

Getting Ready To Apply For Specialty Training –Top 10 Tips

1. Apply for the job that you want: Do not worry unnecessarily about the competition ratios, you should bear them in mind but many people get the job their first preference. The key is to prepare early and in an organised way.
2. Person specifications and Applicants Guide: Look at these early in the process: it sets out the criteria required from applicants. Most person specifications will have essential and desirable criteria, if you do not fit the essential criteria then it is most likely that your application will be rejected. You need to provide evidence as to how you will meet each criteria- you will be scored against each one in the application form and at the assessment centre. Person specifications can be downloaded from: <https://specialtytraining.hee.nhs.uk/Recruitment/Person-specifications> and applicants guide here <https://specialtytraining.hee.nhs.uk/Recruitment/Application-guidance>
3. Prepare your CV: An up-to-date CV will help you to decide which areas you need to work on to show that you are a good all-round candidate to score the most marks, e.g. if you have nothing in your teaching section then you need to do some! Keep it up to date: this will form the basis of your portfolio. However, don't worry if some sections on your C.V. are not filled with evidence, for example if you do not have any publications or research. Try to tick these boxes if you can, but at the foundation level of career your interviewers will accept that you may not have had opportunities to undertake these things. (But note some people will have!) Advice on how to structure your C.V. can be found here: http://careers.bmj.com/careers/advice/Preparing_your_medical_CV
4. Evidence: Make sure that you have evidence for everything that you have listed on your C.V. e.g. if you have said that you have performed teaching as a junior doctor or medical student, keep the slides or get feedback from students or a supervising consultant. This will be important for your portfolio, and can take a while to gather if you are trying to do it in a rush!
5. Taster week: Use your study leave to undertake a taster week in the career that you are intending to apply for. It shows an assessor that you are committed to a certain speciality without too much time commitment and improve your score.
6. Speak to trainees and Consultants – information interviews: Useful for organising audits, helping with research to get a publication and hearing about events that you could attend to further your interest. An information interview is also useful for finding out about training, whether you are suited to a speciality, where you may want to work and finding out about the sorts of questions that have come up in previous interviews.

7. Audit/Quality improvement: Another way of adding weight to your application form, which doesn't necessarily have to be time-consuming. Undertake an audit in your chosen specialty. Points can be awarded for the fact that you have presented it locally/regionally, nationally and internationally.

8. Organise your portfolio: Presentation is key! A ring binder and plastic wallets will suffice. Some interviews are staged with an interviewer going through your portfolio during the station, so presentation and ease of reading is important, especially if you have lots to show off! A standard portfolio will contain your CV and other key documents e.g. Qualifications, GMC certificate, your DOPS, MINI CEXs, CBDs and MSF as well as your research/publications, audits and teaching. These can be separated into sections. If you are applying for more than one specialty this is particularly important as you will need separate portfolios for each to highlight information more relevant to one specialty than another. See <http://www.medicalcareers.nhs.uk/> for information on the interviews, portfolios, training abroad, making the most of foundation training years.

9. The application form: Make a note of all the deadlines for submissions – late applications will not be considered. Use the STAR technique (Situation, Task, Action, Result) to help you answer the competency questions. The STAR method lets you describe the Situation you were involved in that resulted in a positive outcome, Task describe the tasks involved in that situation then Action allows you to give details of the various actions involved in the situation's task, finally the Result gives you space to reflect on what results directly followed because of your actions.

10. The interview: There are lots of websites and books aimed at helping you tackle some of the typical questions that are commonly asked at interviewer. See <http://www.medicalinterviews.co.uk/> or <https://www.medical-interviews.co.uk/> as examples.

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