself, or any other strength-disguised-as-a-weakness.*
- Don't go nuts criticizing yourself.
- You can and should talk about things that you really do struggle with, and how you're working to improve on those things (this latter component is very important).
 - » *For example, maybe you are easily frustrated, have difficulty taking orders, or struggle to memorize long lists of details.*
 - » *What is important is that you recognize these things, and explain that (and how) you are working on improving them. This shows honesty, integrity, and maturity – all things which medical schools want to see in their students.*

7

Know the medical school.

- Do your homework.
- Make sure you know enough about the school to explain why you want to go there and to ask intelligent, insightful and meaningful questions.
- Don't ask questions you could easily answer just from looking at the website.
- Don't ask superficial questions that won't help you figure out if the medical school is a good fit for you.
- Think of meaningful and thoughtful questions that demonstrate that you already have a good handle on what the school is all about.

8

Be excited.

- Why travel all that way to your interview if you are not going to convey to the admissions committee, students and your interviewers how much and why you want to attend their medical school.
- There is nothing worse than someone who seems like they don't even want to be there on interview day.
- Nerves can sometimes get the best of you, but don't forget to tell people all of the reasons you really want to attend their medical school.
- This is not the time to be shy.
- Don't be overbearing and pandering, but make sure you state, clearly and with specifics, why you would be thrilled to attend their school.
 - » *Even if it's just because its your hometown, mention it.*

9

Get past the superficial.

- Interviews are your opportunity to get past the written application and go into depth about some of your experiences and characteristics.
- Never answer a question with single word answers.
- Know what you want the committee to know and feel about you.
 - » *Then answer questions with enough specific and vivid details for them to get to know you, but not so much detail that the interviewer is tuning you out.*
- Generally speaking your answer should be somewhere between 30 seconds to two minutes.
 - » ***TIP:** *Next time you are listening to someone speak in a normal conversation, keep a running tab of about how long someone typically speaks when you ask them a question.*

10

Answer the question.

- If someone asks you a question it is because they want the answer.
- If you don't answer the question it comes off as either avoiding the question or not listening.
 - » *Neither of these are traits or qualities you want to demonstrate to your interviewer.*
- If the question catches you off guard, you can't think of an answer, or you didn't understand the question - take a minute to think or ask for clarification.
 - » ***TIP:** *A good exercise is to paraphrase and repeat the question back in your own words. You will see this technique used by public speakers all the time: "Let me make sure I understand the question, you'd like to know....".*
 - » *This demonstrates active listening and gives you a moment to gather your thoughts.*
 - » *It will also help the interview feel like a conversation.*

A good interview entails a back and forth between interviewer and interviewee. This is your opportunity to demonstrate your communication skills, which are mandatory for the job of physician. For help preparing for your medical school interview, setup a consultation with an **InGenius Prep** medical school admissions expert.