

THE MEDICAL STUDENT GUIDE

A RESOURCE TO GUIDE THROUGH THE MATCH



The Match

You will make some important decisions during your fourth year. Your decisions will significantly impact where you will train as residents. To make the most informed decisions about your graduate medical education, you must obtain as much valid and reliable information as you can so that you can make wise decisions.

This resource will:

- give you a timeline of important dates of the residency application/interview/match process
- indicate ways to get information about residency programs
- suggest ways to assess residency programs before you apply
- provide information about the Early Match, NRMP, and the Couples Match
- describe how to obtain letters of recommendation
- give you important information about the Medical Student Performance Evaluation (aka the “Dean’s Letter”)
- describe the Electronic Residency Application System (ERAS)
- give you information about writing your curriculum vitae and personal statement
- give you important information about scheduling interviews
- describe how to shine before, during, and after interviews
- provide hints on travel and lodging during the application/interview process
- suggest guidelines for post-interview program correspondence
- explain how to arrange and submit your Rank Order List (ROL), and
- discuss Match Week activities

One caveat: Another invaluable residency resource is the [AAMC’s Roadmap to Residency](#). This AAMC resource and this guide supplement each other. Thus, you must use these resources and your network of peers, residents, faculty, administrators, and other support personnel to ensure that you’re happy on Match Day.

Congratulations on reaching this milestone, and best wishes for a productive and exciting fourth year!

Important Notice: Due to the ongoing uncertainty related to the COVID-19 pandemic, all deadlines and information may be subject to change. The UTRGV School of Medicine Student Affairs team will be monitoring and updating information received from AAMC, ERAS, NRMP, and individual programs as they become available.

Careers in Medicine Team

Careers in Medicine

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley School of Medicine

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Overview of the Residency Application/Interview/Match Process

The following timelines identify the major events of the NRMP Match and Early Match. Use them to see what's ahead and "check off" events you do them. Complete the tasks "on time" to reduce stress and enhance likelihood of matching.

	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March
NRMP Match	Research program information ERAS tokens issued in early June		Register with NRMP Preliminary class rank distributed	Complete application and apply to program via ERAS. Sept. 14: Transcripts loaded to ERAS Sept. 15: Deadline for reviewing MSPE's Sept. 15: LoRs uploaded to ERAS. Residencies start downloading applications Sept. 25: Final class rank Oct. 1: MSPE's released		Interviews (Recommend month off)			Enter NRMP Rank Order Lists 1/15-2/21	MATCH DAY! March 18, 2022
Early Match	Request information and applications									
		Submit applications								
						Interviews (Recommended month off)		ROL submitted during Dec-Jan	Match results released mid-late Jan	

Important information for both NRMP and Early Match Participants

← On October 1, ERAS releases MSPE's to programs (transcripts are transmitted prior to the application date of September 15th).

↑ Identify each program's application deadline since application deadlines vary significantly.

→ Some programs will offer interviews only after receiving the MSPE on

October 1, but others (e.g., early match programs) will offer interviews before October 1.

↓ Check your email daily after applying! Most programs will contact you via email to schedule an interview. Respond immediately to schedule an interview.

The Match: Summary of Recommendations

Here at UTRGV we aim for a high match rate. A high match rate makes everyone happy and reduces the number of those who have to participate in the Supplemental Offer and Acceptance Program (SOAP) to find a residency position after the main Match.

Following the recommendations listed below will increase the likelihood that you match and that your class also has a high match rate. Unfortunately, there are no guarantees. But experience has shown that the majority of students who approach the Match process with common sense and heed good advice will match.

Follow these recommendations:

1. Talk with your career advisor and your personal faculty advisor in your chosen specialty to identify the number of programs and, based on your geographic preferences, the programs to which you should apply.
2. Consider a parallel plan. Applicants with less competitive applications and/or students applying in competitive specialties should strongly consider a back-up specialty (one that is much less competitive) or preliminary programs as a back-up plan.
3. Learn about those programs via program brochures, the Web, residents, etc.
4. Apply to the number of programs recommended by your advisor (categorical and preliminary if your specialty requires). Apply to programs in three tiers: “dream” programs that may be too competitive for your application, “good fit” programs, and “safe” programs for which you are over-qualified.
5. Interview at the number of programs recommended by your advisor. If you are applying for an advanced position, you must be certain that you apply to a more than adequate number of preliminary positions. These are becoming more competitive.
6. Monitor the number of interview invitations you receive. If you have been offered fewer than 10 interviews by mid- to late October, immediately contact your specialty advisor to discuss applying to additional programs or consider adding a backup specialty.
7. Rank all the programs at which you interviewed. Please only exclude a program from your rank list if you are willing to not match at all rather than train there.
8. Inform the programs at which you are willing to train that you are interested in being a resident in those programs.
9. Cautiously interpret any telephone calls or letters from programs that tell you they will rank you highly. It is to a program’s advantage for you to rank them highly, and students can draw dangerous conclusions about positive letters from programs. Do NOT cut your rank list short based on a false sense of security or advice from others. Remember, programs cannot ask you to tell them how you intend to rank them. These discussions are precluded by an agreement with the NRMP.
10. Do everything you can to avoid not matching and having to participate in SOAP. Although there are positions available, there is great uncertainty as to the availability of preferable locations or even specialties! *Students who do not match initially may have limited options and are not guaranteed a position in the SOAP.*

Matching Processes - Definitions

Advanced (PGY-2) Residency Positions: An “advanced” or PGY-2 position does not commence until 1-2 years after the match and requires completion of 1 or more years of preliminary training. The following specialties offer advanced positions (some of these may also have programs which offer categorical positions): anesthesiology, dermatology, neurology, ophthalmology, PM&R, radiation oncology, and radiology. Programs in neurosurgery, orthopaedic surgery, plastic surgery, and urology are advanced programs which “bundle” in a preliminary year in general surgery and do not generally require a separate preliminary application process.

Career Advisor: A faculty members assigned by the UTRGV School of Medicine to assist you in the application process. A Career Advisor provides counseling and feedback in the career selection and implementation process, navigation of the match process, and review of application materials, including the personal statement and ERAS application.

Categorical Residency Positions: A “categorical” position is one which offers full residency training required for board certification in that specialty. You do not need a preliminary year for these programs.

Early Match: Ophthalmology, urology, and all residency programs run by the military are early match programs. Applicants in ophthalmology apply and match through the San Francisco Match ([http:// www.sfmach.org/](http://www.sfmach.org/)), while applicants in urology apply via ERAS and match via the American Urological Association (<http://www.aunet.org>). Ophthalmology applications are due in July and urology applications in September. Rank lists are submitted in December/ January, and match results are posted in January.

Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS) – ERAS is a service that transmits applications, letters of recommendation, Medical Student Performance Evaluations (MSPEs), medical school transcripts, USMLE transcripts, and other supporting documents from you and your designated dean’s office to residency program directors using the internet. ERAS begins transmitting applications on September 15.

LORs (Letters of Recommendation): Anywhere between 3-6 LORs are necessary for an application to residency, depending on the program and number of specialties to which a student applies. Applicants should ask for LORs no later than 6 weeks in advance of submitting their application and they should ask a physician with a good sense of their clinical ability, clinical performance, and personal interests.

Match Day: Match Day is held on Friday of the third week in March. All US seniors open their match envelopes from the NRMP at 12:00 pm Eastern Standard Time to find out into which residency program they have matched.

MSPE (Medical Student Performance Evaluation): A letter of evaluation (not recommendation) which describes a student’s performance in medical school. The MSPE includes an assessment

of both the student's academic performance and professional attributes. It is released to residency programs on October 1.

National Resident Matching Program (NRMP) – The NRMP (<http://www.nrmp.org/>) conducts a residency match that is designed to optimize the rank ordered choices of students and program directors. On Friday of the third week of March, the results of the match are announced. With the exception of early match programs, all residency programs use the NRMP. The applicant registration deadline is the end of November and the Rank Order List deadline is the end of February. The NRMP is not the same as ERAS. You use ERAS to submit your application; you use the NRMP to submit your rank list.

PGY: Post-graduate year. PGY-1 is an intern position; PGY-2 or higher is a resident position.

Preliminary Residency Positions (PGY-1): A “preliminary”, or PGY-1, position offers only 1-2 years of training prior to entry into advanced specialty programs. Many internal medicine and surgery training programs offer preliminary positions in addition to categorical positions. Transitional year programs are also considered preliminary programs.

ROL (Rank Order Lists): Rank order lists are the lists of programs in order of preference submitted by applicants to the NRMP before the deadline (last week of February). Matched applicants consistently have longer ROLs than unmatched applicants; in 2018, the average number of ranked programs for matched U.S. applicants was 12.5.

SLOE (Standardized Letter of Recommendation): Some specialties, like emergency medicine and plastic and reconstructive surgery, require a SLOE from an applicant's home institution. Check with your specialty advisor to see if this applies to you.

SOAP (Supplemental Offer and Acceptance Program): SOAP is a program administered by the NRMP that begins on the Monday of Match Week. Through the SOAP, students who have not matched to a residency program can submit additional applications through ERAS in an effort to obtain a residency position.

Specialty Advisor: A faculty member from the specialty to which you will apply. You choose this person based on the recommendations of the department and your own familiarity with the faculty member. This advisor provides “specialty care” in the match process, including constructing a list of programs, identifying letter of reference writers, and reviewing rank lists for breadth and depth.

Transitional Residency Positions: A “transitional” position is an alternative to a preliminary year. It offers a mosaic of experiences in surgery, medicine, pediatrics, and more, and is for people who want broader exposure to clinical issues. It may be a good option for those seeking specialties that support other disciplines, like radiology or anesthesia.

