

## Dentistry: Quick Facts

<p><b>Is this career right for you?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you enjoy taking science courses, but also enjoy drawing, painting, and/or sculpting?</li> <li>• Do you enjoy working with your hands?</li> <li>• Would you like to have the opportunity to work in private practice and hold standard business hours?</li> <li>• Would you have compassion for patients who tend to be fearful when they see you for treatment?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Degree</b></p>	<p>D.D.S. and D.M.D.</p> <p>Each dental school offers only one or the other; the two degrees are considered to be identical. (There are historical reasons for the two names, but there is no functional difference.)</p>
<p><b>Dual Degree Options</b></p>	<p>A few dental schools offer dual degree programs for their dental students. Typically, dual degree programs take one to four years longer to complete than going to dental school alone, but take less time than completing each degree separately. (Note: Some of the schools that do not offer dual degree programs do offer more than one type of degree, but students have to complete each separately.)</p> <p>A sampling of dental dual degree programs includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• D.D.S./Ph.D. or D.M.D./Ph.D.: for people who want to have a very strong research component to their work, in addition to providing patient care</li> <li>• D.D.S./M.B.A. or D.M.D./M.B.A.: for people who want formal business training in addition to clinical training. These people often take on healthcare management roles in their careers</li> <li>• D.D.S./M.S. in Dental Public Health: for people who want training in Public Health in addition to direct patient care. These people generally opt for careers in community health planning to affect dental outcomes for entire populations in addition to clinically treating individuals.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Length of Professional Training</b></p>	<p>Dental school takes four years. After completing your dental degree, you may choose to go straight into practice. Some dentists choose to undertake a dental residency, either to gain advanced training as a general dentist or to become a specialist. Dental residencies take an additional one to six years to complete, depending on the field you choose.</p>

<p><b>Pre-Dental Clinical Experience</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Shadowing</b> is defined as the observation of a health care provider while that person cares for patients. We recommend spending ½ to 1 day <i>each</i> with the following types of clinicians: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A general dentist</li> <li>○ A dental hygienist in a general dentistry practice</li> <li>○ A dentist in a specialty area (such as in endodontics, oral and maxillofacial surgery, orthodontics, pediatric dentistry, periodontics, or prosthodontics)</li> <li>○ A dentist in another specialty area</li> <li>○ One other clinician in a related field (such as medicine, podiatry, optometry, etc.)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Direct patient interaction</b> is defined as being in a position to offer comfort and moral support to conscious patients in a dental clinic while assisting a dentist. Most successful applicants have spent <i>at least one year volunteering for 4 hours/week</i> (often more) as a dental assistant. On-the-job training is usually available for volunteer positions of this type. Your objectives are to become comfortable around dental patients (who are often quite nervous), to gain insight into the business of running a dental clinic, and to develop your communication skills in a clinical setting.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Other Desired Traits and Experiences</b></p>	<p>Refer to the <b>List of Core Competencies for Pre-Health Students</b>, taking note that dental schools especially emphasize the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Manual Dexterity:</b> Examples of activities that demonstrate that you have the fine motor skills and eye-hand coordination needed to be successful as a dentist are painting, drawing, sewing, model building, crafts, playing musical instruments, and auto repair.</li> <li>• <b>Service Orientation:</b> Dentists typically have strong altruistic motivations. Most successful applicants have consistently engaged in paid and volunteer positions involving non-clinical service to others since high school. Examples include retail/restaurant jobs, working as a tutor, and volunteering in roles that allows you to directly help others who are in need. Greater consideration is given to long-term efforts that exemplify the applicant’s dedication and depth of commitment to the service chosen.</li> <li>• <b>Cultural Sensitivity:</b> Every dentist cares for patients from a wide variety of racial, ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Thus, a history of experiences with people of diverse backgrounds is valued. Such experiences may include living abroad for a period of time, involvement with multicultural organizations, or other volunteer or paid positions that have allowed you to understand and appreciate people whose backgrounds and belief systems are quite different from your own.</li> <li>• <b>Effective Teamwork and Leadership:</b> Dentists must serve as both leaders and collaborators, so dental schools seek candidates who work well in a team and can serve as effective leaders. Thus, dental schools look for a history of collaborating successfully with others on a team in a professional setting (such as in research, business, etc.) as well as formal leadership training and experience. Examples of formal leadership roles include serving as a teaching assistant, a resident assistant in a dormitory, a wilderness guide, a manager at work, the captain of an athletic team, or an officer in the military.</li> <li>• <b>Scientific Inquiry:</b> Your future work as a dentist will require you to use strong critical thinking skills on the job and to remain committed to lifelong learning. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ One way to demonstrate your personal commitment to self-directed learning would be to educate yourself on the relationship between oral health and systemic health (see Reading List)</li> <li>○ Getting involved in an independent study project or another form of research is a great way to demonstrate that you enjoy asking new questions and to gain formal practice in critically analyzing your results and presenting your findings. Research is defined as involvement in a scholarly or scientific hypothesis investigation that is supervised by an individual with verifiable research credentials. Although involvement in research is not an absolute requirement, many successful applicants have spent at least one semester working/volunteering as a research assistant, in a role that offers true intellectual engagement (i.e., attendance at lab meetings/journal club meetings, completion of a literature review, etc.).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<p><b>GPA</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mean <i>cumulative</i> GPA of accepted students nationwide: 3.5</li> <li>• Mean <i>science*</i> GPA of accepted students nationwide: 3.5</li> </ul> <p>Although it is ideal to apply with mean cumulative and science GPAs at or above the nationwide means for accepted students, you can become a strong candidate with lower GPAs <i>if your recent academic history demonstrates a long-term trend of academic success.</i></p> <p>If your cumulative and/or science GPAs are currently below the means for accepted students, you can still become a competitive applicant if each of your term GPAs <i>for the four consecutive terms leading up to the time of application</i> are at or above 3.5. If you have already completed the prerequisites, consider completing additional semesters of upper-division science elective courses or completing a one-year pre-health master's program before applying to dental school.</p> <p><i>*Science GPA is defined as your average GPA in all biology, chemistry, and physics courses. (CU Boulder prefixes of EBIO, IPHY, MCDB, NRSC, CHEM, and PHYS.) Writing and Statistics courses taken in these departments do not count toward your science GPA.</i></p>
<p><b>Admissions Test</b></p>	<p>DAT: Dental Admissions Test The sections of the DAT are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General Biology</li> <li>• General Chemistry</li> <li>• Organic Chemistry</li> <li>• Perceptual Ability</li> <li>• Reading Comprehension</li> <li>• Quantitative Reasoning</li> </ul> <p>On average, successful DAT test-takers devote ~300 hours to dedicated DAT test preparation, <i>after</i> completing the relevant biology and chemistry coursework.</p> <p>On March 1, 2025, the DAT grading scale will switch from a score range of 1-30 points to a new score range of 200-600 points. Once that change is made, test-takers will no longer receive an unofficial score report on the day of the test.</p>
<p><b>Common Application Services</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ADEA AADSAS (Associated American Dental Schools Application Service): Opens early June each year, for the following year's entering class (i.e. 15 months later)</li> </ul> <p>And if you are applying to dental schools in Texas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some of these schools participate in AADSAS.</li> <li>• Others only participate in TMDSAS (Texas Medical and Dental School Application Service): Opens early May each year, for the following year's entering class (i.e. 16 months later)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Application Fee Assistance Program</b></p>	<p>The ADEA offers an application fee assistance program that covers the cost of sending the AADSAS application to three dental schools. (Applicants must cover the cost of any additional school designations.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eligibility: You and your immediate family members (including your parents) must collectively earn less than three times the poverty level for your family size. Dependent status doesn't matter.</li> <li>• Apply early for the Fee Assistance Program! You may apply for the Fee Assistance Program as soon as the AADSAS application opens in your application year. You must wait until you've received your FAP decision before submitting your AADSAS application. (If you submit the AADSAS application while the FAP decision is pending, your request for fee assistance will automatically be denied.) While you wait for their answer, you can be working on the AADSAS application and have it ready to go. Allow one to two weeks for the decision to be made.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Reference Guide (for school selection)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ADEA Official Guide to Dental Schools (book)</li> <li>• ADEA Dental School Explorer (digital version with same information)</li> </ul> <p>Both available for purchase through the American Dental Education Association website.</p>										
<p><b>Number of schools to which to apply</b></p>	<p>We recommend applying to a total of 9 to 10 schools. Do not apply to more than 15 schools, as you simply won't have enough time in the summer to complete the additional essays in your supplementary applications in a careful, thoughtful, and timely manner.</p> <p><i>A note about public vs. private dental schools:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At private schools, all applicants are in the same evaluation pool. In contrast, many public dental schools give strong preference to applicants who are residents of their state. This preference can work in your favor at your in-state school(s) but against you at public schools in other states, where all out-of-state applicants must compete for a small number of seats allocated for out-of-staters. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In the ADEA Dental School Explorer, each school listing provides the number of in-state and out-of-state applicants and matriculants. You can use that information to calculate in-state and out-of-state application success rates.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• If you are a resident of a state that does not have a dental school of its own, there is likely a public dental school in a different state that has agreed to consider the residents of your state to be honorary in-state residents for admission and tuition purposes.</li> </ul>										
