Hello all,

The Medical College Admission Test, or more famously known as the MCAT is an entrance exam all prospective medical students need to take. This test is very important as it is used for the medical college’s admission staff to determine if you are capable of undergoing a rigorous program. This test is very stressful and takes a great deal of effort. This packet is a guide to help you prepare for the exam.

Included in this packet:

- 6 Month Study Plan
- Methods
- Tips and Tricks

The MCAT requires a great deal of time and energy, but achieving a great score is never out of the realm. If you want to schedule an appointment with an Academic Coach, call (515-294-6624).

- The ASC Academic Coaching Team

“The results you achieve will be in direct proportion to the effort you apply.”

-Denis Waitley
Classes

When studying for the MCAT these will be the classes that are recommended to succeed on the MCAT

- 2 Semesters of Biochemistry (BBMB 404 and 405)
- 2 Semesters of Biology (211 and 212)
- 2 Semesters of General Chemistry (Chem 177 and 178)
- 2 Semesters of Organic Chemistry (Chem 331 and 332)
- 2 Semesters of Physics (Phys 111 and 112)
- 1 Semester of Sociology (Soc 134)
- 1 Semester of Psychology (Psych 101)

Six Month Study Plan

This outline is a study guide for preparing for the MCAT that outlines six months (about 26 weeks) from the testing date

- When using this study guide, try and study 25-30 hours a week. That is about 4-5 hours a day. You can always spend more on one day than another. If you study for an hour in the morning, an hour in between classes, and two hours in the afternoon, you are already at the bottom of the range.
- Please note that this six month plan can easily become a three month plan (Weeks 1-13), after week 13 the pattern of topics is repeated. We recommend six months as the ideal time to spend studying and preparing but acknowledge that some people may have less time to prepare.

Week 1

- Biology: Cell Biology and Cell Cycle
- Biochemistry: Amino Acids, Peptides, and Proteins
- General Chemistry: Atomic Structure (Protons, Neutron, etc.)
- Organic Chemistry: Nomenclature of alkanes, alkenes, alkynes
- Physics: Dimensional Analysis, Basic Math, Units and Statistics
- Psychology and Sociology: Biological Basis of Behavior and Neurobiology
- CARS: Reading to Find the Most Important Information

Week 2

- Biology: Reproduction, Embryogenesis and Development
- Biochemistry: Protein Structure and Function
- General Chemistry: Periodic Table (S, P, D, F Blocks and characteristics)
- Organic Chemistry: Isomers (Cis/Trans, R/S, Enantiomer, Newman Projection, Etc.)
- Physics: Kinematics and Translational Motion
- Psychology and Sociology: Sensation and Perception
- CARS: Reading to Find the Most Important Information
Week 3-4

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day Off</td>
<td>General Chemistry</td>
<td>Organic Chemistry</td>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>Catch up on the week and review all materials (week 3)</td>
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Week 3:
- Biology: The Nervous System
- Biochemistry: Enzymes
- General Chemistry: Bonding and Chemical Interactions
- Organic Chemistry: Bonding and Lewis Structure
- Physics: Equilibrium and Momentum
- Psychology and Sociology: Learning and Memory
- CARS: Reading to Find the Most Important Information

Week 4:
- Biology: The Endocrine System
- Biochemistry: Nonenzymatic Proteins
- General Chemistry: Compounds and Stoichiometry
- Organic Chemistry: Alcohols and Ethers
- Physics: Force and Motion
- Psychology and Sociology: Cognition, Consciousness, and Language
- CARS: Reading to Find the Most Important Information

Week 5-6

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Week 5:
- Biology: The Respiratory System
- Biochemistry: Carbohydrate Structure and Function
- General Chemistry: Chemical Kinetics and Rate Processes
- Organic Chemistry: Benzene and Benzene Derivatives
- Physics: Work and Energy
- Psychology and Sociology: Emotion and Stress
- CARS: Foundation of Comprehension Questions

Week 6:
- Biology: The Cardiovascular System and Blood
- Biochemistry: Lipid Structure and Function
- General Chemistry: Equilibrium
- Organic Chemistry: Organic Oxidation and Reduction
- Physics: Thermodynamics
- Psychology and Sociology: Identity and Personality
- CARS: Reasoning Within the Text Questions
### Week 7-8