VSAS (Visiting Student Application Service): VSAS is an AAMC service that helps streamline the process of applying for away rotations. Through VSAS, students are able to submit one single application for an away rotation. Check the VSAS website (<https://www.aamc.org/students/medstudents/vsas>) to find a list of participating institution. VSAS also provides a centralized location for managing offers and tracking decisions.

Getting Information about Residency Programs

You must obtain as much information about programs as you can to determine where you want to train. Use the resources below to obtain more insight into programs' strengths and values.

Here are some questions you might consider:

- Are you considering enough "dream" programs?
- Are you considering enough "safe" programs?
- Is the program in a setting you enjoy (e.g., urban, suburban, rural)?
- Is the program in an area that offers cultural and other activities you enjoy?
- How easy is it to travel to and from the city where the program is located?
- Is the program's salary sufficient for the area?
- What is the program's accreditation status? (e.g., is the program on probation?)
- Has there been substantial faculty or resident turnover?
- Does the program have a solid academic component as evidenced by the percentage of its graduates who pass the board specialty exam?
- What are the program's strengths and weaknesses?
- If you want to conduct research, do you share the same interests as the program's faculty?
- What do current residents or recent graduates say about the program?
- Is the variety of patients seen by the program's residents consistent with the training experience you want?
- Is the size of the program important (number of residents per year)?
- Are there adequate numbers of patients?
- Do you want to live where the program is located?
- How do you learn best? (didactics, hands on, etc.)
- Is the call schedule important (traditional call versus night float system)? How has the program adjusted to the new ACGME duty hour requirements? What is a typical intern ward schedule? What is a typical schedule/call schedule for a second- or third-year resident, etc.?

Program Literature

Programs' brochures and websites will often describe their intellectually fulfilling educational activities, outstanding faculty and residents, state-of-the art clinical facilities, and attractive local interests. Beware though, that sometimes programs do not match their marketing materials.

Information Available via the Internet

Check out the following Web resources:

- **ACGME Residency Program Requirements:**
<http://www.acgme.org/acgmeweb/tabid/87/GraduateMedicalEducation.aspx>. Tells you what each residency program must do to train you. Includes the minimum and maximum hours on duty and on-call, minimum hours of study, and minimum hours away from it all.

- **FREIDA** (Fellowship and Residency Electronic Interactive Database):
<http://www.ama-assn.org/go/freida>.
 A database of residency programs searchable by both multiple states and multiple specialties. In addition to other details, FREIDA will tell you: the total number of residents by year and by program, the type of programs (i.e., university, university affiliated, and community), number of applications received for PGY-1 positions, number of interviews conducted for PGY-1 positions, number of faculty, educational environment, educational features, work schedule, program policies, benefits, how graduates from this program have performed on board examinations, and the variety of patients served.
- **Doximity Residency Navigator:**
https://www.doximity.com/residency_navigator/programs. Provides medical students with a transparent look into over 3,600 residency training programs in collaboration with U.S. News & World Report.
- **AAMC Residency Explorer:**
<https://www.residencyexplorer.org>
 Residency Explorer will allow students to explore and compare residency programs in 11 specialties and compare your profile to applicants who matched at each program. Residency Explorer is a working prototype, which means that not all the features and functions are fully developed. It is encouraged that students you consult with a trusted advisor or mentor as programs are researched.

Group Meetings

You will receive information about the NRMP process in various settings throughout your medical education especially during the third year. Sessions will be hosted by the Office of Student Affairs.

Finding a Faculty Member to Advise You

Each of the clinical departments has assigned career advisors who are available to assist you and for those departments that have yet to be established there is an assigned community career advisor. You are strongly encouraged to meet with this individual early in the process, and seek their guidance and advice on your competitiveness for the specialty, numbers and types of programs to apply to, additional requirements needed for that specialty (research, away rotations, etc.), and assistance with ranking. Utilizing career advisors assists you in the preparation of your application, review your CV, personal statement, and perhaps assist you in your interview skills through a mock interview.

If you are undecided, we recommend you obtain an advisor in more than one specialty and make sure to participate in student interest groups until you have made your final decision. Having a strategy for selecting programs to which you apply will save you time, energy, and money. Once you are assigned an advisor, use this person to help you determine the number of programs to which you should apply. Knowing you and your goals can help your mentor identify programs to which you should – and shouldn't – apply.

Your career advisor will be interested in your Step 1 score, your class quartile (preliminary quartiles are finalized in September), and the types of programs you find attractive (e.g. big/small, urban/rural, academic/ community, etc.). Only you can provide this information to them. (A federal law named "FERPA" prohibits the Office of Enrollment Services from providing this information without your permission.)

The Early Match

Although most residency programs participate in the NRMP match, some participate in a match that occurs earlier. Early match residency programs fall into three categories:

1. **Military Match** - for students participating in the Armed Forces Health Profession Scholarship Program who apply to military residency training programs. Such students are required to apply here unless they receive a deferment to apply through civilian matches.
 - a. Air Force: <http://www.afms.af.mil/physicianeducationbranch/>
 - b. Army: <http://www.mods.army.mil/medicaleducation/>
 - c. Navy: <https://www.navy.com/joining/education-opportunities/graduate-professional.html>
2. **San Francisco Match** - an organization that offers a Centralized Application Service (CAS) for students applying in ophthalmology. <http://www.sfmach.org/>
3. **American Urological Association Match** - for students applying for a urology residency. <http://www.auanet.org/education/urology-and-specialty-matches.cfm>

General Early Match Timelines

Military Match

U.S. Military Health Professions Scholarship Program (HSPS) - The HSPS pays for tuition, fees, equipment, and a monthly stipend. In return, participants must payback 3-4 years of active duty (AD) service after completion of GME training.

Active Duty Tours (ADT) are required electives at military training hospitals that serve as audition rotations for GME.

The Joint Service Graduate Medical Education Selection Board (JSGMESB) is referred to as the “military match.”

The military application process is very different than the civilian match. It is best to contact earlier USTW military students and have them guide you through the process. The military will NOT spoon-feed you through this process. It is your responsibility to be proactive and find out exactly what is expected of you.

- Students submit preferences for residency type and location.
- No option to “not rank” training in a military residency or particular location
- If the number of residency positions for that service is greater than the number of applicants, then no one is allowed to match civilian.

Below is a brief overview of your application schedule.

MS3 year:

January: Register through websites: instructions available after registration.

- **ARMY & NAVY MATCH:** You should strongly consider a rotation at the programs to which you hope to match, especially if you choose a competitive specialty. You are responsible for setting up the rotations, and most can be arranged via phone and email. It is best to request these no later than February of your MS3 year. The earliest you can schedule your away rotations is six months prior to the start of your

rotation. You are allowed to use two ADTs during your fourth year. You are only allowed to schedule one away rotation per ADT. Rotating while on orders is preferable because housing, food, and transportation are reimbursed; additionally, you will receive active duty pay for a total of 12 weeks.

- **AIR FORCE MATCH:** Similar to Army/Navy. You need to schedule away rotations nine months in advance. Popular sites like SAMMC in San Antonio fill up fast.

Late March of MS3 Year: Obtain your ERAS information from the Student Affairs office.

March or April: Student Affairs hosts an orientation for early matchers.

May: Begin working on gathering the pieces of the complete application. Write your personal statement and include it in a folder to give to faculty you've asked to write letters of recommendation. Request transcripts from undergraduate institutions. Apply for USMLE Step 2; both the Clinical Skills and Clinical Knowledge exams should be taken before September.

- **ARMY MATCH:** Plan on taking Step 2 much earlier than your classmates (possibly even during spring of third year)
- **NAVY MATCH:** Plan on taking Step 2 CK by September 1st (scores by September 30th). You must take Step 2 CS by October 22nd as required by UTSW's deadline. Scores are due to the Navy by February 25th.

June: You will receive a letter from the military describing the application process.

MS4 year:

July-September:

Use several of these blocks for electives at military residency sites. Be prepared to ask faculty at these away sites for letters of recommendations. Begin requesting letters of recommendation. Note: Military LoRs are not required but can be helpful since the military medical field is small and people know each other.

- **ARMY, NAVY, and AIR FORCE MATCH:** Plan on scheduling your interviews to coincide with your away rotations – the military encourages this setup. With this in mind, be prepared to take all necessary application materials with you when doing a rotation (CV, personal statement, photo, etc.)
- **AIR FORCE and NAVY MATCH:** If you are unable to travel to all locations, you may set up phone interviews.
- **NAVY MATCH:** You will have to submit a preliminary Rank Order List by July 15th with final changes due by October 15th.
- **AIR FORCE MATCH:** You will have to submit your application and preliminary Rank Order List by September 15th with the final rank list due by October 15th.

Mid-September: Transcripts loaded to ERAS by Student Affairs office.

September 15th: Apply via ERAS.

October: Application must be complete including USMLE Step 2 score. Final rank list due.

August-October: Interviews.

- **ARMY, NAVY, and AIR FORCE MATCH:** Be sure to request ADT (Active Duty Training) orders when doing your rotations/interviews because the Army and Navy will pay all related expenses.
- **ARMY MATCH:** Rank Order List must be submitted by October 15th with final changes due by October 31st.
- **NAVY MATCH:** You are required to rank five programs and two specialties because of the limited number of locations for certain specialties. The one exception is family medicine, which has five sites for residency.
- **AIR FORCE MATCH:** Rank Order List is due by September 15th with final changes due by October 15th. You have the option to rank two specialties but are not required to do so.

