



Know Your Chances & Build Your School List

A practical, evidence-based workbook for deciding when to apply, where to apply, and why each school belongs.

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START HERE

What this guide can - and cannot - tell you

Admissions is not a slot machine, but it is not a calculator either. The goal is to replace vague hope with a disciplined decision process.

THIS GUIDE HELPS YOU

- Separate eligibility from competitiveness.
- Assess metrics, experiences, attributes, and narrative coherence.
- Research schools with the same evidence fields every time.
- Build a balanced list you can afford and execute.
- Identify a specific reason to apply now or wait.

IT DOES NOT

- Predict an individual admission outcome.
- Create a true “safety” school. None exists.
- Replace current school websites, MSAR, Choose DO Explorer, or application-service instructions.
- Override advice from an advisor who knows your full record.

Annual-update rule: Verify every prerequisite, residency policy, deadline, test requirement, and fee during your application cycle. Mark the date you checked each one.

HOW TO USE IT

- 1 Audit yourself.** Complete pages 5-12 without naming schools.
- 2 Decide readiness.** Apply now only if the full file is defensible.
- 3 Research schools.** Use primary sources, not reputation lists.
- 4 Balance the portfolio.** Stress-test mission, geography, cost, and secondary workload.

Educational information only. Admissions decisions are school-specific and change over time.

FRAMEWORK

The decision model

A strong list is the intersection of five questions. If one answer is “no,” the school should usually leave the list.

01

ELIGIBLE?

Coursework, degree status, citizenship/residency, test age, campus restrictions, technical standards.

02

CREDIBLE?

Your record demonstrates academic readiness and sustained engagement with medicine and service.

03

ALIGNED?

Your experiences and goals genuinely overlap with the school’s mission and communities.

04

LIVABLE?

The learning model, geography, support systems, and clinical environment work for you.

05

EXECUTABLE?

You can pay for and complete the primary, secondary, interview, and decision process well.

THE RULE

Do not keep a school because it is famous, familiar, or “worth a shot.”
Keep it because the evidence supports a coherent application.

AAMC describes holistic review as balancing **experiences, attributes, and metrics** in light of institutional mission. That is the logic of this workbook. [1]

YOUR STARTING HYPOTHESIS

I am applying in the _____ cycle. My strongest evidence is _____. My largest unresolved risk is _____.

STEP 1 • ELIGIBILITY

Start with hard eligibility gates

A school can be a perfect philosophical fit and still be a wasted application if you do not meet a non-negotiable requirement.

Gate	What to verify	Evidence	Checked
Degree / credit	Required degree or minimum credits; institution type accepted	Official admissions page	☐
Prerequisites	Courses, labs, AP/IB, online courses, community-college policy	School page + MSAR	☐
MCAT	Required, oldest accepted date, latest testing date, minimums	School page + service guide	☐
Situational tests	PREview, Casper, or other assessment and deadline	School page	☐
Residency	In-state preference, regional ties, legal residence rules	School policy + MSAR	☐
Citizenship	U.S. citizen, permanent resident, DACA, or international eligibility	School page + MSAR	☐
Letters	Committee letter, science faculty, clinician, research mentor rules	School page	☐
Program / campus	MD, DO, MD/PhD, rural track, branch-campus restrictions	Program page	☐

Two-source rule: if MSAR and a school website disagree, treat the school's current admissions page as controlling and ask the admissions office when the discrepancy affects eligibility. Record the response.

GATE LOG

School: _____ Issue: _____ Source/date: _____

Resolution or question sent: _____

STEP 2 • SELF-ASSESSMENT

Audit your academic readiness

Numbers are not your identity. They are evidence that you can manage the scientific and cognitive demands of medical school.

RECORD THE FACTS

Overall undergraduate GPA	_____
BCPM / science GPA	_____
Recent 30-45 credits GPA	_____
Post-bacc / graduate GPA	_____
MCAT total / date	_____
MCAT sections	___ / ___ / ___ / ___
Attempts	_____

READ THE PATTERN

- ☐ Consistent performance across semesters
- ☐ Upward trend after a weak start
- ☐ Strong recent science work
- ☐ No isolated section score likely to trigger concern
- ☐ Prerequisites completed or scheduled
- ☐ Test timing fits the cycle

Context is not an eraser.

Explain constraints briefly, then show what changed and what evidence now supports readiness.

THREE-SENTENCE ACADEMIC INTERPRETATION

- 1. Baseline:** What does the full transcript show?
- 2. Inflection:** If performance changed, when and why?
- 3. Proof:** What recent evidence best predicts success now?

Use the application service’s GPA calculation, not only your institution’s displayed GPA. Course classification rules can change the result.

FREE PREVIEW · WHAT'S INSIDE THE FULL GUIDE

Know Your Chances & Build Your School List

You've read the opening pages. Here is everything else the guide covers:

- The five-question decision framework
- Step 1: eligibility gates and the gate log
- Step 2: honest self-assessment — metrics in context
- Experiences, attributes, and narrative audit
- Risk audit and the readiness decision
- Step 3: building your school universe
- Geography, mission, academic, and life-fit filters
- Step 4: portfolio design with the decision tool
- Longlist worksheet and the stress test
- Cost, capacity, and special situations
- Worked examples, 7-day plan, submission checkpoint

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