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**Week 7:**
- Biology: The Immune System
- Biochemistry: DNA and Replication
- General Chemistry: Thermochemistry and Enthalpy
- Organic Chemistry: Aldehydes and Ketones
- Physics: Fluids and Solids
- Psychology and Sociology: Psychological Disorders
- CARS: Reasoning Beyond the Text Questions

**Week 8:**
- Biology: The Digestive System
- Biochemistry: RNA Transcription and Translation
- General Chemistry: Thermodynamics
- Organic Chemistry: Carboxylic Acids and Carboxylic Acid Derivatives (especially biological esters)
- Physics: Waves, Periodic Motion, and Sound
- Psychology and Sociology: Social Processes and Behavior
- CARS: Reading and Answering Within the Time Allowed

### Week 9-10

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**Week 9:**
- Biology: The Muscular System
- Biochemistry: Carbohydrate Metabolism
- General Chemistry: The Gas Phase and Gas Laws
- Organic Chemistry: Nitrogen (Amine) and Phosphorus-Containing Compounds
- Physics: Light and Geometrical Optics
- Psychology and Sociology: Social Thought Processes
- CARS: Synthesis of Reading and Answering Questions

**Week 10:**
- Biology: The Skeletal System
- Biochemistry: Lipid and Amino Acid Metabolism
- General Chemistry: Solutions and Phase Interactions
- Organic Chemistry: Carbohydrates and Amino Acids
- Physics: Electrostatics
- Psychology and Sociology: Social Structure and Demographics
- CARS: Synthesis of Reading and Answering Questions
## Week 11-12

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Full Length Test (Week 12)

### Week 11:
- Biology: Homeostasis and the Excretory System
- Biochemistry: Bioenergetics and Regulation of Metabolism
- General Chemistry: Acids and Bases
- Physics: Magnetism/Electromagnetism
- Psychology and Sociology: Social Stratification
- CARS: Synthesis of Reading and Answering Questions

### Week 12:
- Biology: Genetics
- Biochemistry: Biological Membranes
- General Chemistry: Oxidation and Reduction
- Organic Chemistry: NMR and IR Spectroscopy
- Physics: Circuits
- Psychology and Sociology: Social Thinking and Attitudes
- CARS: Reasoning Within the Text Questions

## Week 13-14

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### Week 13:
- Biology: Evolution
- Biochemistry: Plasma Membrane and Biotechnology
- General Chemistry: Electrochemistry
- Organic Chemistry: Separation, Purification/Recrystallize, Extraction, Distillation, Chromatography
- Physics: Atomic and Nuclear Phenomena/Structure
- Psychology and Sociology: Social Interaction
- CARS: Reasoning Within the Text Questions

### Week 14:
- Biology: Cell Biology and Cell Cycle
- Biochemistry: Amino Acids, Peptides, and Proteins
- General Chemistry: Atomic Structure (Protons, Neutron, etc.)
- Organic Chemistry: Nomenclature of alkanes, alkenes, alkynes
- Physics: Dimensional Analysis, Basic Math, Units and Statistics
- Psychology and Sociology: Biological Basis of Behavior
- CARS: Reading to Find the Most Important Information
### Week 15-16

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<td>Sociology</td>
<td>Catch up on the week and review all materials (week 15)</td>
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<td>Full Length Test (Week 16)</td>
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#### Week 15:
- Biology: Reproduction, Embryogenesis and Development
- Biochemistry: Protein Structure and Function
- General Chemistry: Periodic Table (S, P, D, F Blocks and characteristics)
- Organic Chemistry: Isomers (Cis/Trans, R/S, Enantiomer, Newman Projection, Etc.)
- Physics: Kinematics and Translational Motion
- Psychology and Sociology: Sensation and Perception
- CARS: Reading to Find the Most Important Information

#### Week 16:
- Biology: The Nervous System
- Biochemistry: Enzymes
- General Chemistry: Bonding and Chemical Interactions
- Organic Chemistry: Bonding and Lewis Structure
- Physics: Equilibrium and Momentum
- Psychology and Sociology: Learning and Memory
- CARS: Reading to Find the Most Important Information

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#### Week 17:
- Biology: The Endocrine System
- Biochemistry: Nonenzymatic Proteins
- General Chemistry: Compounds and Stoichiometry
- Organic Chemistry: Alcohols and Ethers
- Physics: Force and Motion
- Psychology and Sociology: Cognition and Language
- CARS: Reading to Find the Most Important Information

