As a medical student, the residency application process is the first step in charting your life as a physician. On the whole, the medical residency match process can be overwhelming. Breaking it into phases—essentially, understanding what you should be doing and when—can make it more manageable.

Here’s a look at the benchmarks and steps you should keep in mind as you search for the right residency program.

**Step 1: The leg work**

The final months of your third year of medical school and the ensuing summer should be spent making sure you have your ducks in a row. Some key tasks include:

- Finalizing letters of recommendation and providing each letter of recommendation author their letter-request form.
- Crafting a personal statement and comprehensive CV.
- Obtaining your token for the Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS), a service that transmits students’ residency program applications and key information from their designated dean’s office to program directors.

**Step 2: Information gathering**

Narrowing down the type of program you want to work in is about researching your options and understanding your own wants and needs. You can begin gathering specialty information from FREIDA™ and exploring residency programs as early your second year in medical school. When you
have more context on your career path, you begin a deeper dive.

FREIDA, the AMA’s comprehensive residency and fellowship database, captures more than 11,000 Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME)-accredited residency programs, and it has a new look and feel that offers a streamlined user experience.

One major benefit of FREIDA is that it includes a personalized search experience, with more than 35 filters that allow users to sort programs by location (via Google Maps), program type, application information, demographics, benefits, Osteopathic Recognition, special tracks and more. FREIDA’s members-only dashboard helps users save, rank and keep notes on each program.

Step 3: Begin the application/match process

Med students can start applying to programs accredited by ACGME in early September through ERAS. Around that time, students should also register for the National Resident Matching Program (NRMP) Main Residency Match. Students interested in the couples match, San Francisco Match or the urology match can apply for programs at this time. If you’re an osteopathic applicant interested in AOA-accredited programs, you should register for the AOA Intern/Resident Registration Program over the summer.

Step 4: Interviewing

Interview invitations typically start coming in early October, but they can arrive well into November. If you have fewer than 10 invitations by the final days of October, the Association of American Medical Colleges recommends contacting an advisor at your institution to discuss your options.

When you do go to an interview, be sure to be ready to ask questions. Don’t forget to send thank-you notes following each interview.

Step 5: Ranking

The interview process should give you some idea how you fit at each program. Deciding where you could see yourself is very individualized. The NRMP’s match ranking process opens in January and the deadline to certify and submit final ranking lists is typically in mid-February. Remember, the match process is binding, so you shouldn’t rank any program you don’t intend to work in.

URL: https://www.ama-assn.org/residents-students/match/residency-match-made-simple-m4-pgy-1-6-steps
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Step 6: Waiting

This can be the hardest part. Take solace in the numbers—as a graduate of a U.S. medical school, you'll probably match. On Monday of Match Week—the third week of March—you will find out if you matched. By that Friday, you'll know where.

If you don’t match, the Supplemental Offer and Acceptance Program can help. It is a vehicle through which eligible unmatched applicants in the Main Residency Match apply for and are offered positions that were not filled when the matching algorithm was initially processed.