Questions to Ask About Specialties

Questions to ask yourself
• What do I enjoy doing?
• What is important to me?
• What energizes me?
• What do I do well?

Do I value...
• Autonomy
• Continuity of care
• Innovative thinking
• Intellectual challenge

• Where do I feel most at home?
• What made me want to practice medicine in the first place?

Nature of the work
• What systems, diseases, patient types, and procedures are part of this specialty?
• What kind of relationships do physicians in these specialties have with their patients?
• Do they work with a variety of common medical problems, or singular, specialized problems?
• In what settings are these specialties practiced?
• Do they regularly work with consultants, referral specialists or allied health professionals?
• Does the work involve regular manual or mechanical activities?
• Does the work involve an intellectual component?

Characteristics of physicians in the specialty
• What values, interests, skills, and personality types are common to physicians in this specialty?
• Is this field diverse in ways that matter to me?
• Training/Residency requirements
• How long is the training for this career path?
• How competitive is this option, and can I compete (grades, USMLE scores, etc.)?
• What are the options for fellowship or subspecialty training?

Lifestyle and salary
• What is the average number of work hours per week?
• What is the on-call schedule like?
• What can I expect in terms of salary?
Issues facing professionals in the field

- What are the hot topics?
- What research questions are being studied?
- How interesting are these issues to me?
- Is there an expectation of growth or decline in the need for physicians in this specialty area?

Questions to ask a specialist

- How / why did you choose this specialty?
- What do you find most rewarding about your work?
- What are the biggest challenges?
- How much balance do you have between your career and personal life?
- What attributes are important in anyone considering this specialty?
- Knowing what you do now, would you choose this specialty again?