

Licensing Requirements

Students at allopathic colleges of medicine (MD)	Students at osteopathic colleges of medicine (DO)
<p>During medical school, you're required to take and pass Step 1 and Step 2 of a three-step test called the United States Medical Licensing Examination® (USMLE®), which is sponsored by the Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB) and the National Board of Medical Examiners® (NBME®).</p> <p>Two of the steps are administered during medical school. The final step is completed during residency.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USMLE Step 1: Assessment of medical knowledge and foundational science • USMLE Step 2 (split into two tests): Assessment of knowledge of clinical science (USMLE Step 2 CK) and assessment of clinical skills (USMLE Step 2 CS) • USMLE Step 3: Assessment of whether you can apply medical knowledge and understanding of biomedical and clinical science in order to practice medicine without supervision 	<p>To graduate from medical school, you're required to take and pass Level 1 and Level 2 of a three-level test called the Comprehensive Osteopathic Medical Licensing Examination of the United States (COMLEX-USA), which is administered by the National Board of Osteopathic Medical Examiners.</p> <p>Two of the levels are administered during medical school. The final level is completed during residency.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COMLEX-USA Level 1: Assessment of medical knowledge and foundational science • COMLEX-USA Level 2 (split into two tests): Assessment of knowledge of clinical science (COMLEX-USA Level 2-CE) and assessment of clinical skills (COMLEX-USA Level 2-PE) • COMLEX-USA Level 3: Assessment of whether you can apply medical knowledge and understanding of biomedical and clinical science in order to practice medicine without supervision
<p>Scores on these exams serve as one crucial piece of eligibility criteria on residency applications and are required by most residencies during the application process. Make sure you're on schedule to complete the required exams in time for your scores to be shared with residencies.</p>	

SHOULD OSTEOPATHIC MEDICAL STUDENTS TAKE BOTH COMLEX AND USMLE?

Students at osteopathic colleges of medicine are required to take Levels 1 and 2 of COMLEX-USA to graduate from medical school. About half of DO students also take the USMLE exam as a safeguard for residency applications. **Most ACGME-accredited residencies—including 90%-95% of family medicine residency programs— accept COMLEX scores, but some still prefer or require USMLE scores.** While taking the USMLE may offer flexibility in residency eligibility, it poses a risk if your exam performance is variable. Taking both exams is also an additional cost.

Your Curriculum Vitae

A curriculum vitae (CV) is a multipurpose personal application form for employment, educational opportunities, honors/awards, presentations, research, and membership or participation in an organization. Learning to prepare a good CV now will help you throughout your professional life. One of the primary functions of a CV is to provide a succinct record of your experience and training. It's a living document that must be continually updated as you complete new experiences and accomplishments.

For additional information on developing your CV, visit www.aafp.org/medical-school-residency/residency/apply/cv.html. Also, the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) offers a CV template at <https://students-residents.aamc.org/training-residency-fellowship/article/preparing-your-curriculum-vitae/>.



CV TIPS

- **Start now:** Don't wait until late in your medical school years to seek leadership, research, scholarship, and other opportunities that can be listed on your CV. In addition, look for opportunities to publish your work or participate in extracurricular or volunteer efforts.
- **Keep it short:** In general, your CV shouldn't be lengthy. No matter how many accomplishments you list, you won't impress interviewers if they can't quickly pick out two or three good reasons to choose you over someone else. Let your CV help you put your best foot forward.
- **Be concise:** The language of a CV is abbreviated and succinct. Resist the temptation to add explanatory sentences or language. You'll distract the reader from the basic information being presented. When you apply for residency training, you'll have the opportunity to express yourself in a personal or biographical statement. When applying for a job or some other type of position in the future, you can include an appropriate cover letter with your CV to explain your particular qualifications for the position.
- **Make it orderly:** A chronological CV should be arranged in reverse chronological order, starting with where you are currently. You may choose to arrange each section of the CV chronologically.
- **Highlight your unique qualities:** An application form is limited to the few things that a particular institution wants to know about everybody, but a CV lets you highlight information that's unique to you. Add all your key accomplishments and activities in the initial draft. In subsequent drafts or different versions, you can remove information that isn't pertinent.
- **Customize it:** Your CV should be restructured and rewritten—or at least reviewed—for each purpose for which you use it. Some experts recommend maintaining two versions of your CV: a short summary of your training and experience, and a longer version with more detailed information about your publications and presentations.
- **Be entirely honest:** If you haven't accomplished anything in a certain category, leave it out. Don't create accomplishments to fill in the spaces or make changes to basic data to get around possible screening cutoffs programs use. Be honest and specific about your level of participation in a project or activity (e.g., don't say you were the president of a student organization at your school if you just coordinated the organization's membership recruitment). If program directors discover that you have presented false information on your application, it's possible for them to report you for academic dishonesty, disqualifying you from the Match.
- **Get expert advice:** Your dean's office may be able to share CV samples and provide additional guidance. In addition, student organizations at your school may host CV review events, and many regional and national conferences offer these services to attendees. Look for opportunities to have your CV reviewed through local and national student, medical, and specialty societies.

