FREE WORKBOOK · PRE-DENTAL

Dental School Application Kit

A calm, step-by-step workbook for the ADEA AADSAS cycle: timeline, personal statement, letters, interviews, and choosing schools.

2026–27 edition

ToothOps
Your quiet guide through dental school and beyond

Free resource
thetoothops.com

Before you begin

Applying to dental school is a long project with many moving parts. This kit breaks it into calm, manageable steps: what to do and when, how to write your personal statement, how to ask for strong letters, how to prepare for interviews, and how to choose where to apply.

How to use this kit

- Work through the parts in order, or jump to the one you need right now.
- Print it, or fill it in on a tablet.
- Dates and rules change every cycle. Each part tells you where to confirm the current details.

What's inside

1. **Your application timeline** — a month-by-month plan with checklists
2. **Personal statement workbook** — prompts, a structure, and a revision checklist
3. **Letters of evaluation planner** — who to ask, what to send, and ready-to-adapt emails
4. **Interview preparation** — formats, three calm answer frameworks, and a question bank
5. **School comparison worksheet** — compare fit, cost, and clinic experience side by side

Key dates in the 2026–27 ADEA AADSAS cycle

- **May 12, 2026** — application opened
- **June 2, 2026** — first day to submit
- **February 5, 2027** — application closes
- **February 11, 2027** — last day for official documents to arrive

The 2027–28 cycle (for students starting in fall 2028) follows a similar pattern. ADEA posts the exact dates each spring.

What this kit is not: a guarantee. No resource can promise an acceptance. What it can do is help you show up organized, clear, and calm — which is something every strong application has in common.

PART 1

Your application timeline

Most applicants apply about 15 months before they start dental school: they submit in early summer to begin the following fall. Submitting early matters, because many schools review applications on a rolling basis and verification can take several weeks during the summer rush.

12–18 months before you apply

- [ ] Compare your remaining prerequisites with your top schools' requirements (biology, general and organic chemistry, physics, and often biochemistry and English — requirements vary by school)
- [ ] Keep building shadowing hours in general and specialty practices, and log each visit: date, office, hours, and what you learned
- [ ] Get to know two or three science faculty well enough that they could write a detailed letter
- [ ] Choose a DAT study window and take a diagnostic practice test
- [ ] Start a running list of meaningful experiences, with dates and hours

January–April: the spring before you apply

- [ ] Take the DAT, ideally by late spring so scores are ready when you submit. You must wait 60 days between attempts, so leave room for a retake
- [ ] Ask for letters of evaluation, giving each writer four to six weeks (see Part 3)
- [ ] Write the first full draft of your personal statement (see Part 2)
- [ ] Build your school list (see Part 5)
- [ ] If cost is a barrier, look at the ADEA AADSAS Fee Assistance Program — it opens in spring and reviews applications first come, first served

May: the application opens

- [ ] Create your ADEA AADSAS account as soon as it opens
- [ ] Enter every course exactly as it appears on your transcripts
- [ ] Request official transcripts from every college you attended
- [ ] Finalize your personal statement and experiences

June: submit

- [ ] Submit as close to the first submission day as you can
- [ ] Confirm your letters and transcripts have arrived
- [ ] Watch your email for verification updates

July–September: secondary applications

- [ ] Track each school's supplemental application, fee, and deadline in Part 5
- [ ] Aim to return each secondary within about two weeks
- [ ] Begin interview practice (see Part 4)

September–February: interviews and offers

- [ ] Prepare for each school's interview format
- [ ] Send a brief thank-you note within a day or two of each interview
- [ ] Know the offer rules: under ADEA's current guidelines, schools begin extending offers on December 3. Early offers come with longer response windows (30 days for offers made December 3 to January 1); later offers come with shorter ones
- [ ] Write down each school's deposit deadline before you accept anywhere

After you're accepted

- [ ] Complete the FAFSA and compare financial aid offers carefully
- [ ] Look into scholarship and service programs (the ToothOps *Dental School Cost & Scholarship Toolkit* compares them)
- [ ] Thank everyone who wrote you a letter — and tell them where you're going

PART 2

Personal statement workbook

One essay goes to every school you apply to. ADEA AADSAS limits it to 4,500 characters, including spaces — about a page and a half. Its job is to answer one question honestly: why dentistry, and why you?

