

# Rx How Do You Want to Help People?

One of the most common interview questions and all too often, the first interview question you will receive by your admissions interviewer is “Why are you considering the medical field?” The all too common and clichéd answer is “I want to help people”. Mike Mann pondered this question after having given the same answer.

*“At the beginning of my first year in college, when asked why I wanted to be a doctor, I replied, ‘because I want to help people’. As that first year of college progressed, and as I began to choose coursework that would lead to a career, I realized that my vague desire to help was not a rich enough reason for me to pursue a career in medicine. There are, after all, many other careers that directly benefit individuals or society. I needed a deeper reason, no matter which career I choose...So in my effort to better understand my uncertainty, I refined the question to: ‘How do I want to help people?’” (Mann, 2003)<sup>1</sup>*

Mike Mann was accepted into the University of Texas School of Medicine where he is also pursuing a master’s degree in public policy.

There are numerous careers in the world that accomplishes the ‘task of helping people’. However, you have chosen specifically to do so in the medical field. You must ask yourself right now: how do I, as an individual, want to help people, and why do I choose to do so in the medical field. It is perfectly acceptable to not have an answer to this question. However, if you don’t have answer, then it is likely that you have not had enough experience in medicine to answer this question at your admissions interview.

So now you must begin researching, experiencing, networking and reflecting. The answer to this question will not only ensure that at least one of your admissions questions is entirely covered, but the answer might lead to surprising career options, possibly never even considered before.

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<sup>1</sup> Mann, M (2003), a Pre-Med Major: Tackling the Pre-Med Decision. In S.K Lundgren, H. M. Spiro, & R. M. Donaldson, *The Yale Guide to Careers in Medicine & the Health Professions ;Pathways to Medicine in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (pp. 18-22). New Haven, London: Yale University Press.

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## Quick Links to Pre-Health Online Career Resources:

- [Pre-Health Online Resource Page](#): Access this list of quick links to the most frequently requested career resources.
- [Community Volunteer/Internship Database](#): Looking for an internship or volunteer opportunity. This database has more than 50 organizations offering opportunities for pre-health students.
- [Pre-Health Career links](#): Explore your career options! Check out this list of websites designated for specific medical careers.

# Four Year Time Line

Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Enroll in at least 4 mandatory courses for the year (2 during the Fall and 2 during the Spring). Maintain good GPA, especially in Science courses.</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Explore career options, visit the Career Center for assistance.</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Research 15 medical institutions</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Join student health organizations</a></li> <li>• Job-Shadow three physicians</li> <li>• <a href="#">Investigate volunteer opportunities</a></li> <li>• Meet Pre-Health advisors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enroll in at least 4 mandatory courses for the year (2 during the Fall and 2 during the Spring). Maintain good GPA, especially in Science courses.</li> <li>• Explore career options; consider interning or job-shadowing.</li> <li>• <a href="#">Plan for summer internship/ research opportunities</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Continue Volunteering</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Declare your major</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Prepare for Admissions Tests</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Finish 'Required Courses'. Enroll in courses required by your top five medical schools. Maintain good GPA, especially in Science courses.</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Finalize career path: MD/DO/Allied Health etc.</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Focus your sights on your favorite five medical schools and five back-ups</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Begin your Personal Statement</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Take required admissions tests</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Begin application process</a></li> <li>• Meet with your designated pre-health advisor.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Consider options for funding your medical career</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Request Letters of Recommendation</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Train for your upcoming interviews</a></li> <li>• Finish Personal Statement</li> <li>• Submit your completed application</li> <li>• <a href="#">Reflect on your accomplishments, and wait for your letter.</a></li> </ul>

## TIME LINE: Freshman

### **Familiarize yourself with your resources**

- Meet your pre-health advisors at the Pre-Health Orientation.
- Peruse the [Pre-Health Website](#) for helpful online resources
- Stop by the Career Center and learn about career exploration in the medical field, and learn about preparing yourself for the pre-health application process.

### **Enroll in at least 4 of the mandatory pre-requisite courses.**

Enroll in two pre-requisite courses for the Fall and two for the Spring. At least two of these courses should be science courses. For example, you could enroll in CHEM 115 in the Fall semester and CHEM 116 in the Spring, completing your General Chemistry requirement, and one humanities course in the Fall and Spring. While you are considering a course schedule, keep in mind that many medical pre-requisites must be done in a certain order (you will need to complete both CHEM 115 and 116 prior to Organic Chemistry).