Mid-December: Military Match.

- **Active Duty:** Train at a military residency. No payback, but earning years of service.
- **Civilian Deferred:** Continue through the NRMP, match to civilian residency just like peers. No military connection or benefits during residency. Brought into active duty at the end to serve payback.
- **Civilian Sponsored:** Brought into active duty at full pay and benefits. Train in a civilian program and incur extra commitment. Typically used for fellowship, not initial residency.

The Navy match is for an intern year only. This means there are subsequent matches you must go through once you are in residency.

The Air Force requires you to apply for a prelim year as back-up. This means that you must apply to prelim years through ERAS regardless of which specialty you are applying to. **You don't want to have to SOAP if you are not selected for a categorical residency!**

San Francisco Match

MS3 year:

Late March: Obtain your ERAS information from the student affairs office.

March or April: Student Affairs hosts an orientation for early matchers. Strongly consider scheduling an away rotation to enhance your ability of matching in a preferred program or area of the country.

May: Register with the SF Match Central Application Service as soon as it becomes available.

Contact information: Email: help@sffmatch.org

Phone: 415.447.0350

Fax: 415.561.8535

Begin working on gathering the pieces of the complete application. Write your personal statement and include it in a folder to give to faculty you've asked to write letters of recommendation. Request transcripts from undergraduate institutions. Schedule USMLE Step 2 CK and CS. Both exams must be taken before December.

June: Print and read instructions from CAS. Begin requesting letters of recommendation.

Request at least one LoR from either your surgery or internal medicine clerkship. Remember to

provide your CAS number to your letter writers. You will need two sets of letters of recommendation (one for CAS and one for ERAS).

MS4 year:

Late July-Early August: For Ophthalmology, strongly consider applying to more programs than traditional (30-40+) due to the increasing competitive nature of the match. It is a good idea to talk with the residents who recently went through the process to get a feel for the types and numbers of programs they applied to.

Mid-August–Early September: CAS “Target Date”, which should be viewed as the application due date. Provide enough time to complete the application and gather the necessary information. Set August 15th as your goal for submitting your applications. All of your materials for the CAS (LoRs, transcripts from college, medical school, USMLE score forms) will be mailed to CAS by you in an envelope. You can submit the electronic portion of your application when it is finished.

September: Apply through ERAS for backup and/or preliminary programs.

Strongly consider writing your programs to express interest (highlight geographic/family ties if you have them) and/or send “recommended” supplemental paragraphs/updated CVs/articles or supplemental LoRs. Doing so will increase your chances of being offered an interview.

Late August-December: Programs will usually phone or email invitations for interviews. It is helpful to have a list of interview dates for programs you applied to on a calendar (i.e., on your phone/gmail calendar) for quick access so you can choose the date which best fits your schedule.

October 1: Student Affairs loads MSPE and updated transcript to SF Match Portal. **October–December:** Interviews.

Mid-December: Consider contacting your top 3-5 programs to indicate your intention to rank them highly.

Early January: CAS rank list deadline. Be sure the student affairs deans have accurate contact information for you (cell phone, pager, home phone).

Mid- to Late January: CAS Match. A student affairs dean will call you with the results of the match.

Special Issues:

AOA status – MS4s are elected for membership in the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society in late August, which may be after the CAS application has been submitted. Some specialties ask for AOA status on the application. If this occurs, just indicate that your AOA status is not known (there is a checkbox for this) and forward a copy of the AOA membership letter to the CAS when available.

Letters of Recommendation – Most programs require three; the department chair in some departments traditionally writes one of these letters for all applicants to that specialty. Be sure the faculty knows that this letter needs to be completed by the beginning of August. Be sure the faculty saves the letter that is written for the August deadline so it can easily be re-formatted for the ERAS application.

ERAS – Students applying and matching via CAS will need to **apply** for backup or preliminary program spots via ERAS (Electronic Residency Application Service).

NRMP – Students will need to register for the NRMP for **matching** with backup and preliminary year programs.

Pictures – Some residencies require students to send pictures directly to each program that grants them an interview.

Eye Exams – Some residency programs requested an eye exam be submitted prior to being accepted for interview.

AUA Match

MS3 year:

January: Attend urology department annual symposium, which is a great forum to learn more about urology.

January-February: Meet with a urology career advisor to discuss competitiveness, where to apply, timelines, etc. If you and your advisor feel you need a strong USMLE Step 2 score, plan on taking CK and CS by mid-August. Otherwise, CK must be taken before September 30th and CS must be taken before December 1st. Begin gathering information for the complete application. Plan on taking the UTSW urology rotation in July/August of fourth year. If you have not already, **become involved in a urology research project.**

Late March: Obtain your ERAS information from the student affairs office.

May: Write your personal statement and include it in a folder to give to faculty you've asked to write letters of recommendation. Transcripts from undergraduate programs are generally not required for the urology match.

MS4 year:

July-August: Register with the AUA match. Begin working on the ERAS application. Be sure to keep track of whether or not your letters of recommendation have been received by the Student Affairs office to ensure they are available for urology application deadlines. Meet with the urology department chairperson, who will be writing a letter on your behalf. This typically will occur after you work with him during the urology rotation. *Note: Bring a copy of your CV and personal statement to this meeting. You should have three letters of recommendation from UTRGV before you leave for away rotations, one of which should be the Chair's letter. Other programs can take a long time to get their letters in, and it is possible for an away rotation to not go well and thus not yield an LoR. Don't depend on these.

Mid-September: Transcripts loaded to ERAS by Student Affairs office. Apply via ERAS beginning September 15th. Strive to submit your entire application as close to this date as possible, as programs can begin downloading applications on September 15th. Some urology programs have application deadlines as early as mid-September with most having early October deadlines.

October–December: Interviews (some offers may come as early as late September). Be careful when making interview travel plans because most programs only offer 2-3 options, and many have conflicting dates. It is not uncommon to have to decline/cancel interviews for logistical reasons. Some people go back to visit a program for a "second look." While there are conflicting views on whether this should be allowed or is even beneficial, it is probably a good idea to save some time/money towards the end of the interview season in case you choose to return to a program for a "second look."

Early January: AUA Rank Order List deadline. Be sure the student affairs deans have accurate contact information for you (cell phone, pager, home phone).

Late January: AUA Match. A student affairs dean will call you with the results of the match. If you do not match, contact the director of careers in medicine to see about open positions and to plan your next course of action. If you do match, your program will provide you with information regarding ranking the general surgery prelim program at their institution.

Special Issues:

AOA status – MS4s are elected for membership in the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society in late August. In general, they should be aware of their AOA status by the time their ERAS applications are finalized.

Letters of Recommendation – Most programs require three, and the department head traditionally writes one of these letters for all applicants to urology. *Note: ALL three letters, including the chair letters, should be from urology faculty. If you choose to have a fourth letter, it can be from whomever you choose. As the deadline for some urology programs is in early September, the faculty being asked to write letters should be told to submit the letters via the ERAS LoR Portal by August 31st at the latest.

Letters uploaded to ERAS after a urology program has downloaded the student's application may not be considered.

ERAS – Information on ERAS participation can be found on the AUA website. Students should call their prospective programs to verify application deadlines and the need for supplemental materials.

NRMP – Students will need to register for the NRMP for **matching** with back-up and preliminary-year programs.

Couples Matching – Unlike the NRMP match, there is no formal mechanism to ensure both people end up in the same area. However, there are many people who have successfully couples matched with one applying to urology. Both couples should check the “couples match” box on their ERAS applications and should also let their programs know during the interview. See the hypothetical scenarios below for further advice on a successful urology couples match.

Scenario 1: Urology Match + NRMP Match

Most people fit in this category. Because of the timeline of both matches, the process can actually work very well for everyone. Both partners would submit their ERAS applications in early September to programs in the same cities. Most likely, both people will have to apply to a few more programs than they would have if applying alone. Also, both applicants will likely have to apply to more than just the programs in traditional “Couples Match Cities” (New York, Boston, LA, Chicago) because there aren't that many total urology residency programs to begin with, and the programs in these big cities can be very competitive/regionally biased/etc. in their own right.

The urology applicant would start hearing back about interviews in late September with the other applicant starting to hear back a few weeks later. Both applicants will interview at programs in cities where both had at least one interview. They would make a list of cities together, and then the urology applicant would make his/her rank list in early January that would reflect the couples overall preference of cities. The urology applicant would match in late

January and then would have his/her program contact the partner's program. The partner would also contact programs in the same city to inform them of the urology match result. There would be ample time before the partner's rank list is due in mid- to late February, at which point the partner would rank only the programs in the matched urology applicant's city. If either one doesn't match, then they will still most likely have time to make plans to at least be in the same city as the person who did match (as opposed to the NRMP match where there is a chance that both could not match because they tried to Couples Match).

Scenario 2: Urology Match + Other Early Match

This scenario is less likely, but it does happen and has been successful. It gets a little trickier because there is no delay between the urology match results and the partner's rank list being due. As a result, there is a lower chance of both partners ending up in the same city. This scenario requires much more coordination and openness between all parties (applicants, advisors, program directors) in all phases of the process including deciding where to apply, where to interview, and how to rank programs.

Scenario 3: Urology Match x 2

This could theoretically happen, although it seems like it would be very difficult because many urology programs only have one or two spots to begin with. The urology program director would be the best person to provide advice in this situation.

The NRMP Couples Match

Who Benefits from the Couples Match?

