

## Career Description

- Dentists are devoted to maintaining oral health as well as a patient's 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.

## Becoming a Dentist

- Complete a bachelor's degree in any major along with prerequisite courses.
- Attend a 4 year professional dental school program following your 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 (pre-reqs 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	BIOL 20300-20400 or 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)
	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 33300 or CHM 33900 or CHM 53300 or MCMP 20800
Physics- 8 hrs for IU	General	PHYS 22000-22100 or 23300-23400 or PHYS 21800-21900 or PHYS 17200 & 27200 or PHYS 17200 & 24100 (plus additional 1 hour lab such as PHYS 25200)
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 (some schools require 2 semesters of English)
Other	Art	A course in jewelry making, sculpture, or ceramics is recommended
<b>Pre-Med Planning Seminar (optional)</b>		<b>BIOL 39600-0 credit 10 week class covering how to apply to dental school and other health professions programs</b>

## Student Organization: Pre-Dental Club

### Research Programs

- Requirements for dental programs and additional information about schools and admissions statistics can be found in the [ADEA Official Guide to Dental Schools](#) that is released every other year. It may be purchased through the ADEA website as a print book or as a digital release. <http://www.adea.org/officialguide/>

### Applying

- The initial application to most dental programs is through an online common application called the American [Association of Dental Schools Application Service](#) (AADSAS) <https://aadsas.liaisoncas.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.
- 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
  - Strong positive letters of recommendation (mostly from faculty and dentists)
- Early application is essential – generally by early July.

### Fee Assistance

- [AADSAS Fee Assistance Program](#)  
[http://www.adea.org/GoDental/Application\\_Prep/The\\_Application\\_to\\_Dental\\_School\\_ADEA\\_AADSAS/Fee\\_Assistance\\_Program.aspx](http://www.adea.org/GoDental/Application_Prep/The_Application_to_Dental_School_ADEA_AADSAS/Fee_Assistance_Program.aspx)
- [Partial Fee Waiver for the DAT](#)  
[http://www.ada.org/~media/ADA/Education%20and%20Careers/Files/dat\\_fee\\_waiver.ashx](http://www.ada.org/~media/ADA/Education%20and%20Careers/Files/dat_fee_waiver.ashx)

### Employment Outlook

- According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the job outlook for dentists is excellent with an expected 19% growth through 2026.
- The median salary in 2017 was \$158,120.
- Many dentists have their own practice or work as part of a small practice so they often enjoy greater flexibility in their work schedules. Entrepreneurial and business skills are valuable.
- Full time dentists spend approximately 36 hours per week in their practices.

### Programs in the Region

- [Indiana University](#) Indianapolis, IN <https://www.dentistry.iu.edu/>
- [University of Louisville](#) Louisville, KY <http://louisville.edu/dentistry/>
- [Midwestern University](#) Downers Grove, IL  
[https://www.midwestern.edu/programs\\_and\\_admission/il\\_dental\\_medicine.html](https://www.midwestern.edu/programs_and_admission/il_dental_medicine.html)

### More Information

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

### Other Careers to Consider

- Dental Hygiene
- Optometry

Information for this career guide came from the above websites; [Explore Health Careers](https://explorehealthcareers.org/field/dentistry/) <https://explorehealthcareers.org/field/dentistry/>; the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/dentists.htm) <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/dentists.htm>; and the [ADEA Official Guide to Dental School](#).