#### Week 18:
- Biology: The Respiratory System
- Biochemistry: Carbohydrate Structure and Function
- General Chemistry: Chemical Kinetics and Rate Processes
- Organic Chemistry: Benzene and Benzene Derivatives
- Physics: Work and Energy
- Psychology and Sociology: Emotion and Stress
- CARS: Foundation of Comprehension Questions
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<td>Biology</td>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>Review all materials (week 19)</td>
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Week 19:
- Biology: The Cardiovascular System and Blood
- Biochemistry: Lipid Structure and Function
- General Chemistry: Equilibrium
- Organic Chemistry: Organic Oxidation and Reduction
- Physics: Thermodynamics
- Psychology and Sociology: Identity and Personality
- CARS: Reasoning Within the Text Questions

Week 20:
- Biology: The Immune System
- Biochemistry: DNA and Replication
- General Chemistry: Thermochemistry and Enthalpy
- Organic Chemistry: Aldehydes and Ketones
- Physics: Fluids and Solids
- Psychology and Sociology: Psychological Disorders
- CARS: Reasoning Beyond the Text Questions

Week 21-22

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Week 21:
- Biology: The Digestive System
- Biochemistry: RNA Transcription and Translation
- General Chemistry: Thermodynamics
- Organic Chemistry: Carboxylic Acids and Carboxylic Acid Derivatives (especially biological esters)
- Physics: Waves, Periodic Motion, and Sound
- Psychology and Sociology: Social Processes and Behavior
- CARS: Reading and Answering Within the Time Allowed

Week 22:
- Biology: The Muscular System
- Biochemistry: Carbohydrate Metabolism
- General Chemistry: The Gas Phase and Gas Laws
- Organic Chemistry: Nitrogen (Amine) and Phosphorus-Containing Compounds
- Physics: Light and Geometrical Optics
- Psychology and Sociology: Social Thought Processes
- CARS: Synthesis of Reading and Answering Questions
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Week 23:
- Biology: The Skeletal System
- Biochemistry: Lipid and Amino Acid Metabolism
- General Chemistry: Solutions and Phase Interactions
- Organic Chemistry: Carbohydrates and Amino Acids
- Physics: Electrostatics
- Psychology and Sociology: Social Structure and Demographics
- CARS: Synthesis of Reading and Answering Questions

**Week 24**

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Week 24:
- Biology: Homeostasis and the Excretory System
- Biochemistry: Bioenergetics and Regulation of Metabolism
- General Chemistry: Acids and Bases
- Physics: Magnetism/Electromagnetism
- Psychology and Sociology: Social Stratification
- CARS: Synthesis of Reading and Answering Questions
### Week 25

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<td>Biochemistry</td>
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<td>Catch up on the week and review all materials Full Length Test</td>
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**Week 25:**
- Biology: Genetics
- Biochemistry: Biological Membranes
- General Chemistry: Oxidation and Reduction
- Organic Chemistry: NMR and IR Spectroscopy
- Physics: Circuits
- Psychology and Sociology: Social Thinking and Attitudes
- CARS: Reasoning Within the Text Questions

### Week 26

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day Off</td>
<td>General Chemistry</td>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>Morning: Reviewing anything needed</td>
<td>Relaxation Day</td>
<td>TEST DAY!</td>
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<td>Organic Chemistry</td>
<td>Biochemistry</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>Afternoon: Relax</td>
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**Week 26:**
- Biology: Evolution
- Biochemistry: Plasma Membrane and Biotechnology
- General Chemistry: Electrochemistry
- Organic Chemistry: Separation, Purification/Recrystallize, Extraction, Distillation, Chromatography
- Physics: Atomic and Nuclear Phenomena/Structure
- Psychology and Sociology: Social Interaction
- CARS: Reasoning Within the Text Questions
How to Study for the MCAT

1. Make flashcards
   a. There are several apps like StudyBlue, Quizlet, and Anki to make flashcards. When you are studying new content, create some flashcards about concepts that you read about and studied. Create flashcards for every major subject. These are a study tools you can use when on the bus daily
      i. Ex. Studying Atomic Structure for General Chemistry
         1. Make flashcards on what protons, neutrons and electrons are
            a. Proton- positively charged, found in nucleus, 1 amu, etc.