Step 1: Brainstorm before you write

Answer each prompt in a few lines. Don't polish. Look for the stories you keep coming back to.

1. When did dentistry start to feel like *your* path, not just a good career?

2. Describe one patient or moment from shadowing that changed how you see the profession.

3. What have you made or fixed with your hands that you're proud of? (Art, music, lab work, repairs, sports all count.)

4. Tell about a challenge you didn't handle perfectly. What did you change afterward?

5. Who have you served, and what did they teach you?

6. Why dentistry instead of medicine, nursing, or another health career?

7. What kind of dentist do you hope to be ten years from now?

Step 2: Shape it

A simple structure that works for many applicants:

Section	What it does	Length
Opening moment	One specific scene that pulls the reader in	1 short paragraph
Turning points	Two or three experiences, each followed by what you learned	2–3 paragraphs
Evidence of fit	The qualities a good dentist needs, shown through your examples	1 paragraph
Looking forward	The dentist you want to become, and why	1 short paragraph

> **Reflection matters more than résumé.** For every experience, answer three questions: What did I notice? What did I do? What changed in me?

Step 3: Revise with this checklist

- [ ] Under 4,500 characters, including spaces
- [ ] Opens with a specific moment, not a quotation or a dictionary definition
- [ ] Shows your qualities through stories instead of claiming them
- [ ] Explains "why dentistry" in a way only you could have written

- [ ] Every experience is followed by reflection
- [ ] Matches your experiences section, with no surprises
- [ ] Read aloud once, slowly, for rhythm and typos
- [ ] Reviewed by two or three trusted readers (an advisor, a writing center, a mentor)
- [ ] No patient names or private details

Draft space

PART 3

Letters of evaluation planner

Strong letters come from people who have watched you work. ADEA AADSAS accepts up to four letters of evaluation. Schools differ in what they want — a common pattern is two science faculty and one dentist — and some accept a committee letter instead. Check each school's requirements, and confirm how AADSAS counts a committee letter in your cycle.

Who will write for you

Writer	Role and how they know you	Date asked	Materials sent	Due	Received

What to send each writer

- [ ] Your CV or activities list
- [ ] A draft of your personal statement
- [ ] Two or three specific moments they saw you at your best
- [ ] Your school list and the date you plan to submit
- [ ] Clear instructions for submitting through ADEA AADSAS

Email templates

TEMPLATE A · ASKING A PROFESSOR

Subject: Letter of evaluation request — [Your name], [Course and semester]

Dear Professor [Last name],

I hope your semester is going well. I took your [course] in [semester], and I especially enjoyed [a specific topic or project]. I'm applying to dental school this cycle, and I would be grateful if you would consider writing a letter of evaluation for me.

I plan to submit in early June. If you're able to write a strong letter, I'd be happy to send my CV, a draft of my personal statement, and a few notes about my work in your class. The letter is submitted through ADEA AADSAS, and I'll send those instructions too.

Thank you for considering this — I know how busy this time of year is.

Warmly,
[Full name] · [Email] · [Phone]

TEMPLATE B · ASKING A DENTIST YOU SHADOWED

Subject: Letter of evaluation request — [Your name] (shadowing, [months])

Dear Dr. [Last name],

Thank you again for letting me shadow at [practice] from [month] to [month]. Watching you [a specific example, such as calming an anxious patient before treatment] showed me the kind of dentist I want to become.

I'm applying to dental school this cycle. Would you be willing to write a letter of evaluation describing what you observed during my time in your office? I can send my CV, a summary of my shadowing hours, and the ADEA AADSAS submission instructions. I'm hoping to submit in early June.

With gratitude,
[Full name]

TEMPLATE C · A GENTLE REMINDER (TWO WEEKS BEFORE YOUR DATE)

Subject: Friendly reminder — letter of evaluation for [Your name]

Dear [Name],

I wanted to send a quick, friendly reminder about the letter of evaluation for my dental school application. I'm aiming to submit by [date]. Please let me know if anything from me would be helpful. Thank you so much for your support.