Table 3 provides an overview of the basic information captured in a CV. Keep in mind that your CV doesn't have to resemble those of other students who are applying to the same residency program. No residency program director is looking for a specific CV style. However, you will receive points for neatness and readability!

In Appendix A, you'll find a sample CV (adapted from a real-life example and edited for length and to preserve anonymity).

TABLE 3. CV Elements

Personal Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For consistency, give your name exactly as it appears in your medical school records. • Make sure you can be reached at the address, phone number, and email address that you list. Indicate whether there are certain dates when you should be reached at other locations. • Use a professional email address that you check often. For example, if your current personal email address is coolmedstudent@hotmail.com, you might want to create a more professional address, such as janedoe1@gmail.com. • Although some people include the following items, they are not necessary and probably should not be included on a CV: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social Security number - License number - Examination scores <p>If this information is pertinent to your candidacy, the program will request it on the application or at some later point in the application process.</p>
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List your current institution first on your CV, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Name of the institution - Degree sought or completed - Date of completion or date of expected completion • Include medical school, graduate education, and undergraduate education. Omit high school. • Later, you'll add separate categories for "Postgraduate Training" (includes residencies and fellowships), "Practice Experience," "Academic Appointments," and "Certification and Licensure."
Honors and Awards	It's appropriate to list any academic, organizational, or community awards or scholarships, but you must use your judgment about whether the achievement would be valuable to the person reading your CV.
Professional Society Memberships	List any professional organizations to which you belong and the years of your membership. Include leadership positions held, if any.
Employment Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List the position, organization, and dates of employment for each work experience. • Limit this list to experiences that are medically related (e.g., medical technician, nurse's aide, research assistant) or that show the breadth of your work experience (e.g., high school teacher, communications manager).
Extracurricular Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List your outside interests, volunteer service, and extracurricular activities to help develop a broader picture of your personality and character. • Highlight any special talents or qualifications that haven't been given due recognition in other parts of the CV. For example, include things such as fluency in other languages or a certification such as a private pilot's license.
Publications/ Presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List any papers you've published or presented, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Title - Name of publication or location of presentation - Date of publication or presentation • Works accepted for publication but not yet published can be listed as "(forthcoming)." • If this list is very lengthy, consider focusing on the highlights that most relate to your future goals.
Personal and Professional Interests	Include any information demonstrating your passion and drive that might not have been captured in other sections.
References	You may be asked to provide personal and professional references. These names may be included in the CV, appended as part of a cover letter or application form, or noted as "Provided Upon Request."

According to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, federal law prohibits employers from discriminating against any job applicant or employee on the basis of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy or child-rearing plans), national origin, age, disability, or genetic information. Some states and cities have laws that expand these protections. You do not have to provide information related to any protected categories during your interview or time in residency.

CVs in ERAS

Although CVs are not included as one of the standard Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS®) application documents, residency programs can create and print out a report in a CV format based on information in your application.

MyERAS will capture:

- Current and prior training (residency or post-residency)
- Education
- Language fluency
- Publications
- Work, volunteer, and research experience, including clinical experience, teaching experience, unpaid extracurricular activities, and committee service

You can view how your information will appear to programs by selecting the option to print or review your common application form in a CV format in MyERAS.

