

So You're Interested in Dentistry?

Today's dentists are highly sophisticated health professionals who provide a wide range of oral health care services that contribute to the general health and quality of their patients' lives. They are at the forefront of new developments in dental implants, computer-generated imaging, and cosmetic and aesthetic procedures. Dentists are instrumental in the early detection of oral cancer and systemic conditions that manifest in the mouth.

Quick Facts

| Sample Job Titles | Median Wages (2019-2020)* | Required Education |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> General Dentist Pediatric Dentist Orthodontist Oral Surgeon | <p>In CA: \$125,860 In Los Angeles Area: \$112,390</p> <p>*For current wages, visit CareerOneStop.org/salary</p> | <p>Doctorate Degree:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doctor of Dental Medicine (DMD) Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS) |

The Path to Dentistry



In general, a degree in dentistry requires four academic years of graduate level study. Admission to dental school is highly competitive. The first two years usually cover the basic sciences and the last two years are spent diagnosing oral disease, surgery, and clinical study. At the completion of the curriculum, students are awarded either a DMD (Doctor of Dental Medicine) or DDS (Doctor of Dental Surgery) degree.

Choosing an Undergraduate Major

"Pre-dental" is **not** a common major at universities. You should give careful consideration to your choice of major and select an area of study that interests you. Some dental schools do not require a degree in a specific area in order to apply. Instead, they are looking for a well-rounded applicant who does well in the dental school admission requirements.

Students applying to dental school need to plan carefully and complete not only the dental school admission requirements, but also the requirements for their undergraduate major and the general education required by the university.

How to Prepare for Dentistry

As an undergraduate pursuing your bachelor's degree, there are several things you can do to prepare for graduate school. You can begin now as a Citrus College student!

- Complete the **prerequisite coursework** for the dental programs you are interested in. We've included a sample of common prerequisites on the next page of this handout. Prerequisites vary, so be sure to research schools and determine their requirements.
- Maintain a **high GPA**
- Gain **experience**. Consider seeking out a dentist in a private practice to shadow. Not sure where to start? You can begin with your family dentist who may be able to accept volunteers or suggest colleagues.
- Develop your **leadership skills** through involvement in student organizations or **community service**.
- Connect** with faculty and professionals. Remember that most programs will require multiple letters of recommendation.
- Study for the **Dental Admissions Test (DAT)**.
- Consider applying for **educational pre-health programs** like the Summer Health Professions Education Program (shpep.org) and the UCLA Pre-Dental Program (medschool.ucla.edu/apply/prep).



Sample Prerequisite Courses

In general, all prerequisite courses should be taken for a letter grade. Some campuses may have policies regarding whether their requirements can be met through lower-division or upper-division coursework (Citrus College does not offer upper-division classes; these are courses that must be taken at a university).

| Common Prerequisites | Citrus College Courses |
|-------------------------------|--|
| One year of English | ENGL 101 & 103 or 104 |
| One year of Biology | BIOL 124 & 125 |
| One year of Organic Chemistry | CHEM 210/211 & 220/221 |
| One year of Physics | PHYS 201 & 202 or 203* |
| | *Some campuses may accept PHYS 111 & 112. Refer to program specific websites for more information. |
| Recommended Courses: | BIOL 200, BIOL 201, BIOL 220, ART 140, SOC 201, PSY 101, SPCH 101, MATH 190 |

IMPORTANT: This list is meant to be used as an informational guide. All students must refer to the individual campuses/programs for specific information on prerequisite requirements.

Dental School Application Process

- Most dental schools use the **Associated American Dental Schools Application Service (AADSAS)**. This is a centralized service which allows applicants to use a single application process to apply to multiple dental programs. It is the responsibility of the applicant to find out which schools participate and send individual applications to those that do not participate.
- Dental schools require students to take the **Dental Admissions Test (DAT)**. Take the DAT at least a year prior to seeking admission to dental school. This computerized test measures general academic ability, comprehension of scientific information and perceptual ability. Completion of at least one year of college level courses in biology and general and organic chemistry is recommended before taking the DAT.

Resources

Professional Organizations

- American Dental Education Association (adea.org/GoDental)
- American Dental Association (ada.org)
- American Student Dental Association (asdanet.org)

Podcasts

- Life and Dentistry (lifeanddentistry.libsyn.com)
- Dental Realist (dentalrealist.libsyn.com)
- The Dental Student Podcast (dentalstudentpodcast.libsyn.com)

Visit **CandidCareer** to learn more about this occupation from the perspective of current dentists!

bit.ly/CandidDentists

Related Occupations

Not sure if getting a doctoral degree in dentistry is the right fit for you? Here are some related careers with different educational requirements. For more information on these careers or others, visit ONetOnline.org.

| Job Title | Median Wages | Required Education | Holland Interest Code |
|------------------|------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Dental Assistant | In CA: \$38,740 | Certificate | CRS |
| Dental Hygienist | In CA: \$102,510 | Associate's degree | SRC |