

FAQ Document: Tips for Navigating the ASHP Match as a Couple

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What is the purpose of participating in the Match as a couple?

- The ASHP Match allows for any two individuals to link their rank order lists together so they can coordinate where they will match. Usually this is used for the purpose of wanting to match in the same geographic region as your partner. Couples can include spouses, domestic partners, or friends. There is no documentation needed of marriage or partnership to participate in the Match as a couple.

What are some considerations when considering participating in the Match as a couple?

- Both partners must talk early and often as you go through the process. There will be difficult conversations throughout this process, but it can be extremely rewarding in the long term.
- When considering participation as a couple, it is important to determine this before going into the application season to increase your chances of matching in your desired locations. The final decision to participate as a couple does not have to occur until the rank lists are being submitted. For example, two individuals can start the application process with the intent to match as a couple. After applications are submitted and interviews are extended, the two individuals might decide not to submit their rank lists together. This could be decided for several reasons. For example, the partners do not receive interviews in the same area, the individuals decided being in the same location is no longer a major priority, or someone decides not to move forward with the residency match process.
- It is important to consider that each partner needs to be a good candidate to be successful in the Match process. The programs will be assessing you as an individual despite your participation in the Match as a couple. Unless you tell a program, they will not know that you are matching as a couple. In order for both partners to be matched, each person must be able to match individually to the program that forms their part of that rank list.
- Both individuals must be open and honest. It is imperative to have frank discussions about your professional and personal goals, and how geography, institutions, and the rest of life falls into your goals.²
- It is possible that one or both individuals will not be successful in matching to a residency program. Before starting the application process, discuss what happens if one person matches and the other does not.
- It is also possible that your top programs will not be geographically similar. It is important to discuss if you both are willing to potentially compromise your program preferences in order to be matched together, geographically. When matching as a couple you also have the option to match in different geographic areas. This can be helpful in the case you decide that location is not as important as other factors when attempting to match with certain desired programs.
- Open dialogue about non-negotiables in the process is imperative. For example, both partners should discuss the type of program, locations, program needs, and anything else important to those individuals when selecting a residency program.

How does matching as a couple work?

- Within the [NMS Match System](#), each person must register separately for the ASHP Match. You do not have to officially decide if you want to participate as a couple until you are ready to enter

your rank list. Deciding before the application process will allow the applicants to know what is needed to have more options for matching together.

- Each partner must change their Couple Status in the NMS Match System. You will need your Partner's Match Code Number. Your Couple Status will be Pending until your partner identifies you as their partner in the NMS Match system. ¹
- Couples can match between years. For example, a candidate can go through the Match for PGY1 programs, and the other candidate can go through the match for a PGY2 program.

How should couples approach program application selection?

- Attend networking sessions
 - Attend regional residency showcases, the Midyear Clinical Meeting and Exhibition residency showcase, and program hosted webinars. If applicable, consider participating in the Personnel Placement Services (PPS).
 - In general, increasing your exposure and showing your interest in a program can assist you throughout the application process.
 - This will also allow you to gain knowledge about the program and help both partners narrow down their program list.
 - When attending showcases and PPS interviews, ask intentional questions to help narrow down the programs.
- Discuss how many programs you want to apply to
 - In this process, it can be helpful to have more options since you are trying to match two people and not just one.
- Geographic areas
 - Larger metropolitan areas or areas with more residency positions in your interest area can help increase chances of matching successfully as a couple.
 - Consider how far you are willing to drive and potential areas you want to live in.
 - For example, one partner applies to a program 1 hour away from a program that the other partner applies to. Are both partners willing to live in the middle and drive 30+ minutes to work every day? Deciding these factors during the application process will allow the partners to best optimize their time and money.
- Partner interest
 - It is a good idea to discuss potential interests in PGY2 programs to help guide the application process.
- Create a shared list
 - An Excel file can be useful to keep a running rank list throughout the application process for both candidates.

Do programs know that you are participating in the Match as a couple?

- The NMS Match System does not notify programs that you are participating as a couple, but if you apply to the same programs, they might recognize that you are couples matching.
- The program will typically not know unless you tell them.

How do you develop your rank order list as a couple?

- Applicants who participate in the Match as a couple link their rank lists together to form “pairs” of program choices.
- When participating in the Match as a couple, program location is typically the largest deciding factor. As you sit down to rank the programs, it is important to consider what possible program pairings you would be happy with. The more options you are open to, the more likely you both will be placed into programs of your choice.
- The couple should also consider forming pairs where the programs are not in the same location.
- In some cases, you may want to designate one program in the pair as "No Match" to indicate that one partner is willing to go unmatched if the other can get a position at the program paired with the No Match entry (use the Add No Match Rank button to add a "No Match" entry with code 999999). No Match entries are typically seen at the bottom of couples’ rank lists to allow for individual success at matching, but pairs with a No Match choice can be placed throughout the rank list if a program is desirable enough to consider your partner going unmatched as a viable option at that point in your rank list. ¹
- NMS has provided a [Paired Choices Generator Tool](#) on the [ASHP Match website](#) that can assist couples in generating a potential list of paired rankings.
- It is important to list every option you are open to.
- Below, you will see an example rank list. You will notice that the programs are ranked together based upon location. The two partners must decide which programs they are willing to rank together. In some cases, one rank in the pair may be designated "No Match" to indicate that one partner is willing to go unmatched if the other can get a position.
- The partners can rank programs together even if they are not in the same geographic location. You are developing the parameters in your rank list, and the NMS Match System will only consider the options listed.

