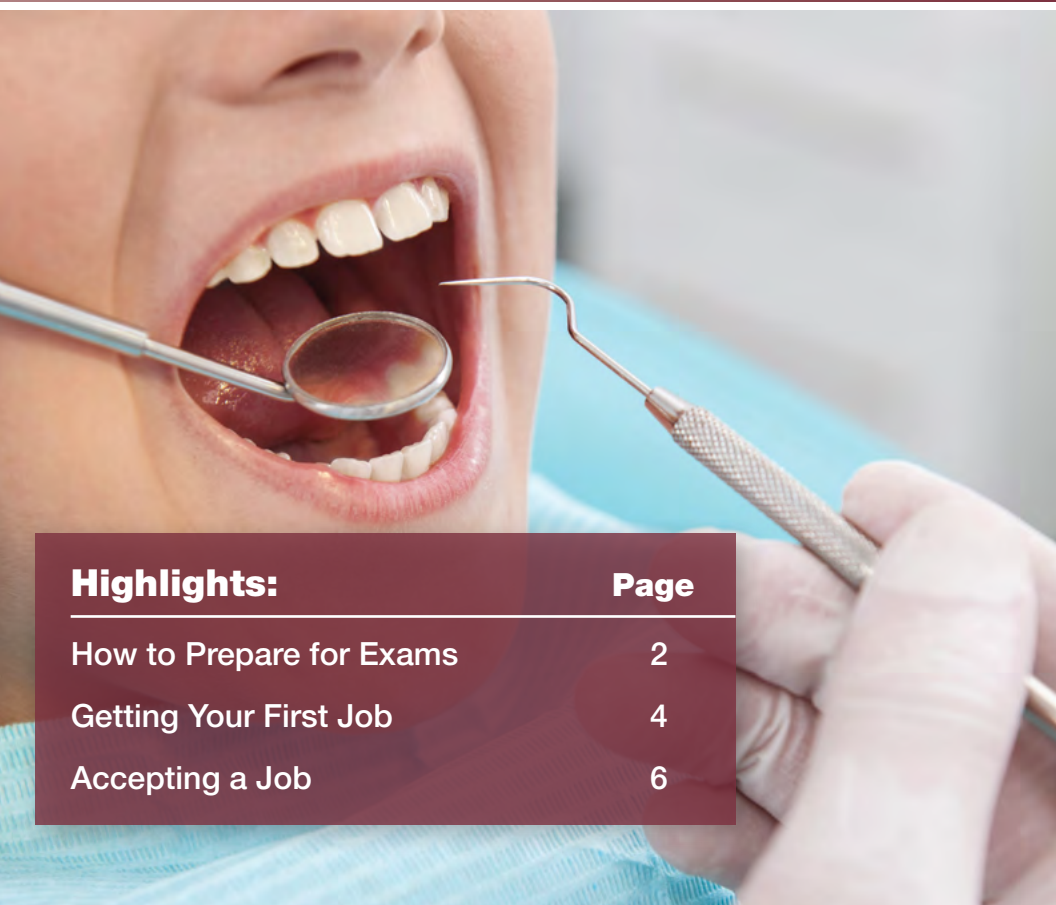


Your Roadmap to Success in Dentistry **YEAR FOUR**

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HOW TO PREPARE FOR EXAMS

Welcome to your last year of dental school! You have come so far in the last few years and are nearly ready to embark on your next adventure – starting your career in dentistry! While it may feel like there is so much to do between now and graduation, try to take time to stop and enjoy your final year and be proud of how far you have come. You’ve made it this far, you’ve got this.

Since you want to do your best on your licensing exams, it is a good idea to start doing some exam prep. Being more prepared will help to alleviate your nerves during the test and ensure that you have the knowledge you will need fresh in your mind.

Written Exams

All licensing boards use the National Board Dental Examinations (NBDE) to satisfy a major portion of their written exam requirements. Because this exam is so broadly used, you will have an array of study materials available to you.

One of the most valuable study resources is reprinted NBDE exams. You can purchase reprints of past NBDE tests through American Student Dental Association (ASDA) to see what types of questions that you might come across and help you to correlate your theoretical knowledge to the case-based style of questions that the NBDE will feature.

There are also a variety of other resources options to choose from depending on your learning style. These range from NBDE review books, decks of flashcards, online review courses, and even test prep apps for your phone. You can find a list of these study materials at asdanet.org/taking-the-nbdes.aspx



HOW TO PREPARE FOR EXAMS

Clinical Exams

The licensure exam in Massachusetts may be administered by multiple agencies. See this map for specifics about MA requirements www.dentallicensure.org/en/news-and-resources/dental-licensure-by-state-map. You can best prepare for your clinical exam by reviewing the exam manual for the test that you are preparing to take. The manuals will outline the format of the exam, how the exam will be scored, and what procedural content to expect. Be aware that you may need to bring a live patient to your exam. You can view the manuals at the website for the testing agency.

In addition to taking advantage of the aforementioned review materials, you can also implement these basic study tips to help you boost your performance.

1. Make a study plan. There is a lot of material that you will need to make sure that you are familiar with, so creating a schedule of when you intend to study and what material you need to cover can help you make the task more manageable.
2. Take breaks. If you find yourself having a hard time concentrating after studying for a while, take a break – go for a walk, call a friend, or have a cup of coffee. This short break can help you to improve your focus when you go back to hitting the books.
3. Collaborate with study partners. Studying with a classmate can both help to motivate you and make the experience more fun. A study partner can also be a great resource as they might be especially knowledgeable about a subject that you struggle with and vice versa.
4. Try to stay relaxed the day of the exam. Make sure that you get a good night's sleep before your exam. While it can be stressful, you should have faith in your hard work and ability.