2. T-Notes
   a. Make a “T” on the paper. (See example below)
   b. Start by creating a problem (ex. Physics-Kinematics/Motion) and solve the problem. Put this on the left of the “T”
   c. On the right side of the “T” we are trying to explain how we reached the solution. First, write stepwise how you solved it, but explain in your own words. Second, think about if something was changed in the problem, how that would change how you solve the problem. This is beneficial because being able to manipulate variables in science is a major component of what is being tested.
   d. Keep all the T-notes you make as you can use these to study later. A benefit of the T-Note method is that once it has been completed, reviewing can be done by simply covering any part of the T to self-test. By covering up the right side of the T you can practice verbalizing the steps and your understanding of the given example. Then, check your accuracy with the explanation you have already written on the right side.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Topic/Equation</th>
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<tr>
<td>SOLVE</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Complete a practice problem or example.</td>
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<tr>
<td>EXPLAIN</td>
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<td>2. Explain the example in your own words (written or out loud), step-by-step.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Consider: “If..., then...” (If something changes then what would you need to know or do differently?). Make sure you can use your understanding correctly when you are presented with a new problem or example.</td>
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3. CARS
   a. A section of the MCAT is called the CARS section- Critically Analyzed Reading Strategies
   b. In this section you will have to read sections of articles and understand what is going on.
   c. The best way to study for this is to find scientific journals, any topic, and focus on the concept to work on for that week. Whether that is understanding big picture, reading between lines, or being able to answer questions about the article. There are several articles online that ask questions about it.
   d. When reading the articles, practice reading quickly but be able to understand what you are reading. The test is timed and being able to read quickly, but efficiently is essential.
   e. Consult a Librarian at Parks Library for articles that may be useful to you https://www.lib.iastate.edu/

4. Mind Bubble
   a. This can be used to help to find relationships between some major concepts.
   b. Start by thinking of a big picture (ex. Nervous System)
   c. Then start making branches about everything you know about the concept (ex. All the parts of the Nervous System and what the Nervous System does)
   d. Now think of another concept (ex. Endocrine system) and find some ways they interact- Compare and Contrast (they both control reactions in the body)
5. MCAT Question of the Day  
   a. Kaplan has a free MCAT question of the day that you can sign up for.  
   b. Every day you get a question and then you can pick your answer and it will tell you if your answer if right or wrong

6. MCAT books  
   a. There are some books one can find online or in book stores that you can buy. In them they will have several practice problems for everything you need to know on the MCAT. Once you have completed a big chunk, start to try and create your own problems. This here is using the Blooms Taxonomy and using the creating problems. If you can do that then you have a very strong understanding on the material you will be tested over.

7. MCAT Prep Classes  
   a. There are several prep classes from Kaplan and Altius that you can use to study. They are pretty costly but the study techniques listed above can be used to study and you will be very successful on the MCAT.  
   b. In these classes you work with other students who are preparing and use each other to test.

8. Kahn Videos  
   a. If you are really struggling with a specific concept, the Kahn Academy has several videos on YouTube that will walk you through a topic.
      Be sure if you are watching them, take thorough notes on the concept.
Bloom’s Taxonomy

What is Bloom’s Taxonomy?
Bloom’s Taxonomy is a theoretical framework around the 6 different levels of thinking: Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating, and Creating. College exams frequently have a combination of questions from each level of thinking. Teachers use it to help course learning outcomes by making sure they are asking specific questions from each level in order to get you to think at those specific levels. The higher you move up the pyramid, the deeper you will learn the concept because you are engaging in deeper critical thinking. These deeper critical thinking are skills needed to do well on the MCAT.

Why a Pyramid?
This pyramid represents the magnitude of learning that occurs. The lower levels represent lower understanding of materials. The higher levels represent higher levels of critical thinking. Ideally when you are studying, you want to aim for higher levels of thinking instead of just sticking to the first two levels. A great deal of questions asked on the MCAT will require Applying, Analyzing, and Evaluating.

*Note: It is important to be able to remember terms and have a basic understanding of material as questions will require you to utilize those terms and concepts when thinking at higher levels.*

Description of Each Level:

**Level 1—Remembering:** Can you memorize the information?

**Level 2—Understanding:** Can you explain ideas or concepts?

**Level 3—Applying:** Can you use the information in a new way or apply it to a science problem?

**Level 4—Analyzing:** Can you distinguish between different parts?

**Level 5—Evaluating:** Can you justify/critique/evaluate why it is that way in your own opinion?

**Level 6—Creating:** Can you create a new product/equation/argument?

Benefit of Understanding and utilizing Bloom’s Taxonomy when studying for the MCAT:
By showing you Bloom’s, we are trying to show you that there are different ways of thinking and learning your material. Be sure you are using a combination of study methods that will help you know material at higher levels. For example, the “T-Notes” and “Mind Bubble” methods previously describe are great for learning at a higher level. We want to make sure that the ways in which you are studying are intentional and engaging you in those higher levels of critical thinking within the Bloom’s Taxonomy pyramid, so that way you are not just always using flashcards (level 1—Remembering).
Tips and Tricks

