



Compare Medical Schools

HOW TO MAKE YOUR MEDICAL SCHOOL LIST

Learn how to maximize your chances of attending your dream medical school





Before Making Your List

Complete pre-medical prerequisite courses

These courses vary depending on which medical schools you are applying to. The standards are rapidly changing from rigid requirements to competency based requirements, where applicants just need to demonstrate proficiency in certain scientific disciplines. In general, prerequisite courses include:

- Two semesters of biology with lab
- Two semesters of general chemistry with lab
- Two semesters of organic chemistry with labs
- Two semesters of physics with labs
- One semester of biochemistry
- Two semesters of mathematics (calculus and statistics)
- Two semesters of writing
- Two semesters of humanities/social/behavioral science (recommended)

Take the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT) at least 2 months before the cycle in which you want to apply.

Request letters of recommendation (LORs) from professors who have taught you as well as from mentors and leaders involved in your meaningful extracurricular activities.

Minimum requirements:

- 2 letters from science professors
- 1 letter from a non-science professor



Medical School List

Decide where you want to apply.

.....

By this point, you have completed hours of studying, volunteering, shadowing, and likely 100 other things! Making a strong medical school is a critical (and often undervalued) aspect of the admissions process.

You are able to maximize your chances for success (regarding secondary applications, interviews, and acceptances) while lowering excess spending in the application process by generating a list that matches your medical school application. For that, we highlight a few key considerations.

Questions to consider:

- When do I want to apply to medical school?
Do I want to take a gap year? Do I want to take more than one gap year before entering medical school?
- What qualities do I seek in a medical school?
Location
Curriculum
Cost of Attendance

Factors to consider (for yourself):

- GPA
Cumulative
Science (BCPM)
Trend in GPA
- MCAT
Scores in each section
Number of attempts
- Why am I pursuing a career in medicine?
This relates to aspects like the personal statement for the primary application.
- Undergraduate Institution
- State of Residency
- Money Limitations

Factors to consider (for each school):

- Quantitative characteristics
Location and "Fit"
School Curriculum Emphasis
Scholarships
Service Opportunities
Community Engagement

In truth, there isn't a "correct" way to make your medical school list.

.....

On the one hand, you don't want to apply to too few schools because you want to apply broadly. Taking into consideration your application profile, you ought to apply broadly since the medical school application process is competitive. To a point, applying to more schools can increase your chances of acceptance.

Conversely, you should be careful about applying to too many schools since there is a point of diminishing returns, where you might not be increasing your chances of admission by spreading yourself too thin and not spending enough time on each application.

The more primary applications you complete, the more secondary applications you will also have to complete. Additionally, by applying to more schools, you may be invited to more interviews. All of this amounts to increasing costs.

On average, a student applies to approximately 16 schools.

Of these schools, there are a mix of reach, match, and safety schools.





Affordability

In-state vs. out-of-state tuition

In terms of medical school tuition costs, there can be a substantial difference between attending a medical school in your state of residence vs. attending a school in a different state, depending on whether the school is public or private. In the U.S., there are only six states without an allopathic (MD) medical school, and those states have made special interstate agreements to provide opportunities for their residents to receive in-state tuition in a state in their region.

According to AAMC data, for the 2018-2019 academic year the median tuition cost for an in-state public medical school was \$32,761. The median tuition for an out-of-state student at a public school was \$58,958. This means that typically it costs students \$26,197 more to attend an out-of-state public medical school than in-state. However, for private schools, the median cost for an out-of-state student is only \$1,164 more than an in-state student (\$56,970 vs. \$55,806 for out-of-state vs. in-state).

When making your list, you will have to consider which types of schools you want to apply to (public vs. private), because even the cheapest private schools can far exceed the costs of an in-state public school.

Basically, your cheapest option is to attend your in-state public school, which is usually going to be significantly cheaper than attending a public school as an out-of-state applicant or any private medical school.

Cost of living

Tuition is only one aspect of the medical school financial burden. In addition to tuition costs, students must pay fees and health insurance, as well as costs associated with living in a given city. Cost of living expenses can vary depending on the city, taking into account a few factors: rent, food, cost of travel and transportation, and whether you will need a car to get around. Some schools could have comparable tuition costs but highly disparate costs of living which could tip the scales in favor of one school over another.