[Full name]

TEMPLATE D · THANK YOU

Subject: Thank you

Dear [Name],

Thank you for writing a letter on my behalf. Your support means a great deal to me, and I'll be sure to let you know how my application goes.

With appreciation,
[Full name]

PART 4

Interview preparation

Interviews help schools learn how you think, communicate, and treat people. Formats vary: traditional one-on-one or panel interviews, multiple mini interviews (MMI) with short timed stations, group activities, and virtual interviews. Ask each school which format it uses, and practice that format out loud.

Three calm frameworks

For "Tell me about a time..."

Situation — set the scene briefly
Task — what you needed to do
Action — what *you* did
Result — what happened, and what you learned

For ethical scenarios

1. Clarify the facts and what you'd need to ask
2. Name who is affected: patient, team, public
3. Lay out two or three options
4. Choose one and explain why
5. Say how you'd prevent it next time

For "Why dentistry?"

Exposure — how you came to know dentistry
Experience — what you saw and did
Evidence — why you're suited and committed

Keep it specific. One real story beats five adjectives.

Question bank

Motivation and fit

- Why dentistry? Why not medicine or another health profession?
- Why our school?
- What will you bring to your class?
- Where do you see yourself in ten years?

Experiences and character

- Tell me about a time you worked on a team that struggled. What did you do?
- Describe a failure and what you changed afterward.
- Tell me about a patient interaction you observed that has stayed with you.
- How do you handle stress during a heavy semester?
- How have you shown manual dexterity?
- What is something not on your application that you'd like us to know?

Ethics and professionalism

- A patient asks for treatment you believe isn't in their best interest. What do you do?

- You notice a classmate copying answers during a quiz. What do you do?
- A patient can't afford the treatment they need. How do you respond?
- A dental assistant tells you a senior dentist cut a corner on infection control. What do you do?

The profession

- What are the biggest challenges facing dentistry today?
- How does oral health connect to overall health?
- How can dentists help improve access to care?
- What role should technology, including AI, play in dental care?

Questions you can ask them

- How early do students begin treating patients?
- What support do students have for wellness and academics?
- What do your graduates say they valued most?

Interview day checklist

- [ ] Confirm the time, place or video link, and format the day before
- [ ] Reread your application, especially your personal statement and experiences
- [ ] Prepare two or three questions for the school
- [ ] Lay out a professional outfit; for virtual interviews, test your camera, sound, and lighting
- [ ] Arrive or log in 15 minutes early
- [ ] Send a short thank-you note within a day or two

Practice notes

PART 5

School comparison worksheet

Choosing where to apply is about fit, not rankings. Use each school's website and the ADEA Official Guide to Dental Schools to fill this in. Give cost real attention — it shapes your life long after graduation.

School	In-state?	Tuition and fees per year	Cost of living	Class size	Clinic model and early patient care	Interview format	Fit (1–5)

Questions worth asking every school

- [ ] How early do students start treating patients?
- [ ] How is clinic time scheduled and supervised?
- [ ] What will I pay beyond tuition (instruments, fees, board exams)?
- [ ] Which scholarship and service programs do students here use?
- [ ] What community will I treat — and live in?

My final list

Priority	School	Why it fits me	Secondary due	Submitted
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				

Notes

Sources and where to confirm

Every cycle brings changes. Before you act on a date or rule in this kit, confirm it with the official source:

- **ADEA AADSAS Applicant Help Center** — cycle dates, application instructions, and the personal statement limit: help.liaisonedu.com (ADEA AADSAS)
- **ADEA GoDental: Letters of Evaluation** — how letters work in ADEA AADSAS: adea.org/godental/letters-of-evaluation
- **ADEA traffic guidelines** — when schools may extend offers and how long you have to respond: adea.org
- **American Dental Association: Dental Admission Test** — test content, scoring, fees, and the retest policy: ada.org/dat
- **ADEA AADSAS Fee Assistance Program** — eligibility and dates: faphelp.adea.org
- **ADEA Official Guide to Dental Schools** — each school's requirements, costs, and class profile

About ToothOps. ToothOps is a free guide for pre-dental and dental students, created by a dental student and HPSP recipient. All views are personal and do not reflect any school, military branch, or government agency. ToothOps is not affiliated with ADEA, the ADA, or any dental school, and does not promise admission or any other outcome.

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