INSIDE THE MATCH | SEASON BRIEFING

The Match Season Calendar 2026 to 2027

Every date that matters, what to do each month, and why you can breathe.

70%
of U.S. citizen IMGs matched to PGY-1 in 2026
AMA / NRMP 2026

56.4%
of non-U.S. citizen IMGs matched to PGY-1 in 2026. Not lottery odds.
AMA / NRMP 2026

8.8 vs 2.4
programs ranked by matched vs unmatched U.S. IMGs. Every interview counts.
NRMP Charting Outcomes IMG 2024

89%
of program directors rank on interpersonal skills (4.8 of 5). Trainable.
NRMP PD Survey 2024

SEPT
SUBMIT

Sep 2 Submissions open **Sep 23 Programs begin review**

Do: Turn on email alerts and check spam daily. Save an invitation reply template. Confirm visa sponsorship for every program. Start your tracker (page 2).

Nothing is decided yet. You have six months of real influence ahead.

OCT
FIRST WAVES

Invitations arrive in waves

Do: Reply to invitations within hours; slots fill first come. Build a Story Bank of 8 to 10 real experiences (STAR plus Lesson). Do your first recorded mock interview.

Silence means "not yet," far more often than "no."

NOV
ADJUST

2nd week Letters of interest **Advocacy window 1**

Do: Send specific letters of interest to silent programs you love. Ask mentors with real connections to send a note (one or two programs each). Fewer invites than hoped? Start the 30-Day Recovery Protocol: audit, widen, reach out, advocate.

A slow season is not a failed season. Adjust with a plan, not a panic.

DEC
LATER WAVES

Later waves and cancellations

Do: Keep dates open; cancellations create openings. Send thank-you notes within 24 to 48 hours of each interview. Send update letters for any new score, publication, or letter.

A December invitation is ranked exactly like an October one.

JAN
ADVOCATE

Advocacy window 2 **Program ranking meetings begin**

Do: Before programs meet to rank, ask mentors connected to your favorite programs for a note of support. Send letters of strong interest. Record honest impressions of every program.

The people who interviewed you want you to do well. Let them remember you.

FEB
RANK

Feb 1 Rank list entry opens

Do: Rank in the order you truly prefer; the algorithm favors your choices. Include every program where you would be willing to train. Send one letter of intent at most, and only if true.

A longer honest list is your strongest protection.

MAR
MATCH

Mar 3 9 p.m. ET List deadline **Mar 15 Match Week + SOAP** **Mar 19 12 p.m. ET Match Day**

Do: Certify early, not at the deadline. Have SOAP materials ready in advance; 2,581 positions were placed through SOAP in 2026. Plan who you will be with at noon on March 19.

Whatever the email says, you are still the physician who did the work.

APR MAY
NEXT

May 31 ERAS season closes

Do: Matched: onboarding, licensing, and visa paperwork. Not yet: debrief honestly, strengthen, and begin the next cycle early. It opens in June.

Effort aimed well is rewarded. Sometimes on the first try, always eventually.

Your Interview Invite Tracker

One row per program. Update it twice a day at set times, then close the laptop. Checking more often never makes invitations arrive faster.

#	Program	Visa OK	Invite	Interview	Thank-you	Advocate	My impression (1 to 5)
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							
9							
10							
11							
12							
13							
14							
15							
16							

The invitation reply (send within hours)

- Thank them, accept, name your preferred date.
- Include your full name and AAMC ID.
- Date unavailable? Ask politely for alternatives. Never go silent.
- Declining? Decline promptly. It frees a spot for a colleague.

Fewer invites than hoped? 30-Day Protocol

- **Week 1, Audit:** specialty mix, visa fit, geography, filters.
- **Week 2, Widen:** add IMG-friendly and overlooked programs.
- **Week 3, Reach out:** specific letters of interest and updates.
- **Week 4, Advocate:** mentors with real connections, plus a written backup plan.

What decides your rank

- Interpersonal skills: 89% of PDs, 4.8 of 5.
- Interactions during interviews: 87%, 4.8 of 5.
- Feedback from current residents: 76%, 4.6 of 5. The social counts.
- A Match violation outweighs everything. Know the rules.

The hour before every interview

- Close everything. Review one page, not your whole story bank.
- Camera at eye level. Look at the lens when you speak.
- Five breaths: in 4, hold 4, out 6.
- Say it once: "I have done the work to be here. They invited me because they want to meet me."

"You chose a path whose entire purpose is to help people at their most vulnerable moments. There is no nobler work. The waiting is the tax every physician pays on the way in. Keep aiming your effort well. It is almost always rewarded."

Dr. NMN | Get the full week-by-week Season Pass: insidethematch.nmndigitalconsulting.com

Sources: NRMP 2027 Main Residency Match Applicants Calendar; ECFMG ERAS 2027 Timeline; AMA, "Largest Match Day on record: Dive into the 2026 numbers"; NRMP Charting Outcomes: IMGs, 2024 (Table 2); NRMP Charting Outcomes: Program Director Survey Results, 2024. This calendar is educational guidance, not an official NRMP or ERAS document. Always confirm dates at nrmp.org and ecfmg.org.