

DENTAL SCHOOL | Timeline to apply

Adapted from ADEA

This is a general application timeline for students studying at a four-year undergraduate institution. This timeline should be used as a guideline and not as a concrete checklist. Make sure to talk with your advisor about your timeline, as he or she can help you develop one more specific to you.

FRESHMAN YEAR

- Meet with a prehealth advisor.
- Enroll in either biology or chemistry courses, as recommended by your advisor.
- Join a pre-dental or pre-health professions club at your school. This is a great opportunity to meet other like-minded students, network, become involved in community service and form study groups for your science courses. Meeting upper-class pre-dental students gives you the opportunity to learn about the dental school application process.
- Learn more about careers in the dental profession. Speak with your own dentist and learn more about the advantages and challenges of the profession. Based on what you learn, why does a career in dentistry appeal to you?
- Learn about personal finance. Does your university offer a course? Consider how your student budget, spending habits and use of credit cards impact your student loan debt. You may also want to look into scholarship and fellowship options. How can you balance a demanding academic schedule, work, and a comfortable, yet frugal, student lifestyle?

FRESHMAN YEAR—SUMMER

- Participate in a summer academic enrichment program like the Summer Medical and Dental Education Program (SMDEP). This program is a free (full tuition, housing and meals) six-week summer medical and dental school preparatory program that offers eligible students intensive and personalized medical and dental school preparation.
- Work or volunteer in a health care environment. Ideally, work in a dental office or clinic. Your goal is to gain exposure to the health care environment in general and to learn more about the work of dental professionals. Talk to practicing dentists, learn about the delivery of dental care, and find out about the issues impacting the profession.

SOPHOMORE YEAR

- Start thinking about selecting a major. Remember, you do not have to be a science major to attend dental school, but you do need to complete specific science courses.
- Work with your advisor to identify special opportunities for the upcoming summer. If you qualify and were unable to attend the previous summer, consider applying to an SMDEP program. Many universities and dental schools offer summer workshops to enhance study skills, to expose undergraduates to the profession, prepare for the Dental Admissions Test (DAT), and expose students to various fields of dental research. Check application deadlines.
- Become actively involved in your pre-dental club. Sign up for committee work, help organize events and participate in activities.

SOPHOMORE YEAR—SUMMER

- Participate in a summer program, enroll in summer school, or work/volunteer in the dental profession.
- Get a job! Keep that student loan debt as low as possible during your undergraduate years.
- Start putting together a financial plan for applying to dental school. Take into consideration fees for the DAT, the ADEA Associated American Dental Schools Application Service (ADEA AADSAS®) application, supplemental application fees to the dental schools, plus the cost of participating in on-site interviews.

JUNIOR YEAR

- Complete biology and chemistry courses in preparation for taking the DAT in late spring of your junior year.
- Review the dental school application process and create a timeline for the submission of your application materials. Most dental schools participate in ADEA AADSAS, the centralized dental school application service offered through ADEA. Look over the application and begin formulating your application information.
- Meet with your advisor to find out how your school handles letters of recommendation. Identify individuals who are willing to write letters of recommendation on your behalf and communicate submission deadlines to them. Be able to document your dental office observation experiences.
- Start making decisions about the type of dental school you want to attend: location, size of school, composition of the student body, curriculum and the program's emphasis. View websites and talk with classmates and upper-class students who are now enrolled in dental school.
- Participate in visitations from dental school admissions officers, visit dental schools and talk to dental students and admissions/minority affairs officers.
- Continue to actively participate in pre-dental organization activities.
- Identify a strategy to prepare for the DAT. Obtain a sample DAT test from the American Dental Association (no charge). Consider purchasing a DAT review book and/or a CD that offers sample tests. Some students opt to enroll in DAT review courses, offered at dental schools, colleges and universities, and private companies. Some of these courses are offered free of charge, while others are costly. If you decide to purchase a book, CD or participate in a commercial DAT preparation workshop, make sure the content matches the actual content of the DAT.
- Register for the DAT with the American Dental Association. After submitting your application, you will receive instructions for contacting a Prometric Testing Center to schedule your test date. The DAT is a computerized examination and can be taken at a date and time of your choosing. Your registration is valid for six months.
- The ideal time to take the DAT is at the end of the spring semester, junior year or immediately after you have completed your organic chemistry courses. If your test scores are not what you would like, you must wait 90 days to re-take the test. The DAT can only be taken up to three times, so plan to score well the first time you take the test.

JUNIOR YEAR—SUMMER

- Submit your ADEA AADSAS application, indicating the dental schools to which you want your application materials sent. The ADEA AADSAS application cycle generally opens on or around June 1. An early application significantly enhances your chances of having your application reviewed early. Don't procrastinate and let application deadlines sneak up on you!

- If possible, work, volunteer, or participate in a summer pre dental program at a dental school.
- Submit your ADEA AADSAS application.
- If you're retaking the DAT, have a study strategy in place. Remember, you must allow 90 days between test dates.

SENIOR YEAR

- Complete advanced science courses. Although most schools only require a year of biology, most dental students will tell you that additional courses, particularly in the biological sciences, prepare you better for the fast-paced dental school curriculum.
- Finish up all course requirements for your degree.
- Prepare to go on interviews. Participate in mock interviews offered by your pre-dental organization or career center.
- Obtain a good interviewing outfit. Professional business attire is the norm.
- Sometime after December 1, you will (hopefully) receive offers of admission. Depending on the date of an offer of admission, you will have specific response time. Most (but not all) schools require a deposit to reserve a space in the class at the time you accept the offer of admission.
- Initiate the financial aid application process to the dental school you choose to attend. Don't procrastinate! Many financial aid awards are based on the date of application. Work with your dental school's financial aid office to stay on top of the application process.
- Prepare for graduation!

SENIOR YEAR—SUMMER

- Prepare for your enrollment in dental school. This could mean participating in a prefreshman experience, working and earning a few more dollars before starting school or traveling and relaxing. Have fun!
- Brush up on your reading. Once you are in a dental program the amount of reading that you will do will be different from what you have as an undergraduate student. Try reading more books, magazines, newspapers, etc. Anything where you can work on reading speed and comprehension will help you prepare for dental school.
- Keep working on your hand skills. Continue to play your instrument, participate in your sporting activity, knit, etc. All those things that you were doing to demonstrate your hand skills, don't stop doing them once you have been accepted into dental school.
- Develop and maintain good healthy eating habits, work out on a regular basis, learn how to relax and find things that are fun to do.