

Application Strategy for Success: 3 Pairs



The 3 Pairs Strategy helps you identify physical therapy programs that best fit your interests and needs. Research suggests acceptance rates increase significantly (90%) when applicants apply to six or more unique programs. Reflect on your priorities and deal-breakers, then use program websites, events, and the PTCAS Directory to build a balanced list of programs that align with your interests and qualifications.

Priorities

Priorities are factors that are important to you and can help distinguish one program from another. While you may be flexible on some, identifying what matters most can focus on your search.

Examples:

- Areas of clinical rotations
- Faculty and class size
- Teaching styles
- Research opportunities
- Academic or mental health support services
- Physical campus
- Alumni network
- Program specialty focus areas
- University mission

Deal-breakers

Deal-breakers are non-negotiable factors. If a program does not meet one of these requirements, it may not be a good fit.

Examples:

- Location of program
- Cost and financial aid
- Program accreditation status
- Graduation and job placement rates
- Prerequisite requirements

Building Your 3 Pairs

Select at least two programs in each category for a starting list of six programs. As you evaluate each program, consider how your academic profile (GPA, GRE scores, prerequisites, and other qualifications) aligns with its admission requirements. Also consider your priorities and deal-breakers and how they align with the programs. While not every program may meet all your expectations, each should be one where you could genuinely see yourself attending and having a positive experience.

Pair 1: The Dream Pair (2 Programs)

Programs you are most excited to attend. These may be more competitive given your qualifications, but they align closely with your goals, priorities, and deal-breakers. They should meet all your deal-breakers and most of your priorities. Consider attending information sessions or visiting these campuses.

Pair 2: The Match Pair (2 Programs)

Programs that align well with your qualifications and goals. These strong-fit options would be ideal programs and meet your deal-breakers. Consider your priorities to help determine which programs are the best match and where you can see yourself succeeding.

Pair 3: The Opportunity Pair (2 Programs)

Programs that may not have been your first choice but meet your deal-breakers, align well with your qualifications and some priorities, and provide a strong path toward becoming a physical therapist. These programs are a great place to broaden your possibilities.