Pairs of students graduating the same year with important reasons to spend at least the next several years together (e.g. married students) will want to maximize the chances that they will end up in the same city after graduation from medical school. The Couples Match is a program offered by the NRMP. Unfortunately, students in the Early Match have no similar program, but there are several general concepts that can benefit all student “couples” applying for residency.

General Concepts

The first important concept is to be open about the fact that you are couples matching with another applicant. First, **complete the section in ERAS** that indicates you will be participating in the couples match and with whom. Next, check programs’ websites, as some may require you to **briefly** touch on it in your personal statement. If they do not require this in your personal statement, and your significant other is not part of the reason you want to go into this specialty, it is not mandatory that you mention them in your personal statement. Finally, **briefly** mention it in every interview. The interviewer may also mention it, since you have put it in your ERAS application. Being open with programs can only help the application by encouraging “crosstalk” between residencies on the same campuses or in the same cities.

The second concept is to focus on geographic areas with several training options (i.e. big cities with several residency training programs like NY, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Houston, Philadelphia, North Carolina’s Research Triangle, etc.). This will increase the number of combinations of programs the couple can list on their rank list. You may have to apply to and interview at more programs than your non-couples counterparts to increase the chances of finding programs that BOTH applicants like.

There are rare circumstances where it may be to your advantage to not disclose the fact that you are couples matching. These could potentially include situations where both applicants are applying into the same discipline or where one candidate is a high risk for not matching. It is recommended that if you have concern, plan to discuss this with your advisors or the associate deans.

For couples in which one or both partners are participating in the Early Match, there is no formal couples match mechanism. The early matcher should rank programs so the NRMP matcher’s choices are maximized (e.g. big city programs first). The early matcher will find out the location of their residency in January. The NRMP matcher will then rank programs according to the early matcher’s residency location.

Prior graduates recommend alerting the **NRMP residency** that the early match member of the couple matched at their campus and reminding the **Early Match residency** that the spouse is vying for a spot on that campus. (Please see a more in-depth description above.)

How to Apply to the NRMP Couples Match

You must have a mutually agreeable partner who wants to be in the same *geographic area* – not necessarily the same residency program or hospital – to participate in the couples match. In ERAS, both members will indicate that they are couples matching. In the NRMP, there is an additional registration fee for each partner. After registering as a couple in NRMP, each person will be able to see the other's rank list. The couple submits the Rank Order List (ROL) as a unit, with pairs of programs as prioritized choices. Please note that the lists never appear as one unit on NRMP, rather the couple is responsible for ensuring that the ranks orders "match up." The couple matches to the most preferred pair of programs on their ROL where each individual is offered a position. Both partners in the couples match apply to residency programs in the same way as individual applicants and should agree on the cities where they apply.

Interviews

You may either schedule your interviews together to check out housing, schools, cost of living, transportation, or you can interview separately and compare notes later. Scheduling interviews together can be difficult since programs offer interviews at different times. However, you can always request that your interview date be changed. You may want to pick a month or a couple of weeks in which to interview in a certain part of the country, then have both partners try to schedule interviews in that region during those slated times. Partners are almost always welcome at the resident dinners the night before the interviews. Plan to attend/have them attend! This helps you get a feel for the program and help your partner feel comfortable with the program/city.

Ranking the Programs

Ranking the programs is the primary difference between the couples match and regular match, but this step does not happen until late January. If one partner withdraws from the Match, the remaining partner's ROL will be processed in the Match as an individual. Past participants recommend that each individual make a rank list according to his/her personal preferences, remaining completely honest to what he/she wants. Then, both members of the couple should discuss their separate lists in order to generate one single list.

Each partner in the couple is responsible for making a rank list on the NRMP website. Each partner may rank up to 20 unique programs on their Primary ROLs and up to 20 unique programs on all their Supplemental ROLs combined before incurring a charge of \$30 for each additional program listed. Each program ranked by one partner must be paired with an active program or with an indication of "No Match" (NRMP Program Code = 999999999) by the other partner. "No Match" means that one partner is willing to be unmatched if the other partner matches to a position in the program designated at that rank. Each partner **must** have the same number of ranked preferences, and the couple is responsible for ensuring the lists are in the same order.

1. For example: At the top of the list, align each program choice with a corresponding choice from the couple's partner. Partner X is ranking only one program in Denver (Denver Children's), but Partner Y is ranking two different programs in Denver (Denver Primary Care and Denver Categorical).

Partner X (Peds)	Partner Y (IM)
Denver Children's	Denver Primary Care
Denver Children's	Denver Categorical
Duke	Duke
UNC	Duke
UTSW	UTSW

2. At the bottom of the list, align a choice with a backup option. If one partner matches with a priority choice, the other partner must be willing to match at a preliminary position, not match and have to participate in SOAP, or not start a residency that year if he/she does not match. The No Match option (999999999) assures that while one partner may match, the other could go unmatched if no suitable choices were in that geographic area. Each partner **must** have the same number of ranked references. Couples Match criteria apply to categorical, preliminary, and advanced training programs.

Partner X (Derm)	Partner Y (Rad)
Derm Residency 19	Rad Residency 19A
Derm Residency 19	Medicine Prelim Program 1A
Medicine Prelim Program 1	Rad Residency 19A
Derm Residency 19	No Match (999999999)
No Match (999999999)	Rad Residency 19A
Etc...	Etc...

Couples are encouraged to complete the **Couples Rank Order List of Paired Programs** worksheet prior to entering their final rank order list. If the couple has a lot of programs on the rank list, they should consider using an Excel spreadsheet to chart the program names and NRMP ID's. Once the ROL is finalized on the spreadsheet, it is very easy to copy the entire column with the NRMP ID's and paste it into the NRMP website. The website provides an option to do this and will save the programs to the ROL in the order of the NRMP ID's. This is much better than individually searching for each program and adding it to the rank list one by one on the NRMP website. It is also helpful if there are any last-minute edits to the ROL.

Individuals listed as couples are treated solely as a couple. Therefore, if they do not obtain a match as a couple, their lists are not run separately to find a match for each individual. *If both individuals match to advanced programs, their Supplemental Rank Order Lists are not treated in the Match as a single unit, i.e., their supplemental lists are not processed as a couple.*

More information about the Couples Match can be found on the NRMP website at: <http://www.nrmp.org/match-process/couples-in-the-match/>.

Registering for the NRMP Match

All students, including those participating in the San Francisco and AUA Matches, must register with the National Residency Match Program (NRMP). Early matchers are required to rank preliminary programs through the NRMP with the exception of those participating in the military match. Per the NRMP, military applicants do not necessarily need to register or rank programs with the NRMP.

Registration is completed via the NRMP website. The Student Affairs Office will alert you to the dates registration opens and closes by distributing instructions when they are received from the NRMP.

Registering with the NRMP is separate from the Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS). The NRMP processes matches from rank order lists submitted by both students and residency training programs that result from the interview process.

Students who decide not to participate in the Match after having registered with the NRMP must withdraw and notify the Student Affairs Office of their decision.

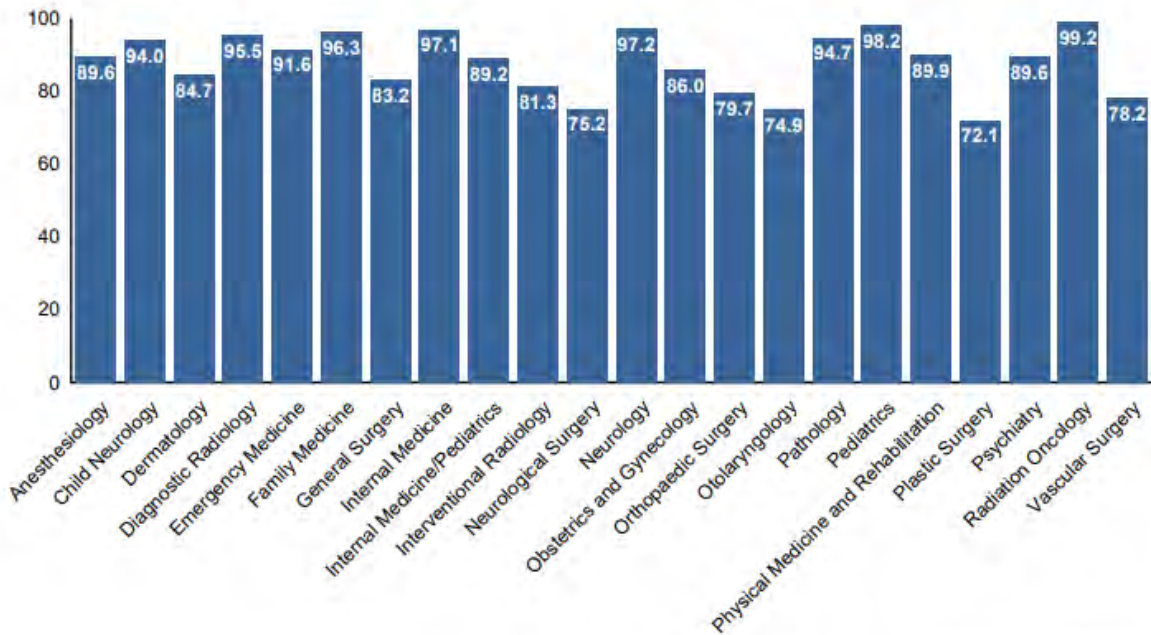
Resources for Learning about the Match

The National Resident Matching Program (NRMP) process begins when you register and ends when you open the envelope that contains your program's name and location. This process appears daunting, so it's realistic to have questions about what to do. Fortunately, you have many resources that can make the process less stressful. Use them!