### **Explore Healthcare career options**

This is the most crucial element that you must begin in your first year. You will need to dig deep and take on experiences that will help direct you to the career that is best for you. How can you accomplish this?

- [Volunteer, intern and/or Job shadow.](#)
- Join healthcare organizations: these organizations often invite speakers to campus, and have several events that will allow you to gain more insight to the medical field.
- Explore our online [Career Exploration Resources](#) and our [Career Links page](#).
- Register on [Careerbeam](#) and take career assessments to discover personality type and skill sets.
- Attend the Weekly Pre-Health Speaker Series to learn about careers and connect.
- [Network](#) with Willamette University healthcare professions alumni on [LinkedIn](#).
- Subscribe to Health organization journals or news feeds such as [SmartBriefs](#), to keep updated on the advancements in healthcare
- Visit our [Career Resource Library](#) for literary materials concerning a variety of topics in the medical field.

### **Research 15 medical institutions:**

You do not need to put in Post-Graduate Dissertation level research into this, but here are some things you should find out:

- Pre-Requisites Courses/ Requirements for application
- Average admissions test scores (MCAT, DAT, etc.) and GPA
- Application Process and deadlines
- Disciplines offered
- Location

Many medical schools are now on Facebook, by befriending or liking their pages you will receive daily posts from faculty, students and alumni. You can also follow these schools on LinkedIn.

## TIMELINE: Sophomore

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### Prepare for MCAT, DAT, VCAT

Time for the acronyms! Regardless of which path you choose to take in the health field, if you are considering attending a graduate school, such as medical school, nursing school, school of pharmacology ect., you will be required to take one of the admissions tests. Now is the time to start preparing for the material, viewing practice exams to familiarize yourself with the layout and the concepts you will be tested on.

### Plan for summer internship and/or research opportunity

Instead of that trusty summer job, consider interning at a health organization or conducting research. Healthcare institutions are looking for students who have practical medical experience and professional maturity.

### Continue Volunteering

Give back to your community and gain insight into the medical field by volunteering your time.

### **Declare Your major**

Contrary to popular belief, you aren't required to have a specific major to enroll in most medical institutions. Some programs will require additional post-graduate training (for example, to enroll into a Nursing master's program you will be required to have 2 years technical training beforehand, or a bachelors in nursing). It is important that you choose a major you enjoy and demonstrate a passion for. Another of the most common interview questions is 'Why did you choose this major?'. 'I thought it would get me into medical school' is not the answer an application committee is looking for.

## TIMELINE: Junior

### Finish your required courses:

First of all, if you have not finished the most commonly required courses for medical institutions, **do not panic**. Schedule a meeting with your advisor to discuss course schedules that will help you finish in time for entering medical school directly after your undergraduate career. At this point, consider the other pre-requisite courses that are required by your top 5 medical institutions, you will want to fit these into your course schedule.

### **Meet with a Pre-Health Advisor**

Check in with your pre-health advisor to ensure that you are not only on track for pre-health requisites, but that you are also on track for graduation.

### **Finalize your Career Path**

You've researched, job-shadowed, interned, and volunteered for the last two years. You are subscribed to multiple healthcare journals and you've even survived organic chemistry. Now for the big question: How do you want to help people? Are you now considering Public Health? Nursing? Patient Advocacy? Perhaps, the MD, DO, or PT? Discuss the next steps with your pre-health advisor.

### **Focus your sights on your Favorite Fives**

Narrow down your list of medical institutions to your top 5, and your 5 back-ups, and make a list of the requirements for each school as well as the application deadlines. Stay organized with all your dates and applications by marking each of the deadlines on your Google Calendar.

### Begin your Personal Statement

In your possession will be a myriad of medical experiences from which you've gained the practical medical skills and have deeply reflected about your decision to join healthcare. Now, it's time to put it all into words.

### **Stay on top of the Application Process**

The majority of medical institutions will require you to participate in an online application process, and then later the institutions' own application process. This is not only time-consuming, but requires careful review and attention to detail. Don't be caught off guard 1 month prior to the deadline! If you intend to enroll into a medical institution directly after undergraduate, then you will want to complete your primary application in the Summer after your Junior year.

### Take Required Admissions Tests

Some students choose to take these tests in sophomore year, but it is just as acceptable to take during your junior year, just be wary of the deadlines for applications. Release time of test scores often vary, such as the MCAT which has a *tentative* release date of one month after your test date. Medical schools are often flexible if the tests scores are unable to be produced earlier, however you do not want your application going to the bottom of the stack, waiting for scores.