GETTING YOUR FIRST JOB

By this stage of dental school, you probably have a good idea of what area of the dental profession you would like to begin your career in. You may be wondering where you should practice, how you will find a job, what interview skills you will need, amongst many other questions. Remember that you don't have to figure out the answers all at once!

Where to Practice

When you are considering where you would like to practice dentistry, you should consider these factors:

1. Where do you want to live? The answer to this question is very personal and as such will vary widely between you and your peers. Being where you want to be will be an important component in both choosing a job and your future job satisfaction.
2. Supply and demand is also something you should be considering. In areas where demand for dental professionals is high, but there are few dentists practicing, you will find a wealth of job opportunities. When the opposite is true, there are more dentists practicing than the number of patients demands. In that case, you will find that it is more competitive and difficult to find a job.

You can find statistics on the supply and demand for dentists through the ADA Health Policy Institute at ada.org/science-research/health-policy-institute

Finding Job Opportunities

It is never too soon to start looking for opportunities and there are many great resources available to you as you begin your search. Here are a few places to begin searching:

- Visit the MDS Career Center at massdental.org/career-center
- Utilize any career placement services that your school may offer.
- Call doctors in the area where you are looking to practice to see if they are hiring.
- Network with upperclassmen or recent graduates to see if they have heard about any opportunities.

GETTING YOUR FIRST JOB

Interviewing

While interviews can be intimidating, you should remember that this is an opportunity for you to interview the employer as well. They will want to know what sort of employee you will be, and you want to know if the practice is a place you could be happy working.

Be prepared when you go into an interview:

- Research the practice before you go to an interview so you understand their culture and mission.
- Dress for success. Even if the office seems more casual, it is better to be overdressed than underdressed.
- Bring copies of your résumé and cover letter in case they do not have them on hand.

They will ask you basic questions that will focus on what you value in terms of autonomy, teamwork, and benefits. How do you feel about each of these? They also may ask broad questions just to see how you'll answer. Try to prepare for how you'd answer: Why do you want to work here? Why should I hire you? What is your greatest strength and what is your greatest weakness?

You will have the opportunity to ask them questions as well. Aside from the obvious (benefits and pay calculation), you'll want to ask: What's their experience working with employee dentists? Why are they hiring now? Who is responsible for lab fees? What is the distribution of hygiene revenue? Ask to chat with a former or current dentist employee to get an idea of the day-to-day operations at that practice. It's possible that you will be interviewing at multiple practices and these questions can help you choose which will be the best fit for you.

Be sure to send a thank-you note after the interview. Follow-up is critical, especially when the employer is wavering between a couple of candidates. Reiterate your skills and experience, and reference your prior conversation to help differentiate yourself and remind them that you're still very much interested in the position.



ACCEPTING A JOB

Once you are offered a job, the first thing you should do is ask if you can get the offer in writing. You will also want to see the employment contract. A written agreement can help answer questions about the relationship in advance and reduce the likelihood of misunderstandings.

If you are not satisfied with the offer that is made, you can make a counter offer to try to find a middle ground that both parties are comfortable with.

Contract Terms

The contract will reflect the type of employment that you are entering into.

Included in your contract you will usually find:

- Parties – who is bound to this contract (usually the practice owner and you)
- Term – duration of contract and renewal options
- Conditions – what the practice will provide, what you will provide
- Compensation structure
- Non-compete clauses
- Dispute resolution
- Termination clauses

Always have a lawyer or dental contract expert review the terms of your contract! It is best to find a lawyer who has experience with dental contracts. If you need help finding a lawyer, you can contact the MDS for assistance by calling the Member Assistance Center at **800.342.8747**.



ACCEPTING A JOB

Methods of Compensation

There are many methods of compensation currently in use and new ones are often being developed.

Your compensation could be **salaried** – being paid a fixed amount of income for a fixed number of hours.

Your compensation could be **production-based** commission – being paid based on how much dentistry you are producing.

Your compensation could be **collection-based commission** – being paid a percentage of monthly collections by the owner of the practice.

Signing Day

Your ASDA membership will end upon your graduation, but hopefully your contributions to organized dentistry will not. The MDS hosts Signing Day events to transition students from ASDA membership to ADA/state/local district (tripartite) membership so they can continue to contribute to the dental community.

When you attend Signing Day at your school you will have the opportunity to learn what tripartite membership has to offer from new dentists and speakers from the MDS and Eastern Dentists Insurance Company (EDIC).

It is important to complete the online Signing Day application even if you are not staying in Massachusetts after graduation so that the ADA can transfer your membership to another state.



Health & Wellness Tip

Take care of yourself during exams!

Amidst the chaos of preparing for exams and graduation, it can be easy to forget to take care of yourself. You can't do your best if you don't treat yourself well.

Here are some self-care tips for when you are feeling burnt out:

- **Go outside.** It's easy to stay inside all day when you're hitting the books, but going outside for some fresh air can be a great mood booster.
- **Stay hydrated.** Staying hydrated can improve your skin, keep you energized and more alert, and improve how you feel overall. If you're planning to study for a couple of hours, grab a bottle of water and try to finish it by the time that you're done.
- **Do something creative.** Doing something creative can help to change your mindset and relieve tension.
- **Exercise.** Exercising is a great way to release endorphins and clear your mind.

If you're still feeling stretched too thin despite trying to take care of yourself, don't hesitate to talk to someone about how you're feeling overwhelmed. Your friends and family are on your team and can provide a sympathetic ear or pep talk when you need one. Your school also offers support services for students and they're always there to offer you help with everything from study tips to counseling.