Developing a stand-alone CV is still recommended for the following reasons:

- It provides most, if not all, of the information needed to complete the ERAS application. Having this information before the dean's interview may reduce the amount of time you spend completing the application.
- Some residency programs may require a CV as supplemental information. Your designated dean's office can't attach your CV to your ERAS application, so you should consider having the CV available during interviews in case it's required by the program.
- You'll use your CV throughout your educational and professional career. Creating your own CV will give you more flexibility in what information you include and how it's structured.

"You want to write a personal statement that reflects a true understanding of family medicine and your passion for it—more than just 'I like everything, so I'm gonna pick family medicine,' and more than just, 'I had this impactful personal experience with a family doctor and I want to be just like him/her.'"

— MICHELLE BYRNE, MD, MPH,
CHICAGO, IL

Your Personal Statement

Every application you submit to a residency program should include a personal statement. The personal statement is how you give faculty members and current residents insight into who you are, what's unique about you as a potential residency candidate, and whether you're a good fit.

SHOW YOUR PERSONALITY

Remember, residency programs are screening thousands of applications, and individual faculty members and residents are likely to read hundreds of personal statements each year. They will appreciate a statement that showcases your personality. A great statement will be interesting, insightful, and specific, capturing why family medicine—particularly this residency program—is right for you. It should be written in your voice and make the reader excited to meet you.

SHOW YOUR EXPERIENCE

The personal statement is your opportunity to expand upon activities that are listed on the CV but deserve to be described so your reader can appreciate the breadth and depth of your involvement in them. It should not be another comprehensive list of your activities. Rather, it should provide details about key activities listed on your CV that have prepared you for residency. You may choose to relate significant personal experiences, but do so only if they are relevant to your candidacy for the residency program.

Your personal statement is also an appropriate place to address anything that may be ambiguous on your CV. In particular, you should address any non-traditional path you've taken through medical school, such as time off or an altered curricular journey. It's better to address these directly than to leave a program wondering.

Tip:

Pick a formative experience in your life or medical training and center your personal statement around that story. However, don't try to share everything. Being concise gives you the best possible chance of having your statement fully read and absorbed. One anecdote is usually enough.

SHOW YOUR GOALS

The personal statement is the appropriate place to specify your professional goals. You can put down on paper some clear, realistic, and carefully considered goals that will leave your reader with a strong impression of your maturity, self-awareness, and character.

Commitment is shown through your CV and personal statement. Make sure you showcase activities that relate to family medicine, like family medicine interest groups (FMIGs) and student-run free clinics. The best part about family medicine is the diversity. Most extracurricular activities can support your application!"

— KELLY BOSSENBROEK FEDORIW, MD, CHAPEL HILL, NC

If you choose to address academic or personal challenges in your statement, focus on what you've learned from those experiences and how they brought you to where you are now. Make sure to address these issues in a positive way, focusing on your path forward.

Tip:

Find a list of generic interview questions and journal your answers to as many of them as you can. Doing so can spark memories, reflections, and ideas that you can use to build your personal statement.

SHOW YOUR COMMITMENT

Be sure to emphasize specific reasons for your interest in family medicine and in the residency program. Demonstrated awareness and excitement about what is going on in family medicine can distinguish a good personal statement from a great one. For example, a student will demonstrate real interest and potential as a residency candidate by showing awareness of—or experience with—population health management, super-utilizers, care coordination, the Family Medicine for America's Health initiative, or other factors related to the specialty's impact and role in health care at a national level.

Good Writing Gets Noticed

In your personal statement, the quality of your writing is at least as important as the content. For the moment, forget everything you've learned in medical school about writing concise histories and physicals. Be sure to do the following when preparing your personal statement:

- Write in complete sentences.
- Avoid repetitive sentence structure.
- Avoid using jargon. If there's a shorter, simpler, less pretentious way of saying something, use it.
- Don't assume your reader knows the acronyms and abbreviations you use. As a courtesy, spell everything out.
- Use a dictionary and spell check.
- Use a thesaurus. Variety in the written language can add interest (but don't get carried away!).

