

Preparing for the MCAT® Exam

What's the MCAT exam?

The Medical College Admission Test® (MCAT®) is a standardized multiple-choice test that has been a part of the medical school admissions process for more than 80 years. Each year, more than 85,000 students sit for the exam. Nearly all medical schools in the United States and several in Canada require MCAT scores, and many health professions and graduate programs now accept MCAT scores in lieu of other standardized tests.

The MCAT exam tests examinees on the skills and knowledge that medical educators, physicians, medical students, and residents have identified as key prerequisites for success in medical school and practicing medicine. The content is divided into four sections:

- Biological and Biochemical Foundations of Living Systems
- Chemical and Physical Foundations of Biological Systems
- Psychological, Social, and Biological Foundations of Behavior
- Critical Analysis and Reasoning Skills

In partnership with its member U.S. medical schools, the AAMC develops and administers the exam multiple times each year from late January through early September at hundreds of test sites throughout the United States and Canada, and in select locations throughout the world.

When should I take the MCAT exam?

Take the exam when you are prepared and ready. Plan to take the exam after you have completed the basic-level science courses that the exam covers—biological sciences, physics, organic and inorganic chemistry. Read over the MCAT exam content outlines to be sure you have covered all the topics and skills that are tested on the exam.

In most cases, you should take the exam in the calendar year prior to the year in which you plan to enter medical school. Testing early in the year is a good idea, especially if you think you will need to retake the exam. It also gives admissions committees more time to review your application. However, if you plan to take a summer course that may help you on the MCAT exam, such as a science class, it may be best to take the exam in the later in the summer. Remember, taking the exam when you are ready is most important.

How important is the MCAT exam?

Taking the MCAT exam is an important step in the application process, but the exam alone does not make or break your chances of getting into medical school. Admissions committees consider many other factors when you apply, such as academic strengths, exposure to health care and medical research environments, personal experiences and interests, potential contributions to the campus and community, and personal attributes such as maturity and drive to help others.

What if I can't afford the registration fee?

The AAMC believes that the cost of applying to medical school(s) shouldn't be a barrier for anyone aspiring to be a physician. The Fee Assistance Program (FAP) assists potential medical students who, without financial assistance, would not be able to take the MCAT exam or apply to medical school. If you meet the eligibility requirements, this program reduces the registration fee from \$300 to \$115. It also includes free MCAT preparation resources, as well as other benefits.

How do I prepare?

The knowledge and skills you will be responsible for knowing on the MCAT exam are outlined in the online interactive tool, What's on the MCAT2015 Exam? Knowledge and skills tested on the exam are found in introductory-level courses, which include biology, general chemistry, organic chemistry, and physics, and first-semester biochemistry, psychology, and sociology. Because course content differs between schools, and some colleges have innovative, interdisciplinary courses, it is a good idea to compare the content of the courses you plan to take with the content lists in the online tool. Pre-health advisors and other faculty at your school are also great resources for helping you plan which courses will best prepare you to do well on the exam. If you do not have a pre-health advisor, the National Association of Advisors for the Health Professions (NAAHP) has volunteer advisors. Visit NAAHP's website at www.naahp.org.

To help you prepare for the content on the new exam, the AAMC collaborated with The Khan Academy and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to create original video tutorials and review questions that cover all content on the exam, including the new discipline areas of biochemistry and the social and behavioral sciences

Are test preparation resources available?

The AAMC offers official MCAT test preparation tools and resources (free and low-cost) to ensure you can study and practice with content written by the test developers and can replicate the MCAT experience in a simulated testing environment.

- What's on the MCAT2015 Exam? interactive tool (www.aamc.org/mcat2015exam)
- Khan Academy MCAT Collection (www.khanacademy.org/mcat)
- The Official Guide to the MCAT Exam (MCAT2015), Fourth Edition (www.aamc.org/officialmcatguide2015)
- Official MCAT2015 Sample Test (www.aamc.org/mcat2015sampletest)
- Psychology and Sociology Textbook Resource (www.aamc.org/mcat/preparing)
- Official MCAT2015 Question Packs (www.aamc.org/mcatquestionpacks)

Coming in 2015!

- Official MCAT2015 Practice Test #1

To learn more about the available test preparation resources, visit www.aamc.org/mcat/preparing.

How is the MCAT exam scored?

You will receive five results from your MCAT exam: one for each of the four sections and one combined total score.

Section Scores: Each of the four section scores will range from 118 to 132. Test takers will receive scores for each of the four sections.

Total Score: Scores for the four sections are combined to create a total score. The total score ranges from 472 to 528.

Scores typically are reported 30–35 days after your exam date. To learn more about your scores and your score report, visit www.aamc.org/mcat.

How are scores used?

Many factors are considered in the medical school admissions process to gain a holistic view of an applicant's likelihood of succeeding in medical school. MCAT scores are one of the factors considered. When admissions officers look at MCAT scores in conjunction with undergraduate GPA, rather than grades alone, they are better able to predict who will be successful in medical school.

What if I don't score well?

If you aren't satisfied with your MCAT score, your pre-health advisor can help you decide if you should re-take the exam. [The Official Guide to the MCAT® Exam](#) also offers some data to consider when making this decision. You can take the MCAT exam up to three times per calendar year, up to four times over two consecutive years, with a seven-time lifetime limit.

RESOURCES:

Fee Assistance Program (FAP): www.aamc.org/fap
What's on the MCAT2015 Exam?: www.aamc.org/mcat2015exam