



## **A Quick Guide to the MCAT**

This resource includes a list of learning tools to help you study for the MCAT. *Recommendations from those who have successfully completed the MCAT are also included.*

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### **What is the MCAT?**

The MCAT stands for Medical College Admissions Test and is a standardized test that is a requirement for admission to many medical schools across North America. [Here](#) is the official website for the test.

### **What is the format of the test?**

The test has four sections:

- Chemistry & Physics
- Critical Reading
- Biology & Biochemistry
- Psychology & Sociology

### **When should I start studying for the test?**

This varies depending on the student. Most students choose to spend several months preparing for the test. The American Association of Medical Colleges (AAMC) has recommended spending 300-350 hours minimum. You can find resources to help you plan your studying [here](#).

### **When should I take the test?**

[Here](#) is a great resource from AAMC to decide when you should take the test. Questions it guides you through include when do you want to attend medical school? Do you want to give yourself time to write the MCAT more than once? How much of the exam content have you mastered?

### **How long does the test take to complete?**

The regular exam lasts 7 hours and 15 minutes including breaks. The COVID-length exam lasts 5 hours and 45 minutes.

### **What is a “good score”?**

This depends on the school you’re interested in. You should check the admissions criteria for the schools you are planning to apply to in order to see the range of scores they usually accept. You can find percentile rank information for the exam [here](#).

### **What are some resources available to help me prepare for the test?**

Khan Academy

<https://www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/mcat>

“Comprehensive video tutorials and practice questions covering all of the following topics: critical analysis and reasoning skills, biological and biochemical foundations of living systems passages, chemical and physical foundations of biological systems passages, psychological, social, and biological foundations of behaviors passages, biomolecules, cells, organ systems, physical processes, chemical processes, processing the environment, behavior, individuals and society, society and culture and social inequality.”

Brown University MCAT Guide

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/18fzdRlrCFZia3lrST8SDM85IluTJQDp4irF6\\_Aj\\_5TM/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/18fzdRlrCFZia3lrST8SDM85IluTJQDp4irF6_Aj_5TM/edit?usp=sharing)

In depth guide on scoring a 520+ on the MCAT. It includes a list of its own resources, some frequently asked questions, virtual study tools, a study timeline and much more. It also lists the contact information of the authors who you can reach out to for more information.

‘The MCAT Podcast’ by Ryan Gray

<https://medicalschoollhq.net/mcat-podcast/>

“A collaboration between the Medical School Headquarters and Next Step Test Prep, The MCAT Podcast is here to make sure you have the information you need to succeed on your MCAT test day. We all know that the MCAT is one of the biggest hurdles on your journey to becoming a physician. Listening to this podcast will give you the motivation and information that you need to know to help you get the score you deserve so you can one day call yourself a physician.”

MD Buddy

<https://mdbuddy.ca/>

“Democratizing and centralizing the Canadian medical school admissions process. GPA calculations, MCAT analysis, requirements information, and more!” Note that this is a resource relevant to Canadian medical universities only.

### **Where can I take the test?**

You can visit and register an account at the [AAMC website](#) in order to find the nearest test center.

### **How much does it cost?**

According to the [Association of American Medical Colleges](#) the cost of writing the MCAT is \$320 (USD). This covers both the registration costs as well as score distribution costs. For financial aid and assistance with fees for Canadians check out [this resource](#).

### **How long are the scores valid for?**

Scores are typically valid for 2-3 years. Check with the school that you are applying to for specific regulations.

### **How often can I take the test?**

According to the [Association of American Medical Colleges](#), you may take the exam up to 3 times in a single testing year, 4 times during a two consecutive-year period and 7 times in a lifetime. Subsequently, the medical school to which you would apply may do any one of the following:

- Evaluate the most recent score
- Evaluate only the highest individual and/or set of scores
- Evaluate an average of the sets of scores
- Consider all scores equally and note the improvements.

Check with the school that you are applying to for specific requirements.

### **Should I take the test multiple times?**

This will depend on your motivation, goals, previous scores, the amount of time you have, etc. Applicants often take the MCAT multiple times to maximize their score if they have the time and resources available to do so.

### **Words of Wisdom**

Here are some helpful tips from individuals who have taken the MCAT.

“Having a friend who is studying/writing at the same time is helpful for encouragement. It's really easy to get discouraged since there's so much info to learn but it's important to remember that no one finds it easy. It's also important to get a good schedule going - make sure to include breaks, time to see friends, exercise, etc.” ~ Joelle Weinerman

“My experience with the almighty MCAT was a challenging one because I pursued other opportunities on top of having to study. I would highly recommend dedicating your time on the MCAT and only the MCAT. For example, spending a solid 2-3 months only on the MCAT. The amount and how you study is all dependent on you, but some important resources that helped included: UWorld, Khan Academy and ExamCrackers books. If you are coming from a science background or degree, you already have the foundations and base knowledge for what the MCAT tests, therefore I feel prep courses are not as useful. However, it is important to find resources or attend prep courses that mainly focus on MCAT strategy because this is a standardised test and there are certain ways of understanding how the questions are constructed and supposed to be answered. Most importantly, rest days are necessary. Studying for the MCAT is like preparing for a marathon and you need to equip yourself well, train yourself well for the final race.”

~ Rachael Chow