This resource along with the Careers in Medicine roadmap (<http://offers.aamc.org/roadmap-to-residency>) are just two resources for learning about the Match. Refer to them often. Additional information from the AAMC can be found in "Charting Outcomes in the Match: Characteristics of Applicants who Matched to their Preferred Specialty in the 2020 NRMP Main Residency Match" For example, the data from this resource in Charts 3 and 4 below provides specialty specific match rates and how the number of ranks on a list influenced match rates. In addition, this resource provides insight into how applicant qualifications affect match status including AOA status, USMLE Step 1 scores, publications, research, etc.

**Chart
3**

**Match Rates of U.S. MD Seniors
Percent Matched by Preferred Specialty**

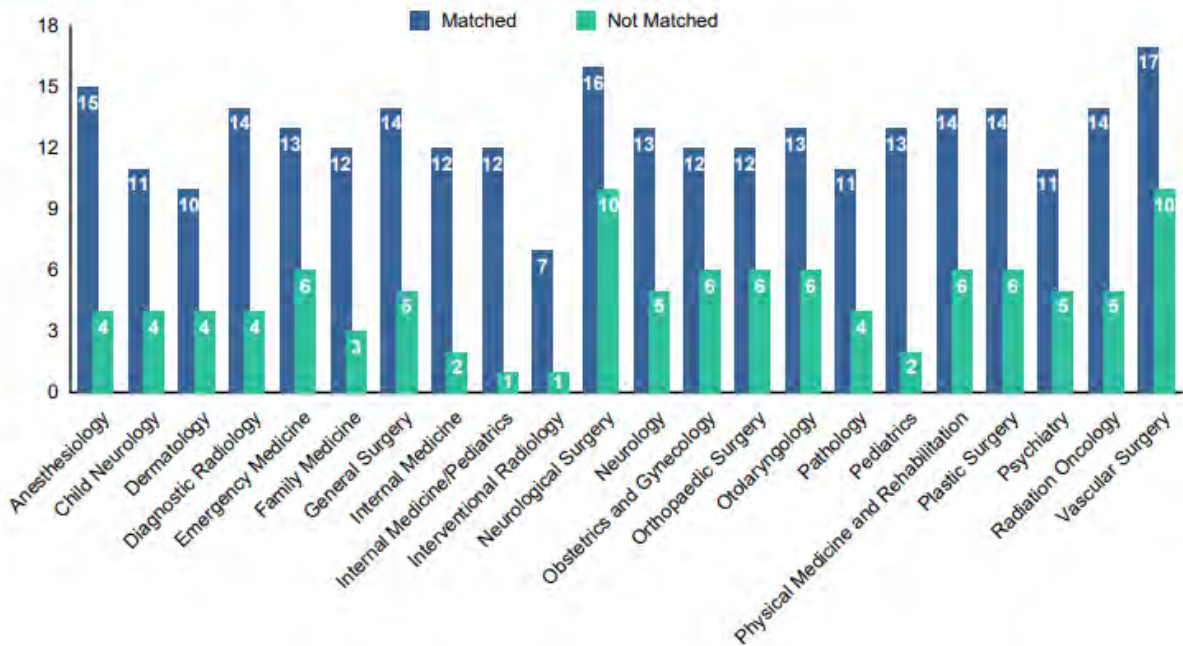


Source: NRMP Data Warehouse

Chart 3 shows the percentages of U.S. MD seniors who matched to their preferred specialty. Overall, 91.2 percent of U.S. MD seniors matched to their preferred specialty, ranging from a high of 99.2 percent (Radiation Oncology) to a low of 72.1 percent (Plastic Surgery).

**Chart
4**

**Median Number of Contiguous Ranks of U.S. MD Seniors
by Preferred Specialty and Match Status**



Additional information you may find useful includes two surveys completed by the NRMP, both of which are available on their [website](#). The first, “Results of the 2020 NRMP Applicant Survey,” presents factors that applicants weigh in selecting programs to interview and to rank for the Match. The second, “Results of the 2020 NRMP Program Director Survey,” includes factors that program directors in the various specialties consider when granting interviews and ranking applicants.

The resources listed below can also help you navigate through the Match.

People

You have at your disposal a variety of human resources who can help you with Match related issues. Because individual experiences and personalities vary, you might want to obtain more than one opinion about a program or a Match-related topic. However, be careful of “flippant” advice that differs from what you read in this book. “Flippant” advice can be very dangerous.

Faculty: Faculty are part of a specialty’s network. Since they know you and the strengths/needs of specific programs, faculty can identify the programs you should pursue and avoid. Faculty can also review your CV and personal statement and suggest ways to make the Match process go smoother.

Career Advisor: This faculty member has been designated by the clinical departments to serve as the point person for career advising. This individual has the most up to date information regarding programs, and should be considered the “source of truth” when it comes to specific information regarding how many programs, and which mix of

programs you should be applying to, how competitive you are for a particular discipline, and whether and what type of backup plan you need to consider. They are also available to provide advice as the season progresses to assist you in determining if you have an adequate number of interviews (mid-October), or need to consider adding programs, etc. A current list of specialty advisors can be found on the UTRGV Careers in Medicine website.

Academic Advisor: You will be assigned an individual faculty advisor. This faculty member will be a valuable adjunct to the career advisor providing assistance in reviewing application materials, CVs and personal statements, as well as conducting mock interviews prior to interview season.

Current Fourth-Year Students: Talk to the fourth-year students from before they graduate. They have experienced the process and can give you “insider” information about parts of the process. They can tell you about interviews, the questions they were asked, and how they selected their top programs. Many SIG's will host meetings that feature MS4's who have MATCHed. Friends or Acquaintances: You may know people who have recently matched. They can also give you personal insights into the process.

Residents: The residents with whom you work can also give you excellent information about the process. Residents in the specialty you seek can suggest factors to consider when evaluating programs and recommend ways to deal with the stress of the Match.

Administrators: The Associate Dean for Student Affairs is also an excellent source of information about the Match. She will answer your questions directly and honestly. So ask for their assistance early and often!

Web Resources

<http://www.utrgv.edu/som/careers-in-medicine/>

UTRGV Careers in Medicine - and adjunct to CiM program with UTRGV specific information

<http://www.aamc.org/cim>

AAMC Careers in Medicine – Career-planning program designed to help students choose a medical specialty and select and apply to a residency program. Resources include tools for self-exploration of interests, example CVs and personal statements, worksheets to assist in evaluating residency programs, example interview questions, and more.

<http://www.nrmp.org/match-data/main-residency-match-data/>

NRMP Data and Reports - Link provided to Results and Data for the most current Residency Match - statistical tables and graphs including number of positions offered and filled.

Resources for Learning about the Match

<http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/medical-students/medical-students.shtml>

AMA Resources for Medical Students - Information on selecting and applying for a residency.

<http://www.ama-assn.org/go/freida>

FREIDA online - A database with over 8700 graduate medical education programs accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education, as well as over 200 combined specialty programs. <https://www.aamc.org/students/medstudents/eras/>

ERAS, the Electronic Residency Application Service - A service that transmits residency applications, letters of recommendation, Dean's Letters/ MSPE, transcripts, and other supporting credentials from applicants and medical schools to Fellowship, Osteopathic Internship and Residency programs using the Internet.

<http://www.nrmp.org/>

The National Resident Matching Program (NRMP) - A private, not-for-profit corporation established in 1952 to provide a uniform date of appointment to positions in graduate medical education (GME) in the United States. Sponsored by five organizations (American Board of Medical Specialties, ABMS, American Medical Association, AMA, Association of American Medical Colleges, AAMC, American Hospital Association, AHA, and the Council of Medical Specialty Societies, CMSS).

<http://www.acgme.org/acgmeweb/>

Accreditation Council on Graduate Medical Education - What every medical student needs to know about the ACGME.

Books

Getting into a Residency by Ken Iserson, M.D. Dr. Iserson, an EM specialist, describes all aspects of the residency process in his book. It has excellent sections on interviews and dealing with challenging interview questions. Use the book to learn about the Match process.

The Successful Match: 200 Rules to Succeed in the Residency Match by Rajani Katta, M.D., and Samir P. Desai, M.D. This book was recommended by a recent graduate as a helpful resource that is easy to read.

Letters of Recommendation

Background

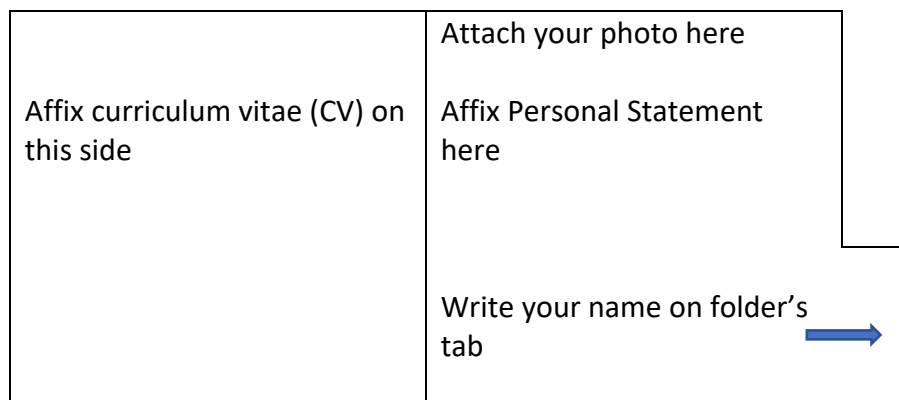
Residency programs usually require two or three letters of recommendation plus your dean's letter (MSPE). Also, programs typically ask that the people who write your letters of recommendation be personally familiar with your clinical skills. Some specialties require a letter of recommendation from the chair of the department. Chairs realize this and will automatically provide a letter for each student applying in that specialty.

