In fall 2022, the Johns Hopkins University Office of Pre-Professional Programs & Advising surveyed our students and alumni to learn about their MCAT preparation. What follows is data from that survey, along with strategies, tips, and suggestions quoted from Hopkins MCAT test takers.

We thank those who participated in this survey for assisting and supporting future Johns Hopkins University medical school applicants.

Preface

Over the past five years, we have seen an upward trend in the median MCAT score for JHU applicants matriculating to allopathic medical schools:

- 2018 --> 514
- 2019 --> 515
- 2020 --> 515
- 2021 --> 516
- 2022 --> 517

Courses:

When asked which academic courses were helpful in preparing for the MCAT, almost every pre-med requirement was listed: General Biology, General Chemistry, Biochemistry, General Physics, Organic Chemistry, Introduction to Sociology and Introduction to Psychology.

In addition, respondents said the following courses were also helpful for MCAT prep:

- Cell Biology
- Genetics
- Developmental Biology
- Human Anatomy
- Molecular Biology
- Public Health courses
- Comparative Physiology
- Protein Engineering Lab
- Other Psychology classes (developmental, social, abnormal, etc.)
Spend at least one full day reviewing full-length practice exams to understand topics you grasp and those you need to improve upon. Spend as much time reviewing the problems you got right as the problems you got wrong.

It is recommended to take a diagnostic exam before you begin studying. From the diagnostic, you will understand where you initially stand, and the areas to improve upon.

Create a schedule for yourself to keep on pace but don’t stress if everything doesn’t go perfectly to plan.

Make a schedule before you start, and leave buffer time if you cannot stick to your schedule.

Practicing exam questions and timed tests should be a priority.
When Do JHU Students Take the MCAT?

- Summer is the most popular time to take the MCAT because students do not have other classes to focus on & can devote more time to preparing.

The first step in determining when to take the MCAT is knowing when you will have your prerequisite classes completed.

- Don't be afraid to push back the exam if you do not feel prepared. The idea is take the exam once and be as confident as possible going in.

- Know what kind of learner you are (visual, audio, etc.) and tailor your prep to how you best learn to maximize retaining the information.

- If you don't score where you want on the AAMC practice tests a month before your MCAT, delay. It is better to delay and take more study time than rush to take the test and get a lower score than you expected.

60% of students studied for 1-3 months

33% of students studied for 3-6 months
Many students found time to stay involved in other activities while also studying for the MCAT.

"Remember to take care of yourself. I took at least one day off every week. I refused to let the exam dictate my life- and the result was that I studied, worked, and had a great summer."

- If you are working full-time while preparing for the MCAT, you may want to take practice exams on the weekend, review the exams the day after, and then spend the week doing more readings and random practice in those specific problem areas.
- If you are a full-time student while preparing for the MCAT, you should build MCAT prep into your daily and weekly schedule just as you would for an academic class.
- Determine if you need dedicated time off (away from school/work) in order to study. It's not generally recommended to exclusively focus all of your time on studying (you'll burn out), but it can be difficult to be a full-time student or full-time employee as well.
A lot of resources exist, so find the resources and study techniques that work for you, not solely what worked for other people.

Look for free resources; taking the MCAT without spending much money on prep materials is possible.

Use free resources to familiarize yourself with the test format and retain knowledge. Use official materials for the sake of replicating your own testing experience.

Don’t just memorize content.

Focus on a variety of resources: books, flashcards, practice questions, etc.
Content review is essential, but MCAT practice is also vital.

Respondents overwhelmingly wrote about the importance of continually completing practice questions and tests.
PRACTICE TESTS

It is recommended to consistently complete practice problems and take practice exams early on to learn test-taking strategies and understand how to apply content.

“START PRACTICING WITH FULL-LENGTH EXAMS EARLY AND TAKE TIME TO REFLECT ON EACH PRACTICE EXAM, STRATEGIZING ON HOW TO IMPROVE ON THE NEXT ONE.”

- When completing practice exams, time yourself and set up a test-like environment. Practice with full-length practice tests, simulating the test experience as closely as possible. It is okay to start practice exams before you’re entirely done with the content review. It can help you understand what to work on.

- Take practice exams in the same way you plan to take the actual test. For example, if you will be wearing a mask, then take practice exams while wearing a mask.

- When taking practice tests, set up your day in the same way as the real test--time your sections, take breaks, stay off your phone. Take full length exams under real-world conditions.

- Make sure to use practice questions and tests to learn test taking strategies and understand how to apply content.

- The absolute most important thing you can do is take practice tests--time yourself, set up a test-like environment every week, start at the time when your actual MCAT is scheduled.
GENERAL ADVICE

NEED TO RETAKE THE MCAT?
WHEN ASKED HOW THEIR STUDY HABITS CHANGED, THOSE WHO TOOK THE MCAT MORE THAN ONCE SAID THEY:

- Spent more time doing practice problems over content review
- Decided to get a tutor
- Followed a more intense study plan using the outline provided by the AAMC
- Focused on section-specific tests instead of full content review
- Improved critical reasoning strategies

NUMBER OF TIMES MCAT TAKEN

- Once 86.4%
- Twice 10%
- 3 or more 3.6%

MCAT studying is tedious and mentally exhausting. It gets especially difficult near the end when you start to lose motivation. But keep at it! You’ll thank yourself when it comes to testing day.

- Build in breaks to give your brain a rest when studying. Getting enough sleep, hanging out with friends and family, and exercising can help improve your test-taking abilities.
- It is okay to have a different studying strategy than your peers.
- Aim to take the test once; don’t go into the test thinking you can or should take it multiple times (this is not the SAT/ACT). But if you do retake the test, don’t despair.
**Let’s Talk**

**PRE-PROF HIGHLY ENCOURAGES STUDENTS TO MEET WITH ONE OF OUR ADVISORS TO DISCUSS YOUR MCAT TIMELINE, SCORE REPORTS, RETAKING THE TEST, AND YOUR FUTURE APPLICATION PLANS.**

**APPOINTMENTS WITH ADVISORS CAN BE MADE ONLINE VIA HANDSHAKE.**

We can also be reached on our various social media sites

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The Office of Pre-Professional Programs and Advising