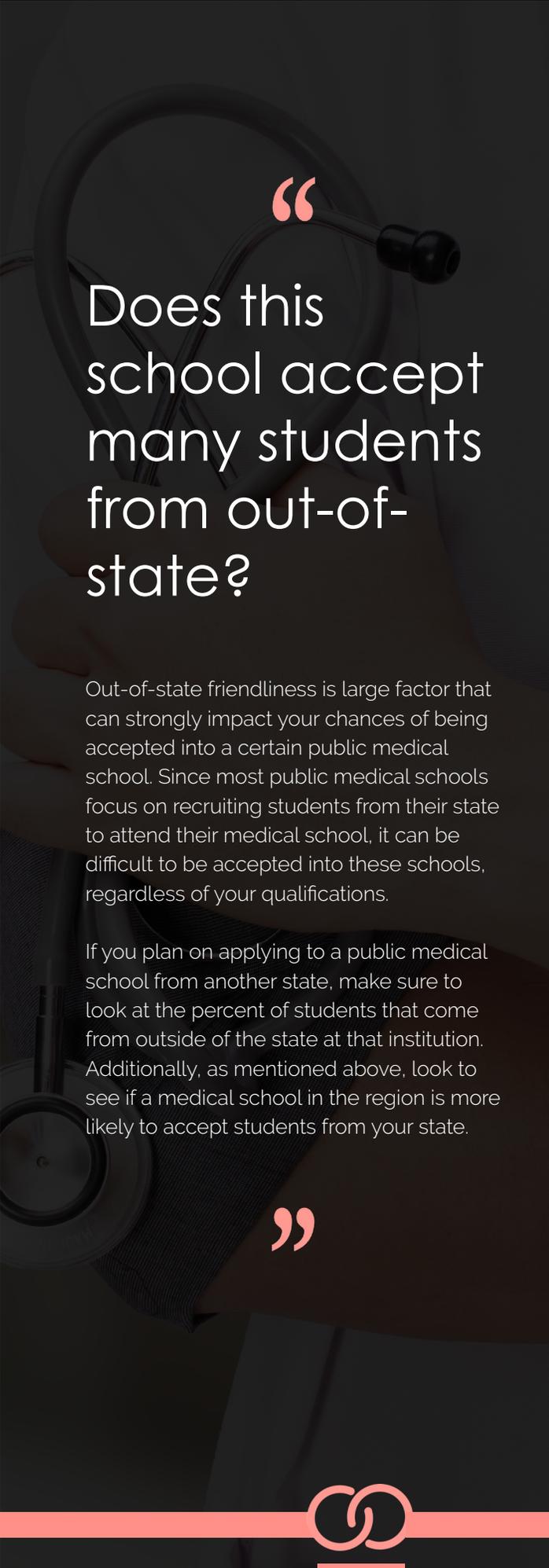
Merit scholarships and financial aid

The process for applying for financial aid in medical school is similar to the process in undergrad. Students are required to fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), after which they will be able to qualify for the Direct Unsubsidized Loan and Grad PLUS Loan. Students are able to borrow up to \$40,500 per year for medical school using Direct Unsubsidized Loans at a fixed interest rate of 6.6%, and students will not be required to make payments while in school. The Grad PLUS loan has flexible loan amounts at a fixed 7.6% interest rate, as well as flexible repayment and deferment options. Universities will also be able to use FAFSA to determine if students qualify for institutional grants and loans.

Some medical schools also offer merit-based scholarships. These can require additional applications after acceptance to the medical school, additional applications after submitting primary and secondary applications, or applicants could be automatically considered for merit scholarships. The Compare Medical Schools database also offers a list of available scholarships at different schools to help begin your search.

The impact of medical school debt

2018 AAMC data show that the average medical student will graduate from medical school with a median debt level of approximately \$200,000. While medical schools around the country aim to decrease the debt burden for medical school students, the path to becoming a doctor is undoubtedly an expensive one. Although the data are mixed, knowing that you are going to take on hundreds of thousands of dollars in debt for medical education might change which residency programs you will apply to post-graduation, likely opting to specialty tracks of general or family medicine tracks. We see this trend at expensive private schools who train a disproportionate number of specialists vs. generalists, which ultimately impacts the equity of the US healthcare delivery system.



“
Does this
school accept
many students
from out-of-
state?”

Out-of-state friendliness is large factor that can strongly impact your chances of being accepted into a certain public medical school. Since most public medical schools focus on recruiting students from their state to attend their medical school, it can be difficult to be accepted into these schools, regardless of your qualifications.

If you plan on applying to a public medical school from another state, make sure to look at the percent of students that come from outside of the state at that institution. Additionally, as mentioned above, look to see if a medical school in the region is more likely to accept students from your state.

”



The Role of MCAT and GPA

MCAT and GPA are considered two of the biggest factors in the medical school admissions process. Due to the various routes of becoming a physician, the MCAT is used as a way to compare aptitude on a standardized scale. While the difficulty to obtain a certain GPA may vary at different institutions, someone's GPA may provide insight on one's competence in classes and willingness to work to acquire knowledge.

- GPA is broken down into two smaller subsections: overall GPA and science GPA. Since medical school is constant engagement in high level scientific content, admissions committees often times will emphasize the science GPA to better understand how a student does when tested on scientific material.

