

Virtual medical school interviews: What premeds should know

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The 2021 medical school application cycle will be the first in which candidates are interviewed entirely through virtual platforms.

How should applicants adjust to this new normal? By preparing and adapting.

The technical side

Medical schools are conducting interviews on a number of platforms and in a number of formats—including prerecorded video interviews.

A webinar on virtual interviews hosted by the Association of American Medical Colleges highlights some of the most important technical aspects of a virtual interview. Among them:

- Find a suitable environment in which you can participate in a virtual interview.
- Practice with the hardware—computer, tablet—and platform on which you plan to conduct the interview.
- Have a plan B, such as contact number or email at the institution, if you experience technical problems during the interview.

Interview content

Technical mishaps during virtual interviews are expected and can be overcome. Not having answers when it comes to interview questions is another matter.

Medical school interviews will take on many formats. The medical schools with which you interview should offer some guidance on interview content.

In terms of the content, schools are looking for responses that show a prospective student is prepared to succeed on day one of medical school. To discover that, schools may ask behavioral questions that call for an applicant to draw from prior experiences or situational questions that put them in hypothetical situations to determine how they would react. The goal is to measure the applicant's competencies for entering medical school.?

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How to succeed

At the University of Michigan Medical School, applicants will participate in a hybrid interview format in which they spend about 30 minutes interviewing with a faculty member then speak to other interviewers in a more abridged format—similar to a multiple mini-interview.

Although the format may be different, what schools are looking for remains the same. So, too, does the advice admissions officers would offer to premeds.

“It important for the interviewees to be true themselves,” said Steven Gay, MD, assistant dean for admissions at University of Michigan Medical School. “Not to try to be all things to all people. What in their personal life has driven them to a life of medicine?”

Interviewees should also expect the topic of COVID-19 to come up and have some plan to address their experiences during the pandemic and how that has informed their decision to pursue a career in medicine.

“None of us have experienced anything like this,” Dr. Gay said. “I don't think any of us could prepare for this. But when put in times of difficulty, what you work to become is important.”