

- Dentists maintain oral health and by doing so help maintain their patients' overall health.
- In their practices, dentists
 - Help patients maintain oral health.
 - Use diagnostic ability and manual skills.
 - Treat and work with people from all age groups requiring good communication skills.
 - Examine the head, neck, and oral cavity.
 - Diagnose conditions using advanced technologies including radiography and computer generated imaging.
 - Restore and replace teeth damaged from decay, trauma or disease.
 - Help patients to improve chewing, speech, digestion of food, sleep patterns and appearance.
- Specialties are available within dentistry with further training following dental school including:
 - Endodontics (nerves), Oral Surgery, Orthodontics, Prosthodontics (appliances), Public Health and others.

Education & Licensure

- Complete a bachelor's degree in any major along with prerequisite courses.
- Attend a 4 year professional dental school program following the undergraduate degree.
- Obtain a DDS (Doctor of Dental Surgery) or a DMD (Doctor of Medical Dentistry) degree. These are equivalent.
- Upon completion of dental school, pass a licensing examination.

Preparation

- Observe a general dentist to make sure this is the right field for you and you truly understand what it means to be a dentist. Plan on at least 100 hours of observation time, but more hours are required at some schools.
- Adopting a hobby or skill that develops and illustrates manual dexterity is recommended.
- Students need to take the Dental Aptitude Test (DAT) to apply to dental school. The DAT is a standardized online exam taken about 15 months before beginning dental school (generally in the spring/summer following the junior year of college).
- Dental programs may differ slightly in their requirements. Many schools recommend courses such as art, business management, accounting, statistics, interpersonal communications, Spanish, cell biology, genetics, histology, microbiology, and molecular biology.
- Many schools require all prerequisite courses have at least a grade of C.

Common Prerequisite Courses (required courses determined by each dental school but similar to this list)

Subject	Course	Purdue Equivalents (specific courses may vary by major)
Biology-Need 20 credit hours for IU including general, A&P, & micro	General Biology	BIOL 11000-11100 or BIOL 13100 & BIOL 23100 & 23200 (lab) or BIOL 23000 & upper level biology course plus lab
	Anatomy & Physiology (A&P)	BIOL 20300-20400 (BIOL 30100-30200)
	Microbiology	BIOL 22100 or BIOL 43800
Chemistry-Need 12 credit hours for IU	Inorganic with lab	CHM 11500-11600 or CHM 12500-12600 or CHM 12300-12400 or CHM 12901 (CHM 11500 credit exam recommended along with CHM 12901) or CHM 13600
	Organic with lab	CHM 25500-25600 or CHM 26100-26200 or CHM 26505-26605 or MCMP 20400-20500
	Biochemistry	BCHM 30700 or BCHM 56100 or CHM 33900 or CHM 43300 or MCMP 20800 (CHM 33300, CHM 53300)
Physics-8 hrs for IU	General	PHYS 22000-22100 or 23300-23400 or PHYS 17200 & 27200 or PHYS 17200 & 24100 (plus additional 1 hour lab such as PHYS 25200) or ENGR 16100-16200*
Social Science-3 hrs for IU	Psychology, Anthropology, Sociology, Communications	PSY 12000, ANTH 10000, SOC 10000, COM 11400
Humanities-3 hrs for IU	English Composition	ENGL 10600 or 10800 or SCLA 10100* (some schools require 2 semesters of English)
Other	Art	A course in jewelry making, sculpture, or ceramics is recommended
Pre-Med Planning Seminar (optional)		BIOL 39600--0 credit 10 week class covering how to apply to dental school and other health professions programs

*Ask individual dental schools if they will accept these courses toward requirements. ~~Courses~~ no longer offered.

Student Organization: Pre-Dental Club

Program Information

- Requirements for dental programs and additional information about schools and admissions statistics can be found in the online [ADEA Dental School Explorer](https://access.adea.org/adeassa/ecssashop.show_product_detail?p_product_serno=340&p_mode=detail) database. A one-year subscription is \$25.
https://access.adea.org/adeassa/ecssashop.show_product_detail?p_product_serno=340&p_mode=detail

Applying

- The initial application to most dental programs is through an online common application called the [American Association of Dental Schools Application Service](https://aadsas.liasoncas.com/applicant-ux/#/login) (AADSAS) <https://aadsas.liasoncas.com/applicant-ux/#/login>.
- Some of the individual dental programs ask for supplementary information beyond what is included in your online application and then invite select students to interview.
- Students from Texas apply to Texas Dental schools through [TMDsas](https://www.tmdsas.com/) <https://www.tmdsas.com/>
- Competitive applicants will have:
 - Strong academic performance including a GPA of 3.5 or higher
 - High scores on the DAT – generally 18 or better in each section
 - Leadership, teamwork, and communication skills
 - Undergraduate research experience
 - Volunteer and shadowing/observation experiences
 - Evidence of manual dexterity
 - Strong positive letters of recommendation (mostly from faculty and dentists)
- Early application is essential. The applications (AADSAS and TMDsas) open in May and should be submitted in June or early July.
- Many factors will influence where you choose to apply. You do need to include the public school(s) where you are an in-state resident as this is often your best chance of admission.

Fee Assistance

- [AADSAS Fee Assistance Program](https://help.liasonedu.com/ADEA_AADSAS_Applicant_Help_Center/Starting_Your_ADEA_AADSAS_Application/Getting_Started_with_Your_ADEA_AADSAS_Application/03_Application_Fees_and_Fee_Assistance_Program)
https://help.liasonedu.com/ADEA_AADSAS_Applicant_Help_Center/Starting_Your_ADEA_AADSAS_Application/Getting_Started_with_Your_ADEA_AADSAS_Application/03_Application_Fees_and_Fee_Assistance_Program
- [Partial Fee Waiver for the DAT](https://www.ada.org/en/education-careers/dental-admission-test/dat-fee-waiver-information) <https://www.ada.org/en/education-careers/dental-admission-test/dat-fee-waiver-information>

Employment Outlook

- According to the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/dentists.htm), the job outlook for dentists is excellent with an expected 3% growth through 2029. The median salary in 2020 was \$164,010. <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/dentists.htm>
- Many dentists have their own practice or work as part of a small practice which often offers greater flexibility in their work schedules. Entrepreneurial and business skills are valuable.
- Full time dentists spend approximately 36 hours per week in their practices.

Diversity Matters

The dental profession needs professionals who look just like you, and who share your life experiences. Race or ethnicity, LGBTQ+ identity, disability, age, geographic region, socioeconomic status, social and cultural identity, and nationality all add to a richer experience for all students in the dental school classroom, contribute to the dental profession, and ultimately lead to better outcomes for patients.

Programs in the Region

- [Indiana University](https://dentistry.iu.edu/academics/degrees-programs/doctor-dental-surgery/index.html) Indianapolis, IN <https://dentistry.iu.edu/academics/degrees-programs/doctor-dental-surgery/index.html>
- [University of Louisville](http://louisville.edu/dentistry/admissions) Louisville, KY <http://louisville.edu/dentistry/admissions>
- [Midwestern University](https://www.midwestern.edu/programs_and_admission/il_dental_medicine.html) Downers Grove, IL https://www.midwestern.edu/programs_and_admission/il_dental_medicine.html

More Information

- [American Dental Education Association](https://www.adea.org/) (includes AADSAS) <https://www.adea.org/>
- [American Dental Association](https://www.ada.org/en) (includes DAT) <https://www.ada.org/en>

Other Careers to Consider

Dental Hygiene · Physician · Optometry · Orthotics & Prosthetics

Preparing for your Giant Leap

purdue.edu/preprofessional