

Individual study has the advantage of being inexpensive--the only cost is that of review materials and practice tests. In addition, you are free to concentrate on those areas in which you are least confident. If you choose to study on your own or with a small group, remember that you must understand each concept well enough to explain it to someone else so that he or she can understand. The following are suggestions from previous CU students regarding individual preparation for the MCAT:

**1. Locate/purchase review material(s).** Essential: Begin with a careful review of the information available on the MCAT section of the AAMC.org website. In addition, you will also need to review relevant course outlines, notes, and textbooks, particularly in the sciences. Recommended: **Examcrackers Complete MCAT Study Package**. There are many other resources available (**Dr. Flowers, CLEaRS, Kaplan Online**). Research them and choose the one(s) that suit your study style.

**2. Take note of the *Preparing for the MCAT section*** on the AAMC.org website, which includes sample topics, a description of skills assessed, test items, and answer keys for the Verbal Reasoning, Physical Sciences, and Biological Sciences sections of the exam. The Writing Sample section includes sample essays and score explanation, and describes how to organize and compose responses.

**3. Take the free AAMC 3R practice test.** Do this a minimum of five to six months before the exam. Note which subjects produce the lowest scores and which cause the most anxiety during testing. This helps to pinpoint the weak areas and familiarize you with the style of the MCAT.

**4. Work on better, faster reading skills.** The information necessary to answer the questions in the verbal reasoning section will be presented in an accompanying passage; however, you should take courses that help you to develop the critical thinking and reasoning skills that are necessary to do well. In addition, reading quickly with good comprehension is *essential* for this section.

**5. Work on writing skills.** In the writing portion of the MCAT, you will be asked to write two essays. The best preparation for the writing section is courses in writing or composition.

**6. Organize yourself** in order to establish a consistent and habitual study pattern for all topics over which you will be tested, beginning with weakest areas. Do not neglect verbal reasoning or the writing sample. You would be surprised to see how often verbal reasoning is the low score on an applicant's MCAT report. Start four to six months before the test. First make a comprehensive outline of each topic to be studied, then treat your MCAT preparation as if it were a four-credit class. Spend time each day studying.

**7. Take AAMC practice exams** periodically during this period to assess progress and re-evaluate weaknesses. Simulate real test conditions as much as possible, including time of day, environment, timing. The more practice exams you take, the better prepared you will be on the day of the test. This will help you learn time-efficient ways to answer questions. Understand the answer to every problem, since similar questions may appear on the exam. Practice answering verbal reasoning and writing sample questions to get used to their style and to increase speed on these sections.

**8. Brush up on arithmetic skills**--adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing without a calculator. You cannot use a calculator during the exam.

**9. Flashcards** of basic laws, formulas, and important cycles may be valuable for quizzing during spare moments. It is more helpful to create your own flashcards than to use commercially created cards.

**10. Don't skip difficult concepts!** Time spent in gaining an understanding of these concepts will build confidence going into the exam.

**11. One week before the MCAT**, take at least one more full-length practice exam. Avoid burnout from excessive cramming. Take time for physical activity to refresh your body and mind. Drive to your test center so you know how to find it and where to park on test day.

**12. The night before the MCAT** get a good night's sleep, but not too much. Pack food and/or drinks you will want during breaks. Eat a well balanced, filling (but not enormous) breakfast that morning.

**13. 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.

**14. Relax** between sections and don't worry about the section you just completed.

**15. Registration.** Read the 2008 MCAT Essentials carefully. The MCAT registration site becomes available about 3 months prior to each test date. The complete schedule can be found online at [www.aamc.org/MCAT](http://www.aamc.org/MCAT). Pay strict attention to the registration deadlines. The earlier you sign up, the more likely you are to get your first choice of test location and date.

**16. MCAT test scores** will be automatically sent to all AMCAS schools you designate on your application. You may designate any non-AMCAS school to receive your scores. Be sure to release your scores to the premedical advisor, since they are needed for your committee letter and to help advise you.

**17. Do not take the exam unless you are prepared!**

**18. The schedule for the test day** and allocated times for each section are as follows:

<b>Section</b>	<b>Number of questions</b>	<b>Time in minutes</b>
Tutorial (optional)		5 minutes
Physical Sciences	52 (BREAK optional)	70 minutes (10 minutes)
Verbal Reasoning	40 (BREAK optional)	60 minutes (10 minutes)
Writing Sample	2 (BREAK optional)	60 minutes (10 minutes)
Biological Sciences	52	70 minutes
Survey		10 minutes
Total Content Time		4 hours, 20 minutes
Total Test Time		4 hours, 45 minutes
<b>Total Appointment Time</b>		<b>5 hours, 5 minutes</b>

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Be prepared for glitches. If you encounter a problem, use the protocols given in the MCAT Essentials. Be aware that the actual starting time of the exam may vary due to volume and pre-administration procedures; therefore, ***be prepared to wait up to an hour, possibly a little longer.*** The center will provide scratch paper or dry eraseboards, ear covers (industrial), and pencils. No other testing aids are allowed. The Test Center Administrator will collect your scratch paper before you leave.