How to Ask Faculty for Letters of Recommendation

It is important that faculty write strong letters of recommendation for you. To avoid receiving uncomplimentary letters, ask the potential letter writers: "Do you feel comfortable writing a strong letter for me?" or "Do you feel that you know me well enough to write a strong letter for me?" instead of "Will you write a good letter of recommendation for me?" This technique gives faculty an "out" if they believe they cannot write you a strong letter. However, it is not appropriate to say, "Will you write me a strong letter?" You don't want to appear to be coercing them.

Ensuring Strong Letters of Recommendation

Help faculty write an accurate and personalized letter by giving them your photograph, curriculum vitae, and personal statement in a labeled file folder (shown below).



Your photo, CV, and personal statement should be visible when the file folder is open

In addition, give the letter writer plenty of time. Hurried faculty write hurried letters. Also, do not ask someone to actually write your letter until you are fairly certain that you are going to use it. Doing this saves them time and effort and reduces potential embarrassment for you.

What to Give your Letter Writers

You will be responsible for presenting each letter writer with the following:

- Personal information (see above)

- ERAS Letter Request Form

Letters of Recommendation and ERAS

Letters of recommendation (LoRs) to be submitted through ERAS can **ONLY** be processed as follows:

- Letter writers must load to ERAS LoR Portal. Applicants access MyERAS to create LoR slots for each letter writer.
- Applicants print out the Letter Request Form for all letter writers and deliver via email, mail, or in person.
- Letter writers complete their LoR on official letterhead with an actual signature; save it in PDF format; and access the LoR Portal to upload their letter. Technical specifications for LoRs can be found at the following link: <https://www.aamc.org/eras/lorp>.
- Letter writers and administrators register on the LoR Portal and create their username and password.
- Letter writers log in; enter the applicant's unique LetterID; verify the applicant and LoR slot details; and follow the prompts to upload their letter in PDF format. **PDFs with encryption, password protection, or digital signatures cannot be processed.**
- The LoR is transmitted to the ERAS PostOffice.

Some important things to know about letters of recommendation:

- A maximum of four LoRs can be sent per program (the usual number is three).
- Do not send more letters than are required.
- If you are applying in more than one discipline, ask the letter writer to provide a general (generic) letter or separate letters specific to each specialty in which you are applying.
- The Letter Request Form lists the procedures required for faculty preparing a letter for ERAS:
 - the letter should be on letterhead with an actual signature.
 - addressed to “Dear Program Director”
 - include the student’s name and AAMC ID number
 - include whether the student waived right to see the letter
- It is **strongly** recommended that you check the box on the Letter Request Form that indicates you “waive” the right to see the letter. Programs expect this.
- The only method of submission is the ERAS LoR Portal. The Letter Request Form generated by the ERAS system when setting up LoR slots should be provided to letter writers and contains instructions for using the LoR Portal. **The Letter Request Form should not be loaded to the ERAS LoR Portal.**

Your application does not need to be complete for letters to be transmitted to programs, and it is not necessary to have all LoRs/documents in before applying to programs.

For individual programs that do not participate in ERAS, letters of recommendation must be mailed directly from the faculty member’s office.

Medical Student Performance Evaluation (MSPE)

Who Will Write Your MSPE?

In April, you will be assigned to the dean of medical education who will write your Medical Student Performance Evaluation or MSPE (aka “dean’s letter”). It is not necessary that your MSPE writer know you personally.

Nature of the MSPE

Residency programs to which you apply require an MSPE. The MSPE is meant to be a letter of "evaluation," rather than one of "recommendation". That means the deans cannot do the subjective bragging about you they would like to do. The MSPE is written by someone who has permission to review your school records – past and present – and can relay objective information to the programs. Your clinical clerkship evaluations compose a major part of your MSPE. The remainder of the letter is information that you were asked to submit to Student Affairs in writing in the spring. You will also be asked to schedule a meeting with the appropriate dean in the summer (you will receive more information about this later). You will have an opportunity to review your MSPE before it is distributed to programs and identify any clerical or factual errors.

Contents of the MSPE

All MSPEs consist of a sequence of similar sections based on the AAMC MSPE Template. The first section will focus on your “Noteworthy Characteristics,” three bullets highlighting your most salient noteworthy characteristics. Information about any significant challenges or hardships encountered during medical school may be included here.

The next section describes your Academic History while at UTRGV. This includes dates of matriculation, graduation, and if applicable dates and explanations for extensions, leaves, dual degrees, transfers, remediation or adverse actions. If applicable, you will contribute to these explanations. **Students who have repeated years due to academic deficiencies were on academic probation during the remedial year; this information will need to be disclosed in the MSPE, as well as by the student and the school in response to subsequent queries from residency programs, hospitals, state medical boards, future employers, etc.**

The Academic Progress information includes information about your academic performance and professional attributes during the preclinical and basic science coursework, as well as during your core clinical and elective rotations. It will also include a statement regarding your attainment of professional standards as defined by UTRGV.

Since program directors are most interested in how you performed when participating in patient care, the Clerkships section is the largest part of the letter. This section includes the

components of each clerkship, the weight of each component, grades and clinical comments from the third-year clerkships, and graphic representations of your comparative performance, i.e., grade histograms for each clerkship.

The final paragraph is a summary that recognizes patterns of strengths (and weaknesses - remember this is a letter of evaluation rather than recommendation) apparent in the text of the letter. This section also contains your final class standing in terms of quartile rank.

Finally, a web link to general information about the medical school as required by the AAMC, including UTRGV's goals as an institution, average length of enrollment, and how courses are graded, etc. will be included at the bottom of the letter.

When MSPEs are Released

*The AAMC (Association of American Medical Colleges) rules require MSPEs to go out on October 1st. **Period – no exceptions.*** Some programs may pressure students to send an MSPE before this time; this is not possible. If you are receiving pressure from a program, let the Student Affairs dean intervene.

The Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS)

Background on ERAS

The following two paragraphs are from the ERAS® Residency Applicant Information Sheet

What is ERAS?

The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) developed ERAS® - the Electronic Residency Application Service, to transmit residency applications, letters of recommendation, MSPEs, transcripts, and other supporting credentials from applicants and medical schools to residency program directors using the Internet.

How does ERAS Work?

The ERAS service is made up of four components: MyERAS – the applicant Web site, the Dean’s Office Workstation (DWS), the Program Director’s Workstation (PDWS), and the ERAS PostOffice (ERASPO). Using a secure Web browser, applicants complete an application form, select programs, and create and assign supporting documents. They then submit these files to the ERASPO for delivery to programs. School staff use the DWS to scan and store the applicant’s transcripts, MSPEs, and letters of recommendation and transmit them to the ERASPO. Residency programs use the PDWS to connect to the ERASPO to download applications, and to review them using criteria they establish.

ERAS Facts

- Most PGY-1 specialties will use ERAS.
- Urology and military residencies (Early Match programs) participate in ERAS.
- Ophthalmology residencies (also an Early Match program) do not participate in ERAS.

To participate in ERAS you need:

1. *ERAS instructions:* The Student Affairs Office will distribute this information early in your senior year.
2. *An e-mail address:* Be sure to check your e-mail. Most students who used ERAS reported that they received interview invitations via e-mail.
3. *Access to a computer.*
4. *ERAS ID and password:* The Student Affairs Office will provide you with an ERAS Token to access MyERAS on the web for the first time. Once you access the site you will be given instructions on entering an ID and password.
5. *Photograph:* You must submit a photograph for your ERAS application. More information pertaining to photo session options will be provided at a later date. Photo files must meet the following requirements: [color photo \(head/shoulders\); file type –](#)

JPG/JPEG or PNG; max. file size – 100 KB; max. dimensions - 2.5 x 3.5 inches; max. resolution – 150 DPI. **Look sharp in these photos: First impressions count!**

6. *A personal statement*: See specific information in next section.
7. *Letters of recommendation*: Letter writers must load LoRs through the ERAS LoR Portal.
8. *Your ERAS fee*: The fees are based on the number of programs an applicant selects within each specialty. Carefully screen programs before applying. Applying to an excessively large number of programs wastes money. On the other hand, applying to too few programs just to save money puts one at risk for not matching. Check with your faculty advisor to ensure you have applied to enough programs. The NBME (National Board of Medical Examiners) charges an additional flat fee to transmit USMLE scores to programs (regardless of the numbers of transcripts requested).

Release of Step 2 Scores to ERAS

Pros – schools know that Step 2 is required for graduation, so a score is reassuring to them that the applicant will truly be able to start their program on time.

Cons – a lower than anticipated score could lower the ranking of the applicant.

In our experience, residencies are quite sensitive to the danger of a student failing Step 2 at the last minute and not being able to graduate on time. Many more programs are requiring passage of both parts of the USMLE Step 2 prior to ranking applicants. Early successful completion of these exams is becoming increasingly important. We strongly recommend that the scores be released promptly to avoid these concerns.

Please note: USMLE scores are not automatically released. Anytime the applicant is notified that new scores are available; the applicant must manually retransmit the USMLE transcript to programs to which they have applied using the retransmit option on the Documents/USMLE transcript tab in ERAS.

Writing Your Curriculum Vitae and Personal Statement

Who Needs a CV?