## TIMELINE: Senior

### Consider Options for Funding your Medical Career

While waiting for the application process, begin searching for ways to fund your medical education. This may require additional applications and essays, but will be well-worthwhile when considering these figures:

**OHSU, MD program (for in-state residents): \$43,132.00 per year**

**UW, MD Program (for in-state residents): \$45,790 per year**

**Rush University, Nursing Program: \$28,112 per year**

### Request Letters of Recommendation

The important question to ask here is not necessarily who knows them, but who knows you. It is important that you choose an author of your letters of recommendation (LOR) based on how well they know you and not necessarily how well known they are in the medical field. If you interned under one of the retired admissions board members at your dream medical institution, then of course ask for a recommendation. However, if you are able to reach that economics professor, whom you spent four weeks in New Guinea helping establish a free medical clinic, then his letter is likely to have more detail about your skills than even the most well-known name in the medical field. Remember, your recommendation letter is a snapshot of your skills as detailed by someone else, you want that individual to focus in on the skills that make you unique.

### Train for your Interview

Did Rocky win the boxing title without practice? No! This may be surprising, but you need to put in the hours training for your interview, this not only means drilling interview questions, it also means feeling comfortable and at ease in pressure situations.

### Reflect While Waiting for your Letter

It hasn't been easy, but you have finally made it to the last league of your undergraduate education. It is vital that you recognize your achievements, skills and the experiences that have helped you grow as a person. Remember, medical institutions are looking for mature students who have put thought into why they want to join the medical field, and how they will influence the future of medicine. It is time to ask that question of yourself and formulate your own answer: How do I want to help people?

## Required Courses for all Medical Institutions

### 1 yr. General Chemistry:

[CHEM 115](#) & [CHEM 116](#) (Courses must be taken consecutively; both are lecture/lab based)

### 1 yr. Organic Chemistry:

[CHEM 225](#) & [CHEM 226](#) (CHEM 226 can be substituted with CHEM 228)  
(Require credit in CHEM 115 & CHEM 116; lecture/lab based)

### 1 yr. Biology:

[BIOL 125](#) & [BIOL 130](#)  
(Courses are both lecture/lab based)

### 1 yr. Physics:

[PHYS 221](#) & [PHYS 222](#)  
(Require credit in CALC I & CALC II, or professor's recommendation)

### 1 yr. English Composition

### 1 Mathematics Course

([See listings of courses offered](#); Many schools do not consider statistics an appropriate course for this requirement )

### 2 yrs. Social Sciences/Humanities

## Recommended Courses

### Biochemistry:

[CHEM 351](#)

(Requires credits in CHEM 226 or CHEM 228  
Lab is optional, but recommended)

### Cell Biology &

### Genetics:

[BIO 130](#)

(Lecture/lab based course; many medical institutions require this course)

### Microbiology:

[BIOL 250](#)

(Require credit in BIO 125 or BIO 130; lecture/lab based course)

### Psychology:

[PSYC 210](#)

(Lecture based course; several medical institutions require this course)

# Rx The Interview

A recent editorial announced that the Fall of 2011, Oregon Health Sciences University (OHSU) will be one of the several medical institutions conducting MMIs or Multiple Mini Interviews. These interviews are designed to test emotional intelligence, maturity and compassion. What does this mean for aspiring medical professionals? Institutions are now looking for advanced communication skills and compassion, as opposed to only knowledge and skill. The interview process will have more emphasis in the final decision for admittance than ever before. Therefore, you do not want to go into an interview without any practice.

Don't know what an MMI is? Read Dr. Carleen Eaton's article concerning this process vastly different from traditional interviews:

<http://www.studentdoctor.net/2011/01/the-multiple-mini-interview-for-medical-school-admissions/>

## Basic Interview Questions:

Can you answer these questions?

- Why are you joining the medical field?
- Tell me about your thoughts and feelings about the state of the healthcare system?
- Are there any issues in the healthcare field that interest you?
- If someone has six months to live, how would you handle telling them that as their physician?
- What do you anticipate will be some of the greatest challenges for you as the "physician of tomorrow"?

Each of these questions require prior research and an amount of forethought. Let's address some of the subconscious musings of a pre-health student during an admissions interview.