<p><b>Timing of Application</b></p>	<p>Dental schools conduct their admissions processes on a rolling basis, which means that <i>early applicants have a substantially greater chance of acceptance than those who apply later in the application season</i>. You will be considered an early applicant if you submit your common application in the first month of the application season and follow the timeline below.</p> <p><b>Strongly recommended dental school application timeline:</b></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="451 968 1484 1911"> <tr> <td data-bbox="451 968 721 1203"> <p><b>Take DAT</b></p> </td> <td data-bbox="721 968 1484 1203"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By end of June of application year</li> </ul> <p><i>May be taken <b>after</b> submitting common application, if necessary, though it is preferable to take the test and know your score <b>before</b> you submit your common application (see below). Score reports are released three weeks after the test date</i></p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="451 1203 721 1308"> <p><b>Start Common App, Submit Transcripts</b></p> </td> <td data-bbox="721 1203 1484 1308"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TMSAS: First week of May (for following year's entering class)</li> <li>• AADSAS: First week of June (for following year's entering class)</li> </ul> </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="451 1308 721 1402"> <p><b>Submit Common Application</b></p> </td> <td data-bbox="721 1308 1484 1402"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By mid-June</li> </ul> </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="451 1402 721 1812"> <p><b>Submit Supplemental Applications</b></p> </td> <td data-bbox="721 1402 1484 1812"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some dental schools ask you to complete supplemental application information (essays, etc.) within AADSAS. We recommend initially submitting your AADSAS application with <i>just one school designation of this type</i> by the date listed above, so that AADSAS can initiate your transcript verification process. Meanwhile, you can take an additional 2-3 weeks to add your remaining schools, complete their supplemental materials, and re-submit. By then, your transcript verification should be complete, so your additional schools will immediately receive your verified application.</li> <li>• Other schools will only prompt you to complete a supplemental application after they have reviewed the rest of your application. For these schools, complete the supplemental application within two weeks of being prompted to do so.</li> </ul> </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="451 1812 721 1911"> <p><b>Letters of Recommendation submitted</b></p> </td> <td data-bbox="721 1812 1484 1911"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All submitted on your behalf by end of July</li> </ul> </td> </tr> </table>	<p><b>Take DAT</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By end of June of application year</li> </ul> <p><i>May be taken <b>after</b> submitting common application, if necessary, though it is preferable to take the test and know your score <b>before</b> you submit your common application (see below). Score reports are released three weeks after the test date</i></p>	<p><b>Start Common App, Submit Transcripts</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TMSAS: First week of May (for following year's entering class)</li> <li>• AADSAS: First week of June (for following year's entering class)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Submit Common Application</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By mid-June</li> </ul>	<p><b>Submit Supplemental Applications</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some dental schools ask you to complete supplemental application information (essays, etc.) within AADSAS. We recommend initially submitting your AADSAS application with <i>just one school designation of this type</i> by the date listed above, so that AADSAS can initiate your transcript verification process. Meanwhile, you can take an additional 2-3 weeks to add your remaining schools, complete their supplemental materials, and re-submit. By then, your transcript verification should be complete, so your additional schools will immediately receive your verified application.</li> <li>• Other schools will only prompt you to complete a supplemental application after they have reviewed the rest of your application. For these schools, complete the supplemental application within two weeks of being prompted to do so.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Letters of Recommendation submitted</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All submitted on your behalf by end of July</li> </ul>
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- **Letters of Recommendation**

- Dental schools typically request a total of 3 to 5 letters of recommendation. Check each school's website to determine their specific LOR assortment requirement. **Please provide each of your evaluators with a copy of our *Pre-Health Guidelines to Recommenders* form.**
- **We recommend the following assortment of letters:**
- Letter from a CU Boulder science\* faculty member (preferably one who has taught you in a lecture or seminar course and thus can comment upon your intellectual engagement as a student.)
- Letter from another science\* faculty member. This person can be from CU Boulder or another school you have attended. Again, it is ideal if this person has taught you in a lecture or seminar course and can therefore attest to your intellectual engagement as a student.
- Letter from a dentist with whom you have worked/volunteered in a clinical setting. Ask this person to comment upon your understanding of the profession, your approach to interacting with patients and staff, and your expression of intellectual curiosity in the clinical setting.
- Letter from a supervisor from a work or volunteer experience who can attest to your intrapersonal and interpersonal skills.
- \* *"Science courses," for the purpose of applying to dental school, are defined as biology, chemistry, and physics courses. (CU Boulder prefixes of EBIO, IPHY, MCDB, NRSC, CHEM, and PHYS.) Writing and Statistics courses taken in these departments are not classified as science courses.*