Selection	Partner 1 Rank Order List	Partner 2 Rank Order List
1	Columbus, OH – Program A	Columbus, OH – Program A
2	Nashville, TN – Program A	Nashville, TN – Program B
3	Chapel Hill, NC – Program A	Durham, NC – Program A
4	Greensboro, NC - Program A	Greensboro, NC – Program A
5	Columbus, OH – Program A	No Match
6	Winston-Salem, NC – Program A	Charlotte, NC – Program A
7	No Match	Columbus, OH – Program A
8	Winston-Salem, NC – Program A	No Match
9	Nashville, TN – Program A	No Match
10	No Match	Durham, NA – Program A
11	Greensboro, NC – Program A	No Match
12	No Match	Nashville, TN – Program A
13	No Match	Charlotte, NC – Program A

How do you submit your rank list?

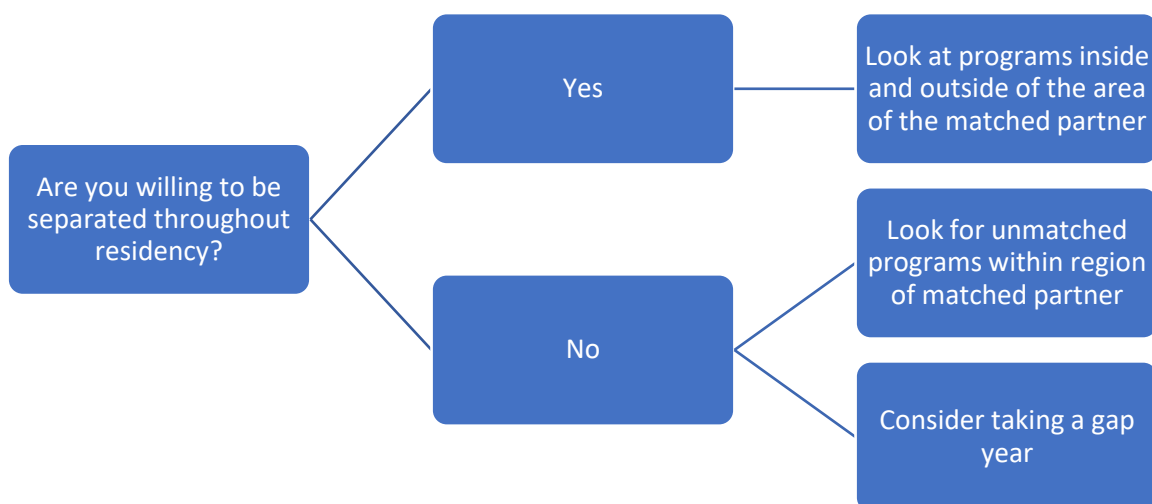
- The couples match process is also done in the NMS Match System. Each partner will log into their individual NMS Match System account, but your accounts must be linked as mentioned previously.
- When submitting your rank list, you will only enter your side of the paired list. It is important to double check each entry is aligned with the correct entry of your partner. The printer-friendly view of your rank list in the NMS Match System will show the rankings entered into the NMS Match System by both you and your partner. It is suggested to print a copy of your rank list prior to submitting to validate and cross reference with your partner's rank list.¹

What are some lessons learned from someone who has successfully matched as a couple?

- Stay open-minded throughout the process
- Understand that your initial plans can change
- Apply to multiple programs in each of the geographic areas you choose to increase your likelihood of matching together
- Objective data as a starting point can help the ranking process run smoothly

If one of the partners is not successful in matching, what are the next steps?

- If you participate in Phase I of the Match as a couple, but you do not obtain a position in Phase I, then your Couples Status will be reset to an individual applicant for Phase II of the Match. If both you and your partner do not obtain a position in Phase I, and you wish to participate as a couple in Phase II of the Match, you will need to re-couple in the NMS Match System prior to submitting your Rank Order Lists for Phase II of the Match.¹
- Consider if you are willing to be separated for the duration of your residency.



Additional information about participating in the Match as a couple can be found on the NMS ASHP Match webpage at <https://www.natmatch.com/ashprmp/applicants/couples.html>

Resources

1. National Matching System – Participating as a Couple
 - a. <https://www.natmatch.com/ashprmp/applicants/couples.html>
2. Shemmassian Blog for Medical Residency
 - a. <https://www.shemmassianconsulting.com/blog/couples-match-residency>
3. Student Doctor
 - a. <https://forums.studentdoctor.net/threads/residency-admissions-how-to-match-as-a-couple.1281629/>

For questions regarding this document, please contact newpractitioners@ashp.org
For similar resources, please visit the [ASHP New Practitioner Resources webpage](#) or the [Student Residency Resource Center](#)

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