### 1). I want to help people and...

**Interviewer:** "Why are you joining the medical field?"

**Applicant:** "(Uh, well I really enjoy helping people-saving lives...)".

Needless to say, this is not the answer medical schools are looking for. This is the very same question posed to you at the beginning of the resource packet, only slightly reworded. Now that you have a plethora of experiences in the medical field, you will be

able to answer this thoughtfully, supplementing with dozens of illustrations that will assure your interviewer that you are prepared for the demands of the medical fields.

## 2). The Tricky Question

**I: “Tell me your thoughts and feelings about the state of the healthcare system?”**

**A: “(Gulp\* This is a trick question right? No matter how I answer, if they disagree then I’m sunk!)”**

No, this is not a trick question where the interviewer expects you to coincide with their views on healthcare. It is a question targeted directly at your professional composure and the amount of time you spent considering your future in the medical field.

Remember, admissions officers are looking for mature, professional students who have considered all the options of healthcare and some of the future barriers. Open the discussion on a topic that you feel could use improvement or a topic that has not yet been addressed. Demonstrate that you have knowledge of the medical field, and that you have thought critically about these issues. Also, ensure that you are able to give a reason for why this issue is important to you. Be specific and concise. It is alright if you disagree with your interviewer, but display your professional work ethics, by calmly stating your claim, your reasoning and then invite discussion upon the topic.

## 3). Yes, your emotions can be immature.

**I: “If someone has six months to live, how would you handle telling them that as their physician?”**

**A: “(Six months to live? But I wanted to go into a specialty with fewer life-threatening situations)”**

This is a pivotal question regarding your emotional maturity, ethics and compassion. In the medical field you will often be required to face situations entirely out of your control, fraught with emotions and life-and-death decisions. If you haven’t considered this question before, then it is vital that you consider it now. Your interviewer wants to interpret your reaction on life-and-death situations, while hearing the reasoning behind your reaction. Furthermore, the interviewer wants to know how you will cope with these situations for your own health. Yes, they are as worried about your own health as you’re the health of your future patients.

These are three of the most common interview questions, but there are numerous others to be employed throughout your interview process. Therefore, it is critical to start your interview training immediately.

# Interview Training Regimen

## Practice on your Own:

- Watch this short video discussing the STAR acronym for interviews  
<http://careertv.com/video.php?mediaid=0m5z326md5PSswHhnTlnMw>
- Complete 15 questions (either written responses or video and/or audio responses)
- Review those questions. If there are any questions that you were unable to answer, or felt you did not have enough information to answer, then go and do some research or reflection.
- Practice as many questions as you feel you need to be comfortable.
- Watch this short video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b56eAUCTLok>  
Know that your interview will go much better.
- Do one audio/verbal interview session of at least 10 questions. If your computer does not have a webcam or audio device, you can come to the Career Center and utilize our student work station.
- Watch your responses: Did you notice any hesitations in your responses? Any personal quirks? For example, does your left eye twitch after the word 'field' is mentioned?
- Ask your friends or family to watch the responses (if you are comfortable), did they notice anything that needed improvement?

\*To better simulate an interview environment, dress in your business casual or business formal. This will condition you to return to this mindset each time you don your suit\*.

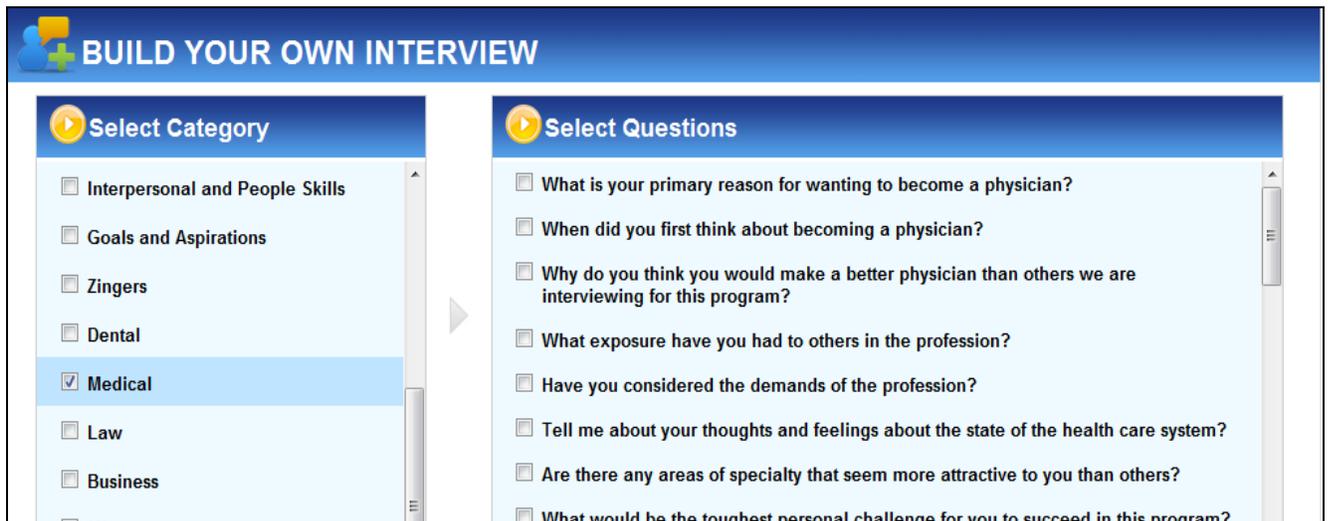
## Career Center:

- Schedule one mock interview at the Career Center.
- Act as though this is the 'Real interview'. Dress accordingly and bring any materials you feel necessary.
- After your interview, our counselor will discuss with you any needed improvements and/or strengths

# Optimal Resume Interview Instructions

**Optimal Resume:** Use the Build your own interview tool to target questions asked by medical admissions officers. You can not only video record yourself during the interview, but you will have the opportunity to engage the assistance of your virtual interview coach.

- 1) Log-in to your Optimal Resume account
- 2) Go to the Interviews section of the 'Document Center' and 'Create New Interview'.
- 3) Name the interview (it does not need to be long or specific- this is entirely for your future reference).
- 4) Choose the question length (20 questions maximum) and choose whether you prefer to record your answers with video, audio, or written response. If you choose video or audio responses, then you can also choose your virtual interviewer from the panel on the right.
- 5) In the 'Select a Category' box, scroll down to 'Medical'



- 6) The most commonly asked medical interview questions are listed to your right.

- 7) You can choose as many of these questions as you specified in the previous section.
- 8) If you chose video and/or audio responses: after some quick checks to ensure that your audio and/or microphone is functioning properly, you are set to begin your virtual interview.

This feature is accessible 24/7 and allows you to practice as often as you would like and at your convenience.

## Virtual Interview Module:

To utilize this feature, you must have a webcam, a microphone, or both. If you do not have access to any of this equipment, then you are welcome to come by the Career Center and utilize our student work station computers.

The screenshot shows a virtual interview interface with three main components:

- Interviewer Window (Red border):** Displays a video of the interviewer. Below the video, the question is: "When did you first think about becoming a physician?". Navigation buttons include "PREVIOUS QUESTION", "Question 2 of 10", and "NEXT QUESTION".
- Candidate Window (Yellow border):** A black screen where the candidate's video and audio responses are visible.
- Interview Assistance Coach Window (Blue border):** A smaller video window showing the interviewer with a "PLAY" button, used for receiving advice on how to answer each question.

Below the Interviewer window, a list of questions is shown:

- Question 1: What is your primary reason for wanting to become a physician?
- Question 2: When did you first think about becoming a physician?
- Question 3: Why do you think you would make a better physician than others we are interviewing for this program?

**Virtual Interview:**  
 You have the opportunity to hand-select your interviewer or to have the interviewer randomly selected for you. Feel free to replay the question as often as you like and in any order. Your list of questions can be viewed below the Interviewer screen.

**Candidate Window:**  
 In this screen you can watch/listen to each of your responses.

**Interview Assistance Coach:**  
 Click on this video to receive advice on how to answer each individual question.

# Rx LOR Writing-No, not Lord of the Rings

In most application services, at least two letters of recommendation are required. Although you are not writing the letter yourself, you are not entirely devoid of tasks. So don't take a vacation just yet! Remember, it is not who you know, but who knows you that matters. Ensure that all of your LOR writers know your individual skills and accomplishments.