Get writing help if you think you need it. For a crash course in good writing, try *The Elements of Style, Fourth Edition*, Strunk and White, Pearson, 1999. If you have friends or relatives with writing or editing skills, enlist their help. Student organizations at your school may host personal statement clinics or your school may offer review services. In addition, local and national student, medical, and specialty societies may offer personal statement reviews or workshops.

It's very important for your personal statement to be an original composition. It's fine to get some help from others, but make sure your personal statement is your original work. Remember, in the early part of the residency selection process, your writing style is the only factor reviewers can use to learn about you personally.

Personal Statements in ERAS

ERAS lets applicants create one or more personal statements that can be earmarked for specific programs. Some programs ask applicants to address specific questions in their personal statements.

Your personal statement(s) must be assigned individually to each program. The MyERAS website describes how to complete the document and assign personal statements to individual programs using MyERAS.

After you submit a personal statement, you may still be able to edit or update it in ERAS. However, if you revise your personal statement after a program has reviewed your application, the changes you make are likely to go unnoticed.

Your Letters of Recommendation

Programs may ask you to submit both personal and professional letters of recommendation (LoRs). They can be very valuable to program directors looking for distinguishing characteristics among the many applications they receive. While CVs and personal statements have many similarities from candidate to candidate, LoRs are an opportunity to emphasize factors that set you apart as a candidate. The quality of your LoRs may be a key element of the strength of your application.

It's easy to procrastinate when it comes to requesting LoRs. You may think you don't know someone well enough to ask for a

letter, or that too much time has passed since you interacted with a potential letter author (usually an attending physician or community faculty). It's in your best interest to avoid making these excuses.

POTENTIAL LoR AUTHORS

Starting in your third year of medical school, you should begin to identify LoR authors. The following are good options to choose from:

- Someone from a rotation that was requested by a specific program's application requirements
- Someone from a rotation in which you did well that relates to your chosen field
- Someone who knows you well instead of someone who doesn't, if possible. This is more important than the professional position of a letter author. For example, a faculty member who worked directly with you while you were on a rotation can write a stronger letter than the chair of the department, who may not have had much contact with you.
- At least one person who is likely to be recognized by the residency program, if possible
- Someone who can judge your clinical skills and intentions, not just someone who is a friend
- Someone who is a mentor in your specialty of choice

Avoid requesting a letter from a resident or fellow. They may have the best knowledge of your clinical skills, but the attending should write your LoR. Help the attending by providing the names of the residents and fellows with whom you worked so he or she can consult them for input, if necessary.

Tips From the Experts

- “I think having a variety of faculty is important [for LoRs]. Try to have different specialties represented since family medicine is so broad. Also, it’s helpful to have writers who have seen you work out in the community.”
– ROMERO SANTIAGO, MD, MPH, SACRAMENTO, CA
- “Ask [the person] early/midway through the rotation experience if they can write a positive letter of support for you. Then, you have to formally request the letter through ERAS. Do this as soon as possible and be ready to request the letter officially as soon as ERAS opens for any third-year rotation letters. Even if this means asking before you have a personal statement done, earlier is better (but still share a draft [of your statement] if you can). Provide [the LoR authors] with everything they could need and more. Letter writers are busy, and the more fodder you can provide to trigger their own memories and reflections, the better. Help them help you.”
– KATIE HARTL, MD, TUCSON, AZ
- “First and foremost, ask people who know you well. Don’t fixate on someone’s title or position. Regardless of someone’s rank or title, a very strong letter goes a long way. Also, ask the person if they can honestly write a strong letter on your behalf. Give them an opportunity to say no. Don’t pressure them. In family medicine, you can have LoRs from physicians in any field. However, make sure you have at least one LoR from [a family physician], plus [the] family medicine department chair, if available.”
– ALEXA MIESES, MD, MPH, DURHAM, NC
- “Advocate for yourself by offering specific examples of experiences you had together, for example: ‘Dr. A, I remember when I worked with you on inpatient pediatrics that we worked with the three-year-old patient who continued to have asthma exacerbations, and you were grateful that I took the time to explore the social and environmental aspects of the family’s life that may have been causing these recurrent episodes.’ Remind [LoR authors] of positive feedback they gave you at the time so they can include it.”
– MICHELLE BYRNE, MD, MPH, CHICAGO, IL

