

HOW TO SURVIVE: THE MCAT®

What is the MCAT?

“The Medical College Admission Test® (MCAT®) is a standardized, multiple-choice examination designed to assess your problem solving, critical thinking, and knowledge of natural, behavioral, and social science concepts and principles prerequisite to the study of medicine.”

From <https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/mcat/> ...also known as: 7.5 hours...of FUN! ;)

What is tested on the MCAT?

The new (as of April 2015) MCAT consists of these four sections:

1. Chemical and Physical Foundations of Biological Systems
2. Biological and Biochemical Foundations of Living Systems
3. Psychological, Social, and Biological Foundations of Behavior
4. Critical Analysis and Reasoning Skills (CARS)

Content breakdown for the science-based sections:

Section/ Content Area	Chemical & Physical Foundations	Biological & Biochemical Foundations	Psychological, Social, & Biological Foundations	Total for all 3 sections
Biology	5%	65%	5%	25%
Biochemistry	25%	25%	--	16.7%
General Chemistry	30%	5%	--	11.7%
Organic Chemistry	15%	5%	--	6.7%
Physics	25%	--	--	8.3%
Psychology	--	--	65%	21.7%
Sociology	--	--	30%	10%

What is the format of the MCAT?

The MCAT has three science-content sections and one reading comprehension section (CARS).

The science sections are comprised of passages and passage-based questions (similar in format to those you might find on other standardized exams), as well as some stand-alone questions which do not refer to a passage. The CARS section contains only passages and passage-based questions.

All exam questions are multiple choice. There is also **no** essay section.

The breakdown within the two section types (science and CARS):

Section/Details	Timing	Number of Passages	Questions by Type	Total # Questions
Science-Based Sections (3)	95 minutes	10	44 passage-based + 15 stand-alone questions	59
CARS Section	90 minutes	9	All passage-based questions	53

When is the MCAT offered and how much does it cost to take?

Currently, the list of MCAT testing dates and locations offered can be found at <https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/mcat/register/> and the registration fee info can be found at <https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/mcat/register/417816/2015-mcat-registration-fees.html>. Signing up for the MCAT well in advance is advised, as spots tend to fill up quickly closer to the exam date and additional fees may apply later on. The cost is roughly \$300 USD before additional fees (see website provided for details) could be applied. There is a Fee Assistance Program, and details are available at AAMC's website at the above link.

How should you prepare for the MCAT?

There are lots of ways to prepare for the MCAT! You can study on your own, take a prep course (many companies offer these but they can be pricey), study from prep books, etc. The first, and probably most important way to prepare is to take necessary/relevant college coursework, most of which is also required or highly recommended for medical school application. A general idea of these courses could include:

- Biology (2 semesters with lab)
 - BIOL 001 & 002, BCOR 011 & 012 or 021
 - Also, BCOR 101 and 103 have been very helpful for some MCAT-takers!
- General Chemistry (2 semesters with lab)
 - CHEM 031 & 032 or 035 & 036
- Organic Chemistry (2 semesters with lab)
 - CHEM 141 & 142 or 143 & 144
- Physics (2 semesters with lab)
 - PHYS 011/021(lab) & 012/022(lab) or 051 & 152
- Statistics – key to understanding research methods and data analysis! (1+ semesters)
 - STAT 111, 141, or 211
- Biochemistry (1+ semesters)
 - BIOC 212 or 205/206 (for related majors)
- Psychology + Sociology (1+ semesters each)
 - PSYC 001 & SOC 001

What about that CARS section?

The CARS section focuses on reading and analyzing complex passages on a variety of topics in the humanities and social sciences.

- DON'T skimp in your preparation for this section! Competency in this section is important and neglecting to adequately prepare for it will most likely yield disappointing results!!
- Taking English, Honors College, or some other reading comprehension-based courses will be helpful for preparation, as well as consistently reading outside of class and exposing yourself to complex, advanced literature to give yourself familiarity with such writing. In this regard, it is **never** too early to begin preparing for this section and honing your analytical reading skills.

Final Tips?

Go to the AAMC website for more information about the MCAT and talk to the UVM Pre-Health Advisor (Faith Rushford) for specifics and if you have questions. Remember: You are not alone on this journey! :)

Good Luck!