A CV is a concise summary of pertinent information about your background and accomplishments (contact information, education, honors and awards, work experience, research, professional memberships, extracurricular activities, publications, presentations, and hobbies). You will enter most of this information directly into your electronic application through ERAS. However, you will still need to create a CV for several reasons. First, most letter writers want to review your CV and personal statement before they write your letters. Second, having an organized document with all of your activities and experiences will make completing your application and personal statement easier. Third, although ERAS will print a CV-like document based on the data you enter, the document that ERAS prints may not contain the same categories or specific information that you want to include within a category. For example, to count a “publication” ERAS requires the article’s citation information (i.e., journal title, date, and page numbers). It does not accept “submitted” or “in progress” entries. So, if you want to include this type of information on your CV you should prepare one. Finally, you will continue to use your CV throughout your career, so it is a good idea to spend some time and effort on this. It will make it easier in the future to periodically add to it. Although there are many different formats which will work well, general guidelines should be followed. Your CV should be clean, attractive, well organized, professional appearing, and easy to read. More useful hints as well as sample CVs are available within the Student Affairs course in Moodle and on the AAMC Careers in Medicine website listed below.

What Makes a Good Personal Statement?

A personal statement often seems to be the most difficult part of the application process because it requires you to be **reflective** about who you are, what you have done, and how your experiences have shaped you. The best personal statements are able to do this in a way that conveys your personality and describes how you and the specialty you have chosen are a good match. You should focus less on how wonderful the specialty is, but rather why it is a wonderful fit for you based on your experiences and your personal strengths. Remember, this is the time to promote yourself, share your future goals, and share who you are rather than creating a written summary of your CV.

It is true that a poorly written statement can hurt you far more than a superbly written statement can help you. Therefore, we will provide you with a few tips. First, it is critical that you pay very close attention to grammar and spelling. Use spell check and ask several people (preferably including an English major) that you trust to review carefully and critically for you. Ask an advisor to read it over as well for content, format, and flow. Consider explaining breaks in your education or any “negatives” that may appear in the application (course failures, low USMLE scores, leaves of absence, etc.) Avoid controversial subjects such as politics. We would also advise against personalizing your personal statement for each program. Finally, you must keep this to one page.

Get Feedback from Faculty in Your Specialty

You should have your specialty advisor review your application materials. This advisor will best know areas to cover/emphasize for that specialty. This person can work with you to “fine tune” your materials so that they also reflect the true “you.” Be ready to write several drafts and check the final version for grammar and spelling!

Books

Résumés and Personal Statements for Health Professionals by Dr. Jim Tysinger. This book will help you identify your marketable traits and effectively communicate those traits in your CV (i.e., academic resume) and personal statement. Read the sample resumes and personal statements contained in the book to see how others have written their materials.

Internet

Information is also available on the internet at www.aamc.org/careersinmedicine.

Scheduling Interviews

Contacting Programs for Interviews

Programs schedule their interviews in many ways. Some programs will contact you, while others expect you to contact them. The invitation will usually come via email, and once these arrive, the interview spots fill up quickly. Respond to the email invitation immediately and schedule your interview. One student was paged on a Sunday to be invited for an interview. When uncertain, telephone the program and politely ask how they schedule interviews. You cannot rank a program at which you have not interviewed!

When Should I Interview?

Whenever possible, interviews should be scheduled during the month you have chosen to take off. Students participating in the regular match will typically take November, December or January off for interviews. Early Match interviews usually occur in October, November or December. Most residency programs will work with applicants to find a mutually convenient time for the interview if the date initially offered is inconvenient. If you are applying to a competitive specialty especially one which requires a preliminary year, you should consider taking two months completely off for interviews.

*Should you find that you must schedule an interview during a rotation, **following these steps is essential:***

- *Request permission from the appropriate **course director, attending, and resident as soon as you know there is a conflict between a rotation and an interview.***
- *Be prepared to show evidence that there are no alternatives to scheduling the interview at that time.*
- *Be polite and offer to make up the time if the course director requests.*

Remember that no course director has to give you time off, and required courses never grant time off. The decision as to whether you have fulfilled your responsibilities is his or her call. The more responsible and considerate you are, the more smoothly the process will go for everyone.

Do I Have Enough Interviews?

It is important that each student have an adequate number of programs in various tiers of competitiveness (reaches, moderates, safeties) at every step of the process (application, interview, and ranking). It is recommended that you review the data published in the AAMC's Charting Outcomes in the Match, which shows the probability of matching based on the number of ranked programs. However, please note that this is an average. *If a student has risk factors, the number of ranked programs may need to be above these means. If by mid- to late-October, you have been invited to less than 10 interviews, please contact your departmental specialty advisor immediately to discuss whether you should apply to additional programs or add a back-up specialty.*

Additional Points to Remember

As the interview process goes on, your enthusiasm for traveling to and visiting another program/hospital may wane. You may also rationalize that programs at which you have already interviewed have made positive promises (always to be taken with a large grain of salt!) about how they will rank you. Resist temptation and keep interviewing based on your initial interviewing strategy! Remember, you can only rank programs at which you interview. If you absolutely cannot attend an interview, inform the program directly and well in advance, and then thank them for their consideration. ***Student Affairs hears about it when students are "no show."***

Remember these points regardless of when you interview:

- Excellent applicants impress regardless of when the interview.
- You must maintain contact with the programs at which you want to train regardless of when you interview. Let programs know that you're interested!

Travel and Lodging

Flight Arrangements

“Cluster” interviews in the same locale (areas of the country) to save time and money. Accumulate those frequent flier miles while you can. If you are traveling to interviews near Thanksgiving, Christmas, or New Year’s, consider making these reservations the earliest as they will be the most costly.

Excelling in Interviews

Interviews are pleasant experiences for the vast majority of students. In fact, many interviewees say that the interviews should be called “marketing discussions” because program directors and faculty really try to “sell” them on their respective programs. Interviewers do this because they want to give you the information you need to make the decision that they would hope for (i.e., for you to rank them high on your list), and they want you to tell others how great they are. In fact, being invited to interview means that the program considers you to be someone in whom they are interested.

The interview gives both you and the program a chance to see if you “fit”. This fit is important because you will work long hours with the faculty and residents for years. What composes this “fit”? Perhaps it’s a mixture of compatible philosophy, backgrounds, similar interests, and personality type. Whatever it is, many students state that they can sense if they fit with a program within an hour after being around a place.

Thus, it’s in your best interests to excel in interviews. Excelling means being yourself and discussing information that reinforces the “fit” between you and the program. Here are some things you can do to excel on interviews:

Remember the Basics

Relax - Get to the interview site early and find where you are supposed to be. Check yourself out in front of a mirror to make sure that you look presentable. Dress conservatively, males with a well-fitting suit and tie and females with a business suit. Take a bath before the interview. Pack extra shirts, ties, panty hose, and a needle and thread. Carry your interview attire on the plane – don’t check it in your baggage (airlines frequently misplace luggage!). Refrain from consuming beverages or food during an interview unless you’re really coordinated and not prone to accidents. Greet your interviewer confidently by looking them in the eye and providing a good firm handshake. Look interested during the interview by leaning forward and paying attention to the interviewer.

Be nice - Being nice, being informed, and showing interest will increase your chances of being ranked high by a program. Programs want to “fill” during the Match, but they don’t want to get a complainer, late-arriver, jerk, etc. So, they put those folks on the “reject” list. You are under the microscope during any interaction with a program

(including a telephone call). So be nice and appear interested and appropriately enthusiastic during all aspects of your interview. Be kind to everyone, including ancillary personnel, and don't complain about anything. Smile lots, 😊, and say "thank you" even if that sandwich is stale!

Seek out contact with residents - These are the folks with whom you will be working. Ask yourself whether they seem happy, inspired, and challenged. Do you "fit in"? Are they the type of residents you would be proud to call colleagues?

Get Ready for These Questions

Interviewers differ widely in terms of the questions they ask. A few will ask questions that are impossible to anticipate. Fortunately, most ask predictable questions for which you can prepare a framework of an answer. Check out Iserson's *Getting Into a Residency* or AAMC's Careers in Medicine website for more questions and plausible responses.

Here are a few questions to consider:

"Tell me about yourself." - This open-ended question should be answered in no more than a minute. Identify categories that you can discuss. Examples include: Undergraduate education, medical school experience (e.g., basic science courses you liked and why, and your favorite clerkship), your research interests (if you have any), and your personal interests. Watch the interviewer. If the person appears to want more, tell them. Otherwise, wait for them to ask another question.

"What questions do you have about this program?" - This is where an in-depth knowledge of the program pays off. Ask the questions that will inform you about the program but avoid touchy issues like salary and benefits.

"What do you see yourself doing in 10 to 15 years?" - The interviewer wants to get a general idea about your career plans. Talk in general terms by using the following terms as they apply to you: caring for patients, interdisciplinary setting, clinical research, coordinating, managing, expanding my knowledge base, community involvement, professional involvement, and personal interests.

"Name your three greatest assets." - Respond with honesty, humility, and confidence. This is no time to be shy. Assets like "working with others," "being able to delegate," "being able to prioritize and accomplish goals," and "empathy for patients and other health care providers", or however you want to phrase them, are what most programs want in their residents.

"What are your three greatest faults?" - Turn your faults into strengths. For example, don't say: "I have trouble managing my time." Instead, say: "One of the things that I'm currently working on is feeling comfortable when I delegate something to someone. In the past I spent too much time following up ensuring the work was done. I now spend time insuring the person knows what's expected and can actually perform the task." (rephrase in your words)

"Why are you applying to this program?" - Before the interview specify one or more reasons for interviewing in that program and be ready to discuss them.

“Why do you want to go into this specialty?” - You should reflect on why you are pursuing a career in a particular specialty and prepare a brief and inspiring response to this item. (Hint: NEVER say: “I want to be a because I didn’t like anything else!”)