BEST PRACTICES FOR REQUESTING LoRS

- **Follow instructions:** Residency programs might dismiss applicants who don't follow their application guidelines. Some programs specify certain departments or rotations from which the LoRs should originate or require a letter from a person who is not involved in the medical profession. **It's especially important to be sure you submit exactly the required number of letters to each program.** Most programs request three. Sending in more letters than requested can make it look like you didn't review the program's application guidelines carefully enough or like you're trying to make up for a deficiency in another area by overcompensating with LoRs. Additionally, some programs review only the first letters to arrive up to the number they request, and subsequent letters are ignored.

- **Declare your intentions:** If you're planning to ask someone to write a letter of recommendation for you at the end of a rotation, let the potential author know upfront. During the rotation, he or she will be able to take note of what stands out about you. If your performance on the rotation is "letter-worthy," you can follow up on your initial request once he or she knows you well enough to write a letter.

- **Plan ahead:** Allow at least one month from the time you request a letter until it must be submitted. Faculty are busy, may be traveling or otherwise unavailable at the time of the initial request, and usually have multiple letters to write.

- **Provide helpful information:** Help the person preparing your letter by providing your CV, personal statement, and photo, and then making a 15-minute appointment to review your CV with him or her, if appropriate. Additional personal information may also be useful, particularly if you can remind the LoR author of a specific event or situation in which you think you performed well on his or her rotation.

If you missed the opportunity to request LoRs from previous rotations, don't wait too long to reach out to potential LoR authors.

Letters of Recommendation in ERAS

MyERAS allows you to request as many letters of recommendation as you deem necessary through the following process:

1. You enter the LoR authors you've chosen into MyERAS.
2. The system generates a letter request form you can email, mail, or deliver in person to each of the authors.
3. LoR authors register through ERAS on the Letter of Recommendation Portal. They use a letter ID provided on the original letter request form to submit completed letters online. New letters may be submitted on your behalf at any point during application season.

Please note: MyERAS will only allow you to assign up to four LoRs per program.

In MyERAS, you select whether to waive your right to see completed LoRs when they are submitted. Keep in mind that program directors and LoR authors will be able to see your selection. Reserving the right to review submitted letters may convey that you're concerned about what was written about you, regardless of your actual reason for viewing your LoRs. Even if you waive your right, LoR authors may choose to share their letters with you directly for your reference and to show support.

Medical Student Performance Evaluation

The medical student performance evaluation (MSPE) is an important part of your application for residency training. Guidelines have been created to help medical schools evaluate the applicant's entire medical school career.

MSPE RELEASE DATE

MSPEs (also called dean's letters) are released to residency programs on October 1 each year. Whether you're applying to your desired programs via ERAS or via other channels, schools will not release the MSPE until October 1.

ERAS is programmed to embargo the MSPE at the ERAS PostOffice until 12:01 a.m. on October 1. The only exception is MSPEs for fellowship applicants. They are available to fellowship programs as soon as they are transmitted from the ERAS Fellowships Documents Office.

PREPARATION FOR THE MSPE

At many medical schools, the process of creating an MSPE entails a meeting with your dean or his or her designee so the evaluation can reflect some personal insight into your performance and career goals. Questions to address in preparation for the MSPE include the following:

- When can you begin scheduling appointments to visit with the dean?
- Whom should you contact to schedule an appointment?
- What resources should you have in preparation for your meeting with the dean? Should you have a draft of your CV and personal statement ready? What other information (e.g., transcripts, list of potential residency programs) should you bring along?
- How do you obtain the MSPE to send to residency programs that are not participating in ERAS?
- How long does it take for the MSPE to be drafted, signed, and sent out?
- Will you have the opportunity to review your MSPE before it is sent out?

Misdemeanor/Felony Questions

The American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) requires all participating specialty boards to have guidelines for professionalism as part of specialty certification and recertification. Applicants are required to answer questions concerning felony or misdemeanor convictions.