A list of typical professional school interview questions

It is important to practice answering interview questions out loud. Going over your answers in your head is not enough! Remember that your answers will be far more meaningful and memorable if you share brief anecdotes and specific examples that support the statements you make, rather than relying on generalizations that could apply to anyone.

1. Questions centering on your motivation and the testing of your motivation:
   - Why do you want to be a doctor (optometrist/dentist/nurse/PA, etc.)?
   - When did your interest in this profession first arise? What other experiences confirmed this interest?
   (Note that general statements about liking science or wanting to help people are insufficient. You must provide specific examples about ways you have confirmed your interest in your intended career. Take time to practice your answer to this question. It is a very common first question for interviewers to ask.)

2. Questions centering on related careers you have not chosen:
   - Why not a career as a dentist/physician assistant/nurse/etc.?
   - Why not a career in research?
   - If you want to help people, why not become a minister or a psychologist or a teacher?

3. Questions centering on your understanding of professional school:
   - Why do you think you will do well in vet school?
   - What makes for a good nursing student?

4. Questions centering on your vision for your career:
   - What would you like to be doing ten years from now?
   - Do you know which specialty you would like to pursue? (Note: in answering this question, it is okay to say that you are going in with an open mind, but if you state that you are definitely interested in a particular specialty, you should be able to back that up with meaningful clinical experience you have gained in that specialty.)

5. Questions that investigate your life choices:
   - Why did you choose your particular major?
   - Why did you take time off after college?

6. Questions centering on the nature of your support groups (because these have been shown to be essential for success in professional school):
   - What is your family like?/What are your friends like? Do they support your decision?

7. Questions centering on your likes and dislikes, and how you perform under adverse conditions:
   - What is the biggest adversity you have overcome?
   - What was the best experience in your life?
   - What was the worst experience in your life?
8. Questions centering on your ability to engage in realistic self-evaluation:
   • What are your strong points?
   • What are your weak points? (You do need to be able to discuss your weaknesses. Pretending you have none is not believable, and you should not take the easy way out by giving yourself a backhanded compliment, such as “I am a perfectionist.” What you should do is to acknowledge an area of weakness, but also to identify how you are working on getting better in that area. Think about how you might answer this type of question ahead of time, as it can be difficult to answer on the fly.)

9. Questions centering on your outside interests. These types of questions might be looking into ways that you exhibit intellectual curiosity outside of your academic work, or ways that you deal with stress.
   • What are the last two non-school books you have read? Did you like them? Why did you like them?
   • What do you do for relaxation?

10. Questions centering on poor performance in the past, to assess if you have learned from them and have become more resilient, as a result:
    • I see that your grades in your sophomore year took a hit. What happened?

11. Questions centering on how you react to people and how you have thought about your experience:
    • During your clinical experiences, what kinds of people have been the most challenging patients for you to deal with? What kinds of people have you found most rewarding to work with?

12. Questions centering on how realistic and committed you are:
    • What will you do if you are not accepted this year?

13. Questions centering on current issues pertaining to healthcare:
    • What are your thoughts on healthcare reform?
    • How do you feel about doctor-assisted suicide/rising obesity rates/abortion/ genetic engineering/etc.?

14. Questions asking for your response to ethical dilemmas. (Note: there are no “correct” answers here; by definition, ethical dilemmas have two competing viewpoints that can be argued as ethically valid from both sides. The important thing is to respectfully acknowledge both sides of the argument. They are looking to see how flexible, opinionated, respectful, or innovative you are):
    • A 15-year old girl comes in to see you. She is pregnant and does not want her parents to know. What would you do?
    • A 70-year old woman has terminal cancer and wants to die, but her family wants you to do everything possible to prolong her life. What would you do?