So you matched to a residency program—now what?

MAR 30, 2022

Brendan Murphy
Senior News Writer

If you’re among the applicants who matched to a residency program this year, you’ve likely enjoyed some celebratory relief after two exhausting years of pandemic uncertainty.

As a medical student transitioning to residency, your life is going to change significantly in the coming months. What are the best steps to prepare for those changes in both a clinical and personal capacity so that you can thrive in residency?

1 Ponder your relocation priorities
For many graduating medical students, the excitement of Match Day is quickly followed by the anticipation and uncertainty of relocating for residency. You’ll need a new home that balances meeting the demands of clinical training with achieving family, financial and lifestyle goals.

In terms of your living arrangement, your options are likely going to fall into three areas: buying—which can be a tall task during residency—renting with roommates and renting on your own. The ideal is to spend no more than 25–35% of monthly income on housing. You also may want to remember to factor commute time into your house hunt.

2 Use your remaining time in medical school wisely
Match Day marks the end of a rigorous academic journey before another begins. Often, graduation and some much-needed downtime are in the near future. While some medical students have already completed their coursework by Match Day, many others
have a month or more remaining in medical school. Learn how to use that time well. If you are the type who plans ahead, you might want to think about how you will use that limited time off you get during your intern year.

3 Prepare your medical residency budget
Housing is one big fixed cost, of course. Following the right advice on other questions of income and expense can allow you to focus more of your mental energy on getting the most out of your training. For those who have the discipline to save on a resident’s income, follow these tips.

4 Have an idea about financial wellness
What you earn as a resident will be a fraction of your physician income down the road, but it is the beginning of your journey to financial maturity. Taking the right steps means understanding what your loan repayment will look like in the immediate future and what your refinance options are. Learn more about the financial goals and hurdles resident physicians face during this episode of the “Making the Rounds” podcast.

5 Know what’s expected of you
Published by the Association of American Medical Colleges, the Core Entrustable Professional Activities for Entering Residency provides a set of tasks learners should be able to perform upon beginning their graduate medical education. Which of those tasks are most vital on day one? To meet those expectations, one veteran physician gives you some key tips and tools you’ll need on the floors. That includes having a pair of good socks.

6 Make the most of your precious free time
As a resident physician working long shifts and running short on free time, accomplishing the everyday tasks can seem to require extraordinary efforts. Understand how residents find time to get their painstaking daily tasks done. If you are the type who likes to get an exercise routine in place, find out how other residents get it done.
Plan now for the USMLE Step 3
Finding time to study for the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) Step 3 can be difficult for residents in the busy first year of residency, often referred to as intern year. Heed these tips for balancing test preparations with rotations to ensure better understanding of the subject matter and boost scores.??

Also, keep in mind that the AMA provides resources to help recent medical graduates obtain their medical licenses and study for licensure exams.

Seek smart advice for the challenges ahead
As you warm up to life as a medical resident, you will learn that practicing medicine is only part science. Some lessons cannot be gleaned from a textbook or lecture. To get that insight, it is wise to speak to physicians you admire and your future attendings.

Learn how the AMA Resident and Fellow Section gives voice to, and advocates for, the issues that affect resident and fellow physicians.