

MCATTIPS

We reached out to some of our MS1s here at JABSOM and asked them for their MCAT secrets including must Dos, Absolutely Do Nots, Tips and Tricks to their MCAT success!

Thank you Maveric A, Austin C, Connor G, Melissa G and Nick SL!

DOs!

- Start EARLY, establish a schedule and be disciplined (but flexible!)
 - AAMC offers an MCAT study schedule template and there are a variety of other templates online
- Set aside time just for studying – dedicate a time period that you can prioritize and focus on only the MCAT
- **PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE.** Take as many practice tests as possible.
- **Mindset:** Intend on taking the MCAT only once– take the exam only when you feel ready
- **“Take Care of Your Goose”**
 - take at least one full day off or several half-days off each week to take care of your mental and physical health

DO NOTs!

- Do not take the MCAT when you are unprepared
 - Do not take the test just to “gauge yourself” and then count on a retake
 - It is cheaper to postpone and reschedule your test date than it is to retake
- Do not wait until last minute to begin practice tests
- Do not compare your progress to someone else’s

SCHEDULING

How long did you prepare? For the most part, on average we all took one semester (~5 months) to prepare for the MCAT + 2-4 weeks dedicated to just the MCAT, practice tests and review

If you studied during school, work or internship, what did your study schedule look like?

An example study schedule:

- Attend in-person classes once a week OR read a bit of each Kaplan book for few hours during the weekdays
- Spent weekends, holidays and breaks catching up with review and self-studying
- Set aside time right before the exam to shift your focus from school/work to focus only on the MCAT
- Closer to test date, get into the a routine similar to test day – start a practice test at 8am and review answers Saturday afternoon-Sunday
- Do not cram the day before test day. Use this day to do only brief reviews. Take time to relax.

RESOURCE RECOMMENDATIONS

Kaplan: we all used these books to self-study

- Covers high-yield content and pretty much everything you need to know but the reading can be dense at times
- Practice exams are harder than the actual AAMC exams

AAMC Q Banks: great investment

- Good indication of level of difficulty for types of questions seen on the actual test
- Works best when you can take the time to really go over the questions and their explanations

Anki: Flash card application using spaced-repetition

- Used primarily for Psych section

Khan Academy:

- Videos are a good resource to brush up on a specific topic
- Psych/Soc: 300pg PDF on Reddit that basically has everything you need to know

Next Step Prep:

- Offered practice test bundles – if you are looking to do more than 4 practice tests (which is recommended!)

AAMC Official Practice Tests + Sample Test: AN ABSOLUTE MUST HAVE

- Best and most valuable resource – save these for the end of your studying and make sure you absolutely do all of them

Other

- Subscribe to MSAR (\$25) to look at your target MCAT/GPA for schools of interest – this is helpful during the application process as well

PRACTICE TEST TIPS

- When doing your practice test, try to make it as much like the exam as possible. Go into a different room from where you usually study, start exactly at 8am, give yourself the same amount of time/number of breaks, etc.
- Find a study environment that most closely resembles a testing center – library cubicles, computer labs; a clear desk with NO phones, smart watches, notifications on your laptop, etc.
- Official AAMC questions and practice tests are the best resource but they are limited - It might be helpful to try a non-AAMC practice test (Next Step, Kaplan) in the beginning of your studies just so you have a better idea of what kind of questions are asked and the timing/length of the test
- Take at least a few hours or an entire day to review practice tests. Try to review within 2 days of completing a practice exam
 - Review incorrect AND correct answers. Make sure you understand the reasoning behind the correct answer

TEST DAY TIPS

- **Get a good night sleep!** Cramming at this point will not make a difference. Make sure you go into the exam feeling well rested and confident
- Check out the test center and parking situation the day prior or earlier in the week – don't let traffic or parking lead to added anxiety!
- Most people rush through the instruction part of the test but I would recommend using every minute so that you can **take notes on the scratch paper/whiteboard that's provided to you before the test actually begins** – write down things that may be hard to memorize and you now you might forget later (ie. equations)
- Some people finish their sections early and will leave early but don't feel peer pressured into also leaving early - **double check your work if you have extra time.** You don't get extra points for finishing fast!

SPECIFIC TIPS FOR EACH SECTION

Chem/Phys

- know the basic formulas!
- a calculator will not be available – practice estimating and rounding when doing any calculations

CARS

- get into the habit of reading a little bit every day!
- get comfortable reading about topics that you may have little or no interest in
- annotate during the passage or write down a one-sentence summary after each paragraph

Biology/Biochem

- be familiar with experimental design and interpreting data

Psychology

- take a stats class in undergrad if available!
- We all felt that this section was mainly memorization – this is why *Anki* is so useful in this section!

OTHER QUESTIONS

It is necessary to take an MCAT class?

- Many of us chose to self-study: we enjoyed going at our own pace and having the flexibility to work around our class or work schedule
- In-person prep courses are great if you want to learn test-taking strategies

Did it help to take the MCAT after prerequisite courses (ie. Orgo or Biochem)?

- Definitely. Your classes will cover the content in much more detail but it certainly helps to have a strong foundation so that you spend less time learning content.