Practice Interviewing

UTRGV Careers in Medicine will conduct a mock interview session at the beginning of your fourth year and you will also find a Guide to the resident interview on the UTRGV CiM website. For extra practice, ask your specialty advisor, to conduct a “mock” interview with you. Dress as if it’s a real interview. Note the questions that you handle easily and get guidance on those that are difficult for you.

Review the Information You Have About the Program Before the Interview

Summarize all you know about a program on one page. Review this summary the night before and the morning of the interview. An interviewee who knows specifics about the program and asks intelligent and thoughtful questions communicates enthusiasm and interest. Be familiar with the types of patients served, the attendings’ clinical interests, and articles attendings have recently published, but interviewers don’t appreciate interviewees who appear to refer to this information to “get points.”

Prepare a one-page synopsis of a program to review just before your interview.

Interview Date:	_____
Program Title:	_____
Address:	_____
Building/Room:	_____
Telephone Number:	_____
Program Director:	_____
Key Faculty:	_____
Reasons Interviewing:	_____
Marketed Strengths:	_____
Possible Needs:	_____
Look For:	_____

Remember Names

Call the faculty “Dr. Last Name” until you are told differently. Record the name of each person who interviews you or spends time with you. Write down key aspects of your interaction (e.g., “talked about fly-fishing and made me feel comfortable”). Keep these notes.

Write “Thank You” Notes to Interviewers

Immediately after the interview write a thank-you note to each person with whom you really “bonded” and refer to the conversation (verified by your notes, above) to make it more personal. An example of a sample thank-you note follows. (Email notes are fine and actually allow a program director to more easily respond back.)

Date

Dear Dr. Block:

I thoroughly enjoyed talking with you during my interview at your program last week. I appreciate the way you made me feel at ease during that fast-paced day. It was nice to talk with someone who shares a mutual interest in pottery. Your collection is impressive! It was also good to talk with you about your interest in (mention something dealing with medicine that you discussed, perhaps clinical research).

Thanks again for making the interview so pleasant.

Your First Name Last Name

Caution: *Any person who talks to you during an interview visit might be asked to comment about you. Therefore, guard your comments and questions carefully, especially with residents. Get the name and telephone number of a resident with whom you establish rapport during the interview. You can use that person to obtain more specific program information (like benefits) without seeming too pushy.*

Post-Interview Correspondence

Interviewees and residency programs frequently exchange correspondence after interviews. While both interviewees and residency programs should follow guidelines from the National Residency Matching Program (NRMP) regarding correspondence, both groups struggle with knowing what, if anything, to say in post-interview contacts. Increasingly, some programs and some specialties have adopted a policy of no post-interview communication. Please pay attention at your interview as to how the program instructs you as to what they stand on this and abide by it.

Post-Interview Correspondence to a Program

A program wants to know if you are interested in going there. Therefore, write the program director and state how much you enjoyed visiting the program and describe, in detail, key program features that appeal to you. Follow-up on interviews with “thank-you” cards to key interviewers to show your interest. Remember, though, that your rank list is a private matter. You can indicate that you really like a program, **but don't tell a program that you intend to rank it #1 unless you are committed to follow through**. It is important for you to know that, in the past, a small number of students have gotten themselves in trouble by giving ranking information to programs, forgetting they did so, and then changing their minds. Avoid this situation!!

Requests for Letters of Intent

Some programs will even tell you that you must notify them that you want to go there. If they tell you that, definitely inform them that you are interested.

Post-Interview Correspondence from a Program

The correspondence a program sends to interviewees following the interview varies widely among specialties and programs. While some programs send positive letters to *everyone*, others send *nothing* to anyone. Some programs may even telephone interviewees to answer any questions the people may have about them.

Be prepared for anything! Don't get depressed if you hear nothing from a program. It is just too difficult to decipher what nothing means. Conversely, don't get too excited if you get a positive letter or a telephone call from a program. Such communications, though nice to get and ego-stroking, assures you of nothing, so be sure NOT to change your cautious behavior based on any program comments.

The following are two examples of correspondence sent to a recent graduate who ultimately did not match with either program:

“A brief update regarding our effort to attract a strong PGY-2 class for 20XX. To date we have received 206 qualified applications and anticipate a few more. Although pleased with the number of applicants, we have been particularly impressed with the quality of the 55 applicants we have already interviewed. Our Residency Selection Committee recently completed its initial meetings. Although obviously early in the process, the committee authorized me to convey our

positive interest in your application and our expectation that you will rank competitively on our final NRMP list. I will keep you informed of our progress. If there are questions or if it would be useful to discuss any of this don't hesitate to contact me."

"At our recent Admissions and Progressions Subcommittee meeting, we formally approved your application to our residency program. Under the terms of the Match Review Board, we will offer you a position through the National Residency Matching Plan. While we will not do our final ranking until shortly before the match submission date, you are clearly an outstanding applicant. I am personally very eager to see you join us in July. If there is anything I can do which might increase your familiarity with -----, I would be very pleased to do so. We have a lot to offer, and our best bet for attracting people like yourself is to make every effort to inform you about our program. Good luck with your important and difficult decision. I hope we get to work together starting next July."

The Rank List

Entering Your Rank Order List (ROL)

After you've decided the order in which you will rank the residency programs at which you interviewed, you must communicate this ranking to the NRMP. You will enter your rank order list (ROL) directly into a computer at the secure NRMP Matching System website. You may enter your ROL in one or more sessions on the NRMP website from mid- January through late February. After you have entered your ROL you will be asked to certify your list. Remember, you must re-certify your ROL each time changes are made.

You can also print a copy of your ROL at any step during the process. You are the only person who can see your list unless you give your AAMC ID and password to someone else.

Important Guidelines

Number One: Seek good guidance throughout the process – even after your interviews. You may have false impressions or misinterpretations of how secure your position is in some programs. Do not remove or re-order programs from your list based on anything a residency program tells you. Show your advisors the list of programs you plan to rank (the programs do NOT have to be in rank order) to help ensure to the highest possible degree that your list is sound, appropriate, and long enough.

Number Two: *Rank 'em like you want 'em.* The NRMP handbook contains a rather lengthy explanation of the mechanics of The Computer and the process by which students and programs match. The gist of it is this: There is no advantage in ranking a less desirable program higher than your #1 choice just because your #2 program ranks (or says it will rank) you higher.

Number Three: Some residency programs require applicants to secure a "preliminary program" (PGY-1) match in addition to a match at their program. These are called "advanced programs". Students applying to these residencies will need to submit a "supplemental" ROL, which links PGY-1 spots to corresponding programs on the "primary" ROL. That is, if a student matches with the advanced program listed on their primary ROL, the computer then tries to match the student to a preliminary program on the supplemental list. **To avoid not matching, students should strongly consider ranking preliminary programs at the bottom of their primary list as a back-up plan.** For example, if a student doesn't get to interview at as many of the competitive programs he or she would like to list on his or her primary list, there is a risk of not matching and having to go through SOAP to secure a position after graduation. This student may list one or more preliminary spots after the advanced programs on their primary list. This way, if this student does not match to an advanced program, he or she could focus on applying in SOAP or seek a position outside the match for the advanced program for the PGY-2 year rather than trying to secure a spot for the PGY-1 year.

Number Four: Do what you can to avoid not matching. While having to participate in SOAP is by no means the end of the world, it is stressful and should be avoided. It also leaves you in the position of having to take whatever you can get (along with the others

who have not matched). Again, if there is any question about your application's competitiveness, also rank a backup specialty and/or preliminary program.

Match Week Process

Day	Tentative Match Week Schedule
Friday Before Match Week	11:00 a.m. – NRMP notifies all applicants, regardless of match status, whether they are eligible for SOAP.
MATCH WEEK Monday	10:00 a.m. – Applicants: Did I Match? 10:00 a.m. – Programs: Did I Fill? 10:00 a.m. – List of Unfilled Programs posted 1:00 p.m. – ERAS opens in SOAP mode Applicants begin sending applications using ERAS. 2:00 p.m. – Programs can download applications Program-initiated telephone interviews with applicants begin, but no offers allowed.
Tuesday	Applicants and programs communicate by program-initiated telephone interviews. 10:30 a.m. – Programs begin entering preference lists in R3 system.
Wednesday	10:55 a.m. – Program preference list deadline for Round 1 offers 11:00 a.m. – Round 1 electronic offers made in R3 system 1:00 p.m. – Deadline to accept/reject Round 1 offers 1:55 p.m. – Program preference list deadline for Round 2 offers 2:00 p.m. – Round 2 electronic offers made in R3 system 4:00 p.m. – Deadline to accept/reject Round 2 offers
Thursday	7:00 a.m. – Schools: Match Results 7:55 a.m. – Program preference list deadline for Round 3 offers 8:00 a.m. – Round 3 electronic offers made in R3 system 10:00 a.m. – Deadline to accept/reject Round 3 offers 11:00 a.m. – List of Unfilled Programs posted
Friday	Match Day! 11:00 a.m. – School Ceremonies 12:00 p.m. – Applicants: Where Did I Match?

* Source: <http://www.nrmp.org/>

** Times shown are Central Standard Time.

MATCH DAY CEREMONY!!

Match Day, usually a day of great celebration, is one day that you will remember perhaps even into senility. Special announcements will be made on the logistics of the Match Day ceremony. This is a special day where your invited families and friends are able to gather with you. Faculty that have been nominated will hand out Match Day envelopes. The envelopes are opened with much jubilation and the festivities continue from there!!