MCAT and GPA are important factors that must be considered when making a medical school list. It is typically recommended to apply primarily to schools that have average MCAT and GPAs scores and percentiles close to your MCAT and GPA. If your scores deviate greatly from the average matriculation statistics, then it can be difficult to be accepted a certain medical school.

Does the medical school emphasize my interests and passions?

It is a common misconception to believe that all medical schools are the same. While the same material is covered and many of the activities are similar, it is important to note the emphasis of a medical school. Does the medical school you are looking at focus on research or is it more interested in serving underserved populations? The focus of a medical school may change your entire experience.

The focus of a certain medical school is oftentimes a large reason that the medical school ranking should not be given much consideration. A highly ranked school may have a strong research emphasis, but they may not serve a wide variety of patients.

Knowing the emphasis of a medical school and the emphasis of your application can help you become a stronger applicant. If in your application and interview you are able to show how this certain medical school will help you pursue your interests, then you may have a greater chance of being accepted!

What dictates the vibe of a school?

Many individuals will often say the vibe of the school is one of the reasons they chose a certain medical school over another one; however, how can I know what the vibe is like without attending? The best way to know vibe is to ask students at this medical school and asking a lot of questions about school culture when visiting for interviews and second looks (days that medical schools invite acceptees to visit the school to help convince them to attend). Some factors that may affect vibe are matriculation size (the total number of students in a medical school class), how most students spend their free time, or if many students come from similar areas or institutions.



MD vs DO Schools

As you approach the medical school application process, it is likely that you will have exposure to physicians who have either an MD or a DO. To understand how to best make your medical school list, it is imperative to understand the difference between allopathic (AKA MD) schools and osteopathic (AKA DO) schools.

Philosophical Difference

While there are many commonalities between MD and DO schools like similar curriculum. It is important to note the differences in philosophies. While we do outline some differences, it is important to note that they are not mutually exclusive for the individual schools.

- MD schools philosophy is commonly associated with a science-based place focused on diagnosing and treating medical conditions.
- DO schools, however, tend to focus on a holistic approach and focus heavily on prevention. DO schools will teach osteopathic manipulative treatment, or a hands-on technique where physicians will move the muscles and joints in a certain way to promote healing. Many DO schools will require students to dedicate at least 200 hours on osteopathic manipulative treatment.

Admissions Statistics

DO schools historically have had lower average MCAT and GPA scores than MD schools. While this does not make a DO physician any less of a doctor than a MD physician, it is important to note when making your medical school list, so that you can make as strong of a list as possible.

Logistics

In medical school, MD students will take the USMLE series of exams while DO students will take the COMLEX series of exams. DO physicians also have the option to take the USMLE series as well, but this can be a time-intensive process. These scores are crucial in the residency application process. Currently, almost all MD students must apply for residency through the National Resident Matching Program. On the other hand, DO students have the option to apply through the National Resident Matching Program and/or through a DO-specific residency matching. In 2018, senior allopathic graduates had a match rate of 94.3 % through the National Resident Matching Program while osteopathic students applying through the same program had a match rate of 81.7%. In 2020, however, there will be an accreditation and match merge. This means that all students must apply for residency through the National Resident Matching Program and this is likely to affect the match rates for both MD and DO students.



Pay Difference

Many students wonder whether having an MD or DO will affect their salary. Typically, salary has no association with degree. Rather, a physician's salary depends more on his or her specialty. The majority of DO physicians practice in family medicine, internal medicine, or pediatrics while many MD physicians will specialize in these fields or enter surgery.

Applications

If you chose to apply to DO schools, it is important to not think of them as safety schools where you can just send a copy of MD application. DO schools often want to understand why you would like to specifically pursue a DO degree and making that clear in your application is crucial.

Primary Application

The AAMC application opens on May 1st

- When the applications, you will be allowed to start filling out the required information including: personal information, activities, honors, personal statement, letters of recommendation, grades

The first day you are allowed to submit your primary application is May 30th.





Compare Medical Schools

At Compare Medical Schools, we aim to level the playing field for students interested in becoming physicians. We understand how difficult it can be to have reliable information for all questions related to pre-medicine.

At comparemedicalschoools.com, you can find a variety of resources.

We have multiple pages outlining information about gap years, medical school interviews, etc. These pages can be a great way to increase your knowledge.

We offer free pre-medical advising for students. This advising can be a great way to answer specific questions that you have about your personal medical school journey as well as learn about ways to strengthen your medical school application.

Additionally, there is a common misconception that all medical schools are more or less the same. We want to help students realize that attending the right medical school for them is important. Therefore, we have created an expansive database for MD and DO schools that allows students to learn more about the medical school in the United States. We include median GPA, median MCAT, scholarship opportunities, service programs, USMLE scores, residency match quality, out of state friendliness, school emphasis, and many more categories.