- Find a group to study with. It is beneficial in a couple ways. You have a group to study with who can give you practice problems and to talk about concepts you are struggling and need help with. They also are a support group. Sometimes when studying you can get really stressed out and they are experiencing the same thing you are so you and your group can go out and just relax for a little bit.

- Take a practice exam monthly. Where and how you take it is crucial. When you are taking it, go to an area where you can have all day by yourself. Go somewhere where there is no distraction. Go somewhere where this test is in a Mock environment. Take the test EXACTLY as you would on test day. Take all of the same breaks and that way you learn how much time you have and so to keep focus on this.

- About 48 hours before the actual MCAT, STOP studying. You know all the material you will know and you need to give your body a rest.

- The day prior to the exam just relax and have fun that day. Go shopping, watch TV, just do anything to keep your mind off the exam for a little while.

- After each section, take it and move on. Don’t hang onto if you think you did badly just forget about it. Take the ENTIRE break to collect yourself.

- On test day, wake up early and eat a solid breakfast. This will give you the energy you need. Bring some snacks and a lunch to eat during your breaks. After the exam go have fun, you crossed the finish line and enjoy it!

- When preparing for the semester you will be studying for the MCAT consider taking a lighter class load. This will allow you more time to study.

- When thinking about classes to take when studying for the MCAT, if you feel comfortable, you can take some classes that are tested on the MCAT during that last semester (ex. Biochemistry.) This will help when studying as you are studying this class every time you go to class.

- For the 6 months of studying, just power through. It may seem excessive all the studying, but just think about the future and how it all will be worth it.

- When studying try and keep a consistent schedule. Wake up early to study and then do classwork after class, or wake up early to do classwork then study later. Just try to keep it consistent so it becomes a habit.

- When preparing for the MCAT, you can attend Supplemental Instruction sessions even if you aren’t in the class. If you excelled in a class, and feel comfortable, you could think about becoming a tutor or a SI leader. This is a great option as you have to find creative ways for your peers to understand the material. You can really master the material by having to help teach it to your peers.
Scoring

There are 4 sections for the exam and on each section, each section has possible points of 118-132 for a total score of 472-528. The MCAT has their own scale and in each section, there are about 55-60 questions. The MCAT scales work so that getting 35-37 answers correct is a score of 123 and 46-48 is about 128 and so on. The average score for the MCAT is 500 and to be a competitive candidate a score of 507 and greater is optimal. Most medical schools have an average MCAT score of about 508-512. The MCAT can be taken up to three times in a single year (and only seven times in a lifetime) Note that medical schools prefer to see fewer attempts.

Additional Resources

Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC)
https://students-residents.aamc.org/

The MCAT is developed and administered by the AAMC. The test is a standardized, multiple-choice examination created to help medical school admissions offices assess your problem solving, critical thinking, and knowledge of natural, behavioral, and social science concepts and principles prerequisite to the study of medicine. Register and create an account to learn even more!

This website is where you will find:
- Registration for the MCAT Exam
- Frequently asked questions
- Test day rules
- Information on applying to medical school
- List of core competencies for entering medical students

Kaplan MCAT Prep
https://www.kaptest.com/mcat

Kaplan is a for-profit corporation that offers test preparation tools and services to college and university students. On this website you will find more information about their study books, free practice, and free events. The company also offers self-guided and instructor led lessons and courses, for purchase. Check out https://kaplanquizzes.com/mcat/ for the MCAT Practice Question of the Day, answer the questions and the sign up for the practice questions to be delivered by email to you daily.

Your Major Advisor

Be sure to tell your advisor that you are interested in medical school and when you are planning to take the MCAT, they can help you make sure you are connected with helpful people on campus, and are taking the correct courses that are pre-requisites to medical school.

MCAT Mobile Apps
- MCAT Prep: MCAT Flashcards by Magoosh
- MCAT Mastery, Medical School Entrance Prep by Higher Learning Technologies
- MCAT Prep: Ready4 MCAT by Ready4, Inc.
- MEDizzy: Medical Community by Medical Social Learning