

# Preparing for the MCAT

The Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) is designed to measure problem solving, critical thinking, writing, and knowledge of science concepts and principles prerequisite to the study of medicine. The four scored sections on the MCAT:

1. Verbal Reasoning
2. Physical Sciences
3. Biological Sciences
4. Writing Sample

**For helpful classes, see Premedical Coursework handout**

## Prep Courses

Prep courses are helpful and they may provide extra motivation to study because of the money invested. They are also taught by experienced tutors and can help you to regulate your time. Remember that a prep course is supposed to supplement, not substitute, your hours of personal study.

- **BYU Prep Course** features professors from each of the subject areas. It is taught on eight consecutive Saturdays for six hours each day. It is offered every Winter Semester and costs around \$580. [ce.byu.edu/cw/testprep/mcat.cfm](http://ce.byu.edu/cw/testprep/mcat.cfm). (801) 422-3550.
- **Kaplan's** review course consists of 24 three-hour sessions, plus home study materials, a local study center, and many practice exams. Tuition is approximately \$1549, but varies depending on the course. [www.kaptest.com/MCAT/Home/index.html](http://www.kaptest.com/MCAT/Home/index.html). 1-800-KAPTEST.
- **Ace Test Prep** offers a 13-week course that includes 26 classroom sessions with lecture and practice test days, 7 full-length proctored exams, a textbook, and over 3,000 practice test questions. Tuition is \$895. Location: Meridian School at 930 E. 300 N. Provo. [acetestprep.com/mcatinfo.php](http://acetestprep.com/mcatinfo.php). (801) 473-4003.
- Information about the **Graduate Admissions Preparation Service** (cassette tapes and written materials) can be obtained by writing: GAPS, 215 W. Harrison, Seattle, WA 98119. (206) 281-1241 or 1-800-426-5537 ext. 1241.
- **Altius Test Prep** focuses on one-on-one tutoring and interactive classroom sessions. Prices range from \$1826–2540. [www.altiustestprep.com](http://www.altiustestprep.com). (435) 671-5783.
- **Princeton Review** courses are led by certified instructors that are expert in their fields. [www.princetonreview.com/medical-school.aspx](http://www.princetonreview.com/medical-school.aspx). 1-800-2Review.

## Studying for the MCAT

**Treat studying for the test as you would a four or five semester-hour class.** Start preparing for the MCAT *at least six months* before you take the actual test. Set aside a definite time each day to study. Get organized! Establish a consistent and habitual study pattern of all topics over which you will be tested, beginning with your weakest areas. Do not neglect verbal reasoning.

Individual study is not as expensive as prep courses are; however, it is not as guided. Whether you choose to study on your own or in a small group, learn each concept well enough to explain that you can explain it to others. Check out [www.aamc.org/MCAT](http://www.aamc.org/MCAT) for more information.

## Tips for individual study

- Computer software packages are available that ask MCAT-type questions and explain the answers. For information contact any computer software store.
- Purchase review manuals.
  - **Strongly Recommended:** *MCAT Student Manual*, which comes with an MCAT practice test, published by the AAMC who administers the test.

- **Suggested:** Examcrackers, Barron's, Kaplan, and Flowers. These and other manuals are available at the BYU Bookstore, online, and at local retailers.
- Read the sub-tests in the *MCAT Student Manual*. Scan all questions in the manual. Note which areas are weakest (this should be done at least five to six months before the exam).
- Take the practice test in the *MCAT Student Manual* and note on which subjects you score lowest and which cause you the most anxiety during testing.
- Improve your reading skills. The Writing Center offers speed-reading classes several times a week. Visit 4026 JKB or [english2.byu.edu/writingcenter/about/hours.htm](http://english2.byu.edu/writingcenter/about/hours.htm).
- Take practice exams (ideally the AAMC Practice Tests which you can buy at [aamc.org](http://aamc.org) or check out from our office) periodically during this period. Practice tests will help you learn time-efficient ways to answer questions and help you identify areas in which you are weak. The more practice exams you take, the better prepared you will be on the day of the test. MCAT publishes full-length practice tests. You can purchase online or paper versions at [www.aamc.org](http://www.aamc.org) or by calling (202) 828-0400.
- Brush up on arithmetic skills without a calculator—you cannot use a calculator during the exam.
- Make flash cards for basic laws, formulas, and important cycles, and quiz during spare moments. It is more helpful to create your own flash cards than to buy them.
- Don't skip difficult concepts while preparing!

### **Registering for the MCAT (for more info, see MCAT Registration Tips)**

- If applicable, submit your Fee Assistance Program (FAP) application before you register.
- Review the MCAT scheduling and registration demo at [www.aamc.org/students/mcat/reserving/registrationdemo.pdf](http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/reserving/registrationdemo.pdf).
- Register at least 50 days before the exam day at [www.aamc.org/mcat](http://www.aamc.org/mcat).
- If you plan on taking the test more than once, take the first one in January, April, or May so that you have time to take it again later.
- Make sure that your contact information is up-to-date.
- Check your registration the day before the test day to make sure you have the correct and most recent address.

### **Taking the MCAT**

- One week before the MCAT, take at least one full-length practice exam. Avoid burnout from excessive cramming. Take time for physical activity to refresh the body and mind.
- Get a good night's sleep the night before the MCAT, but not too much. Eat a well-balanced, filling (but not enormous) breakfast that morning.
- During the MCAT read questions carefully, especially on the reading and quantitative analysis sections. Remember that wrong guesses are not penalized. Eliminate obviously wrong choices, then make a best guess. Don't leave any question blank. Watch the time carefully and pace yourself.
- Relax between sections and don't worry about the section you just completed.