Dentistry (DDS or DMD)

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.
  - Examine the head, neck, and oral cavity.
  - Diagnose conditions using advanced technologies including radiography and computer generated imaging.
  - Treat and work with people from all age groups requiring good communication skills.
  - 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)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Purdue Equivalents (specific courses may vary by major)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biology-Need 20 credit hours for IU including general, A&amp;P, &amp; micro</td>
<td>General Biology</td>
<td>BIOL 11000-11100 or BIOL 13100 &amp; BIOL 23100 &amp; 23200 (lab) or BIOL 23000 &amp; upper level biology course plus lab</td>
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<td>Anatomy &amp; Physiology</td>
<td>BIOL 20300-20400 or BIOL 30100-30200</td>
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<td>Microbiology</td>
<td>BIOL 22100 or BIOL 43800</td>
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<td>Chemistry-Need 12 credit hours for IU</td>
<td>Inorganic with lab</td>
<td>CHM 11500-11600 or CHM 12500-12600 or CHM 12300-12400 or CHM 12901 (CHM 11500 credit exam recommended along with CHM 12901)</td>
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<td>Organic with lab</td>
<td>CHM 25500-25600 or CHM 26100-26200 or CHM 26505-26605 or MCMP 20400-20500</td>
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<td>Biochemistry</td>
<td>BCHM 30700 or BCHM 56100 or CHM 33300 or CHM 33900 or CHM 53300 or MCMP 20800</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physics-8 hrs for IU</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>PHYS 22000-22100 or 23300-23400 or PHYS 21800-21900 or PHYS 17200 &amp; 27200 or PHYS 17200 &amp; 24100 (plus additional 1 hour lab such as PHYS 25200)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Science-3 hrs for IU</td>
<td>Psychology, Anthropology, Sociology, Communications</td>
<td>PSY 12000, ANTH 10000, SOC 10000, COM 11400</td>
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<tr>
<td>Humanities-3 hrs for IU</td>
<td>English Composition</td>
<td>ENGL 10600 or 10800 (some schools require 2 semesters of English)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>A course in jewelry making, sculpture, or ceramics is recommended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Med Planning Seminar (optional)</td>
<td>BIOL 39600-0 credit 10 week class covering how to apply to dental school and other health professions programs</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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](http://www.adea.org/officialguide/) that is released every other year. It may be purchased through the ADEA website as a print book or as a digital release.

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](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_Pre/ The_Application_to_Dental_School_ADEA_AADSAS/Fee_Assistance_Program.aspx](http://www.adea.org/GoDental/Application_Pre/ 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/](https://www.dentistry.iu.edu/)
- University of Louisville Louisville, KY [http://louisville.edu/dentistry/](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](http://www.adea.org)
- American Dental Association (includes DAT) [https://www.ada.org/en](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/); the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/dentists.htm); and the [ADEA Official Guide to Dental School](http://www.adea.org/officialguide/).