VMBARS MEDICINE

After You Submit: A Practical Guide to the Medical School Application Waiting Period

A focused plan and application tracker for the months between submission and the next decision

Your application is fixed at the moment of submission. Your candidacy is not.

The waiting period is a chance to keep building the work, relationships, judgment, and readiness that medical schools may later evaluate. This guide turns that time into a manageable five-part plan: Engage, Connect, Grow, Communicate, and Prepare.

VMBARS Medicine applicant resource

How to Use This Guide

Submission is a transition point. The strongest post-submission approach is steady rather than frantic: continue meaningful commitments, deepen relationships, document real progress, communicate only when there is a clear purpose, and prepare before an invitation arrives.

Use the framework below to decide what deserves your time. Then use the tracker on the final page to manage school-specific policies, updates, contacts, and next actions.

Area	Core question	Practical focus
Engage	What am I continuing?	Stay active in academics, research, clinical work, service, employment, and other commitments that matter.
Connect	Who should remain in the loop?	Maintain genuine relationships with mentors, supervisors, letter writers, and appropriate school contacts.
Grow	Where can I show development?	Look first for initiative, responsibility, and depth within work you already do.
Communicate	Is there a reason to contact this school?	Follow the school's policy and send concise, useful information through the correct channel.
Prepare	What can I do before an invitation?	Know likely formats, refresh school research, maintain a story bank, and follow current health care issues.

A Sustainable Weekly Rhythm

- Continue your existing commitments with reliability and attention.
- Record meaningful developments while the details are fresh.
- Review one or two schools at a time rather than researching the entire list at once.
- Set a recurring tracker review so that policy checks and next actions do not depend on memory.

Engage

Keep doing the work that made your application credible. If you are still in school, remain academically engaged. If you are working, volunteering, conducting research, or gaining clinical exposure, continue showing up and look for ways to contribute. The goal is not constant activity for its own sake. It is evidence that your interests and commitments continued after you pressed Submit.

What Engagement Can Look Like

- Sustaining academic performance and choosing appropriate challenge.
- Continuing research and being able to explain what you are learning or contributing.
- Taking on greater responsibility in clinical, service, community, or workplace settings.
- Following through on projects or goals already described in your application.
- Keeping a short record of outcomes, milestones, and lessons that may later support an update or interview response.

Consistency matters even if the current cycle does not end in an acceptance. Continued work can strengthen a future application and, more importantly, shows that the path to medicine is not dependent on one admissions outcome.

Connect

The people who supported your application remain part of your professional network. Mentors, faculty members, supervisors, principal investigators, physicians, employers, and letter writers may want to hear how the cycle is progressing. A brief, genuine update can keep the relationship active without making every interaction a request.

Relationship Management During the Cycle

- Thank people who supported your application and share meaningful milestones when appropriate.
- Keep letter writers informed, especially when your work with them has developed since the original letter.
- Ask mentors for perspective when circumstances change or when you need help interpreting a difficult decision.
- Use virtual fairs and information sessions to learn. If a representative gives specific advice, an appropriate later follow-up may acknowledge how you used it.
- Do not overuse a connection or treat access to a person as a shortcut to an interview.

Grow

Growth does not have to mean adding another activity. Before expanding your schedule, ask whether you can go deeper in work that already matters to you. Initiative, stronger judgment, sustained contribution, and increased responsibility often tell a more coherent story than a late collection of unrelated experiences.

Go Deeper Before Wider

Deeper growth	Wider growth
Lead a defined piece of an existing project	Add a new role that fills a real gap
Take ownership of follow-through or coordination	Begin a new clinical, research, or service experience
Improve a process or resource for the people you serve	Pursue relevant coursework or structured training
Mentor, train, or support newer team members	Explore a neglected interest with a clear reason
Reflect on what changed in your understanding	Expand only when you can sustain the commitment

Set Goals You Can Explain

Choose goals that are specific enough to guide action and meaningful enough to discuss. A useful goal names the setting, the contribution you intend to make, and how you will recognize progress. Keep notes on what you did, what changed, and what you learned. Those details are more useful than a vague list of hours.

A Simple Reflection Prompt

1. What responsibility or skill am I developing?
2. Who benefits from the work and how am I contributing?
3. What evidence will show that the work has changed or deepened?
4. Would this development add useful information to my application?

Communicate

Admissions communication should have a job. Before contacting a school, identify the new information, the purpose of the message, the school's policy, and the correct submission channel. If the message does not help the reader understand a meaningful development or resolve a real logistical issue, it may not need to be sent.

Purposeful Communication

- Lead with the reason for writing and the most relevant new information.
- Connect the update to qualities or commitments already visible in your application without retelling your biography.
- Explain continued interest in terms of the school's program, community, or values, and how you would participate.
- Use a professional tone with every member of the admissions team and school community.
- Keep the message concise. Do not make the reader search for the point.

School Specific Policies Come First

Update rules vary. Some schools accept updates through an applicant portal, some use email, and some do not accept additional material. Recommendation updates may also have separate instructions. Check the current admissions website or applicant portal for every school before sending anything, and record the policy in the tracker.