## Quick LOR Tips:

- Even the professor eager to write your LOR, has other obligations. Give your LOR writers plenty of time and notice to put thought and care into their words.
- Write a description about yourself, and also a short reflection on why you want to join the medical field so that your LOR writer may learn more about you as the person and your passion for going into medicine.
- Always provide any LOR instructions as detailed by the application. It would be discouraging, if the only reason the admissions committee didn't receive that perfect letter raving about your time as an intern at the Mayo Clinic, was that the writer didn't know how to submit it.
- Give your writer additional details about the school and any other requirements. If the school is infamous for enrolling students who have participated in research, let your writer know so that they can highlight those experiences in your letter.
- Remember, your professors and supervisors are busy and not obligated to spend additional time and effort to write a meaningful LOR. For those who do, make certain to send them a *hand-written* thank you note showing your appreciation.
- Stay organized! With your busy schedule, it is very easy for a deadline to slip past you. Mark your deadlines on your Google Calendars and set alerts so that you won't lose track of time. Give your writer sufficient time to write your letter, then contact your LOR writer one week before the deadline (if they have not submitted your letter) and politely **remind** them of the deadline. Don't forget to reiterate your gratitude for their work-after all they have deadlines as well!

Need some help staying organized? Use our LOR form to keep your records straight, and help you in devising a meaningful LOR.

# LOR Organization Form

LOR Author	Medical Institution	LOR Deadline	How do they know me?	Letter Submission Date	<u>Checklist</u>
					<input type="checkbox"/> Requested LOR <input type="checkbox"/> Sent deadline information/application instructions/name of school <input type="checkbox"/> Marked on Calendar: Remind LOR author one week before deadline <input type="checkbox"/> Sent short description <input type="checkbox"/> Letter Submitted and confirmed <input type="checkbox"/> Thank you letter Sent
Experiences:					

LOR Author	Medical Institution	LOR Deadline	How do they know me?	Letter Submission Date	<u>Checklist</u>
					<input type="checkbox"/> Requested LOR <input type="checkbox"/> Sent deadline information/application instructions/name of school <input type="checkbox"/> Marked on Calendar: Remind LOR author one week before deadline <input type="checkbox"/> Sent short description <input type="checkbox"/> Letter Submitted and confirmed <input type="checkbox"/> Thank you letter Sent
Experiences:					

## Example Recommendation Request/ Form

Need some help visualizing? Review what one student wrote for her recommendation into a research program.

LOR Author	Medical Institution	LOR Deadline	How do they know me?	Letter Submission Date	Checklist
Professor Blitz Bearcat	I want him to write a recommendation for Johns Hopkins.	12/15/XX	*BIO 130 *SCRP research *Lab Aid for his BIO 110 Lab	11/27/XX	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Requested LOR</li> <li>✗ Sent deadline information/application instructions/name of school</li> <li>✗ Marked on Calendar: Remind LOR author one week before deadline</li> <li>✗ Sent short description</li> <li>✗ Letter Submitted and confirmed</li> <li>✗ Thank you letter Sent</li> </ul>
<p>Experiences:</p> <p>I assisted Professor Bearcat during his Fruit Fly research in the summer. I suggested that we alter the procedure to take into account environmental variables. We observed a surprising trend in our original research concerning the direct proportionality of fruit fly mortality and decrease of surface area in holding containers.</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em; color: #c0c0c0; opacity: 0.5;">EXAMPLE</p>					

## Example Email

**Subject:** Letter of Recommendation Request

[Attach a file](#) Insert: [Invitation](#)

**B I U F T** [Plain Text](#) [Check Spelling](#)

Dear Professor Bearcat,

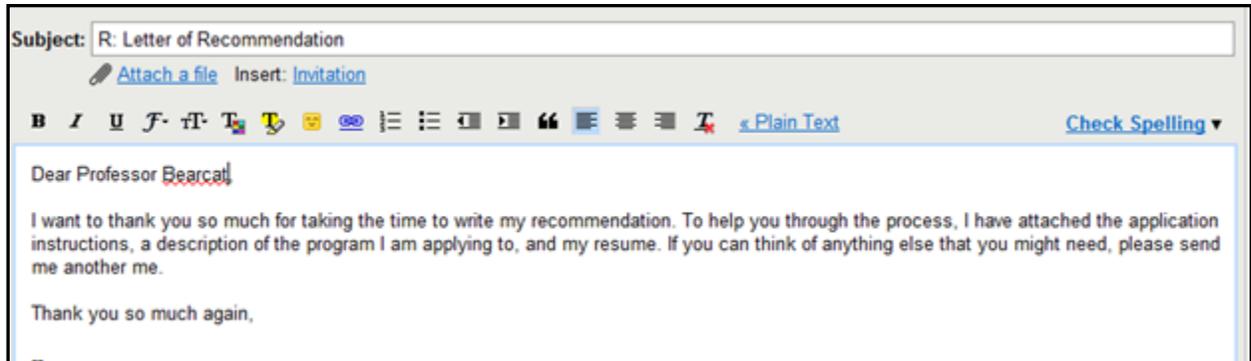
As I approach the beginning of my senior year, I am contemplating where I should go from here. I have finally found the answer! Thanks to the opportunities and experiences you provided to me during my time as your SCRIP Lab Assistant, I am going to apply to the Johns Hopkins Biochemical Engineering Program. During this program, I will have the chance to not only learn about advancements in the Fruit Fly Genome, but also to participate in the medical research program concerning the effects of high blood alcohol concentration on the RNA transcription rates of fruit flies. Ever since we discussed this topic at my last advising meeting, I have been searching for programs that would allow me to do this sort of research. I am very grateful that you mentioned it.

In order to enroll in this program, I need to complete my application by December 15th and submit at least two letters of recommendation. I know that you are very busy writing your new grant proposal, but I would greatly appreciate your recommendation, and hope that I have contacted you early enough that you will not have too much hassle. It is very difficult to present yourself to an entire selection committee with only two letters of recommendation, but I feel that the opportunities you provided me were pivotal in my decision to apply.

I look forward to hearing your response, and thank you for your time.

What makes this letter a good example? The student has:

- Described why she/he has chosen this LOR writer
- Discussed an experience with the LOR writer, which she/he wishes to emphasize
- Detailed the program she/he is replying to, and why it has relevance to this writer.
- Listed the deadline for application, giving the writer enough notice.
- Acknowledged the writer's time obligations, and expressed gratitude.



This letter was sent after the Professor consented to write the recommendation. It is very possible to combine these two emails, by adding the additional information (application instructions, program description, and resume) to the first email. However, it is considered thoughtful if you first request the recommendation and then send additional information; just ensure that you have plenty of time prior to the deadline to send multiple emails.

# Rx The Letter

Four years of arduous work, biology flash cards, organic chemistry notes, and a plethora of scientific knowledge later, you receive *that letter*. *The letter* you have been waiting for your entire undergraduate career, *the letter* that will make your medical dreams become a reality-*the letter* from your top choice medical institution. You grasp *the letter* from your post box, rip open the top in anticipation and eagerly scan the first words of the first paragraph, because at the moment the first sentence is the only one that matters. It reads:

**Congratulations-** you have just been accepted to the medical institution of your dreams. Phew, it must be over now. Not quite so. Your journey into the medical field has just begun, now before you rush to Facebook and post that you are officially a student of medicine, here are some considerations:

- **Officially accept:** If you were accepted into several different institutions it is very important that you remember to notify each of the institutions as to whether or not you will be attending each school. There is a formal timeline for accepting an offer for enrollment, and if you do not notify the institution then they have the authority to dismiss your application.
- **Financial Aid:** Student loans and debts are prominent among any medical institution. Begin investigating possible sources of funding for your education.

**Waitlist...** This is a somewhat frustrating position to be in, as you haven't been rejected, but not entirely accepted. It is important to **take a deep breath**. Good, now don't give up hope! Many institutions will contact students throughout the summer, notifying them of open spots in the class. Even if that does not happen, recognize that you were chosen to go through the interview process, which means that you are still on the school's radar.

**Apologies, however...** After all that work, you were not accepted. Does this mean you never will be? Of course not- do not be discouraged! The most important thing to do is to find out where the weaknesses were in your application. To do this, contact the Admissions Office at the medical institution and ask about the areas in your application that need improvement. Is it that one bad test score? Were you too nervous during your interview? Do you need more practical medical experience? Find these weaknesses and make them stronger by retaking tests, continuing on to complete a Master's Degree, or joining a work experience in the medical field. The options are

endless, but it is most important that you demonstrate improvement to your medical institution. While you are working on the next steps to your career, keep in contact with your medical institution and let them know what you are doing. It is this type of initiative that illustrates the motivation and passion for learning, professional growth and maturity that medical institutions are looking for.

## Still not certain what to do?

Check out this articles written by a current medical professional, facing a similar situation.

What Will You Do if You Don't Get into Medical School? Dr. Jeremiah Fleenor

<http://www.studentdoctor.net/2011/06/what-will-you-do-if-you-don%E2%80%99t-get-into-medical-school/>