Before You Send Anything

Check	Question
Policy	Does the school accept this type of update at this stage?
Method	Should it go through the portal, email, or another channel?
Substance	Is the development meaningful, specific, and new?
Timing	Has enough changed since the last communication?
Fit	Can you explain continued interest without repeating the secondary?
Quality	Is the message concise, accurate, and professionally edited?

Meaningful Update Letters

An update letter should update. It is most useful when it gives the admissions committee substantive information that was not available in the original application. A message that only says you remain interested usually adds little because applying already demonstrates interest.

Developments That May Merit an Update

- A new role, responsibility, or sustained achievement in clinical work, research, service, employment, or academics.
- A significant project milestone, publication, presentation, award, certification, or academic result.
- A clear change in applicant status, such as being placed on a waitlist, when the school permits further communication.
- A new or updated recommendation letter from someone who can speak to substantial recent work, when the school accepts it.

A Strong Update Structure

1. State the purpose of the message and identify the meaningful development.
2. Describe what changed, what you contributed, and why it matters.
3. Connect the development to your preparation for medicine or to a relevant quality already present in your candidacy.
4. Briefly reaffirm school-specific interest and the contribution you hope to make there.
5. Close with appreciation and any required identifying information.

Timing and Frequency

There is no universal schedule. Send an update when you have something worth sharing and the school allows it. Avoid sending messages so frequently that each one contains only minor changes. Track the date, substance, and destination of every communication so that later decisions are based on facts rather than memory.

Letters of Interest and Intent

Terminology and weight vary by school. A general expression of interest is not a substitute for new information. Language that a school is your first choice should be used sparingly and truthfully, usually only when your status and the school's process make it relevant. Never make the same exclusive commitment to more than one school.

Prepare

Interview invitations can arrive with limited lead time. Preparation is easier when it begins before the invitation, but this guide intentionally keeps the interview material brief. Use a dedicated medical school interview preparation guide for full practice plans, sample questions, ethical scenarios, and format-specific coaching.

Pre Interview Readiness

- Know which formats your schools may use, including traditional interviews, multiple mini interviews, group interviews, and relevant situational judgment assessments.
- Review each school's mission, curriculum, clinical setting, communities served, student opportunities, and interview format.
- Prepare thoughtful questions that help you evaluate the program and show that you understand what the school values.
- Follow credible reporting and primary professional sources on current health care issues so you can discuss them thoughtfully.
- Practice communicating clearly on camera and in person, including concise responses and professional logistics.

Maintain a Story Bank

Build a small set of experiences that you know well enough to use flexibly. The goal is not memorized speeches. Record a few bullet points for each story: the situation, your role, the action you took, the result, and what you learned. Map stories to qualities commonly explored in interviews, such as teamwork, adaptability, service, scientific inquiry, cultural humility, leadership, resilience, and ethical judgment.

Research for Fit

Do not reduce school fit to a future specialty outcome. Learn how the school describes its priorities and the kind of community it is building. Then consider how your experiences, interests, and intended contributions align with those priorities. Prepare questions that will help you decide whether the program supports the physician and community member you hope to become.

When Logistics Are Difficult

If an interview date, travel requirement, or format creates a genuine barrier, contact the school promptly and professionally. Explain the constraint, ask what options are available, and avoid assuming that a respectful logistical question will be viewed negatively.

What Not to Do

- Do not stop meaningful activities simply because the application was submitted.
- Do not manufacture updates or add commitments only to create something to report.
- Do not send an empty note that only asks the school to review your file or repeats that you are interested.
- Do not ignore school-specific rules or use the wrong submission channel.
- Do not send updates so often that the new information becomes trivial.
- Do not retell your full biography in every message.
- Do not treat a school representative or personal connection as a route around the process.
- Do not communicate carelessly with staff, students, interviewers, or other members of the school community.
- Do not tell multiple schools that each is your one first choice.
- Do not wait for an invitation to begin basic interview preparation.

Your Next Thirty Days

1. Audit your current commitments and choose one realistic way to deepen your contribution.
2. Send appropriate progress notes to mentors or letter writers you want to keep informed.
3. Check and record the update policy and submission method for every school.
4. Start a development log with dates, responsibilities, outcomes, and lessons.
5. Review a few schools each week and record questions you would ask during an interview or information session.
6. Build or refresh a story bank and identify gaps that require more reflection or practice.
7. Set a recurring date to review the tracker and choose the next action for each school.

Important note Admissions policies change and vary by school. Verify current instructions on each school's official admissions website or applicant portal before submitting additional material.

Post Submission Application Tracker

Review this page on a consistent schedule. Confirm policies before every submission and keep each next action specific enough to complete.

School	Updates Accepted?	Submission Method	Last Update	Meaningful New Development	Interview Prep Status	Relevant Contacts	Next Action

Tracker reminder A meaningful update should be new, specific, relevant, and permitted. “Next action” should name the task and a date, such as “Confirm portal policy by Oct 5” or “Draft update after research presentation.”