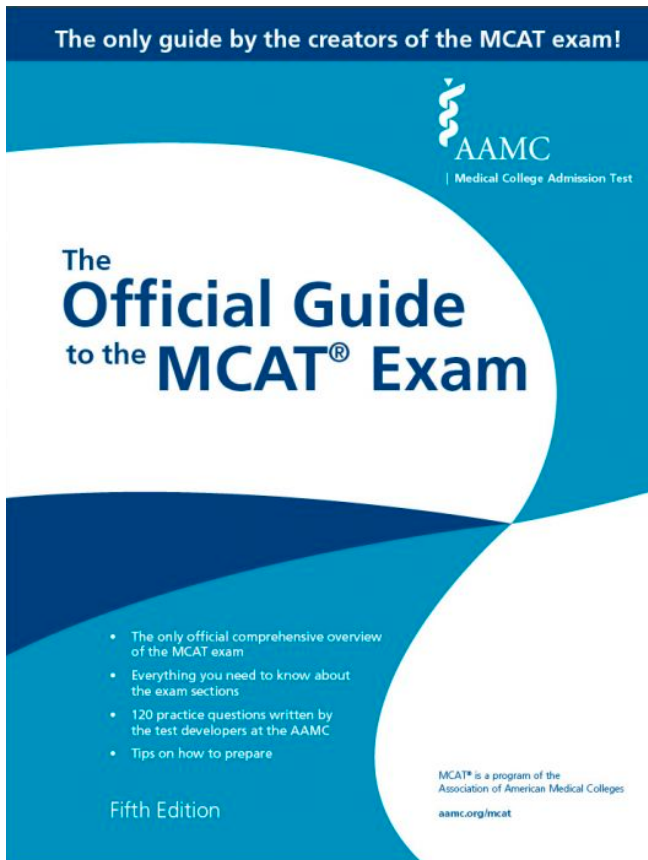




JANUARY 2022 | ISSUE 1

MCAT SECRETS

JABSOM Medical Student Mentorship Program



WHAT IS THIS DOCUMENT?

From JABSOM students to you!

This document was created by the executive board of JABSOM's Medical Student Mentorship Program (MSMP). We surveyed current JABSOM students to learn more about how they studied for the MCAT. This document includes those results from 41 students, as well as additional advice that we hope will help you better plan your MCAT study strategies!

The MCAT, or Medical College Admission Test, "...is a standardized, multiple-choice examination created to help medical school admissions offices assess your problem solving, critical thinking, and knowledge of natural, behavioral, and social science concepts and principles prerequisite to the study of medicine." It is administered by the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) and required for admission to medical school.

A LOOK AT WHAT'S INSIDE THIS DOCUMENT:

1. Suggested resources from JABSOM students
2. Answers to FAQ - *relevant resources hyperlinked*
3. Amazing advice

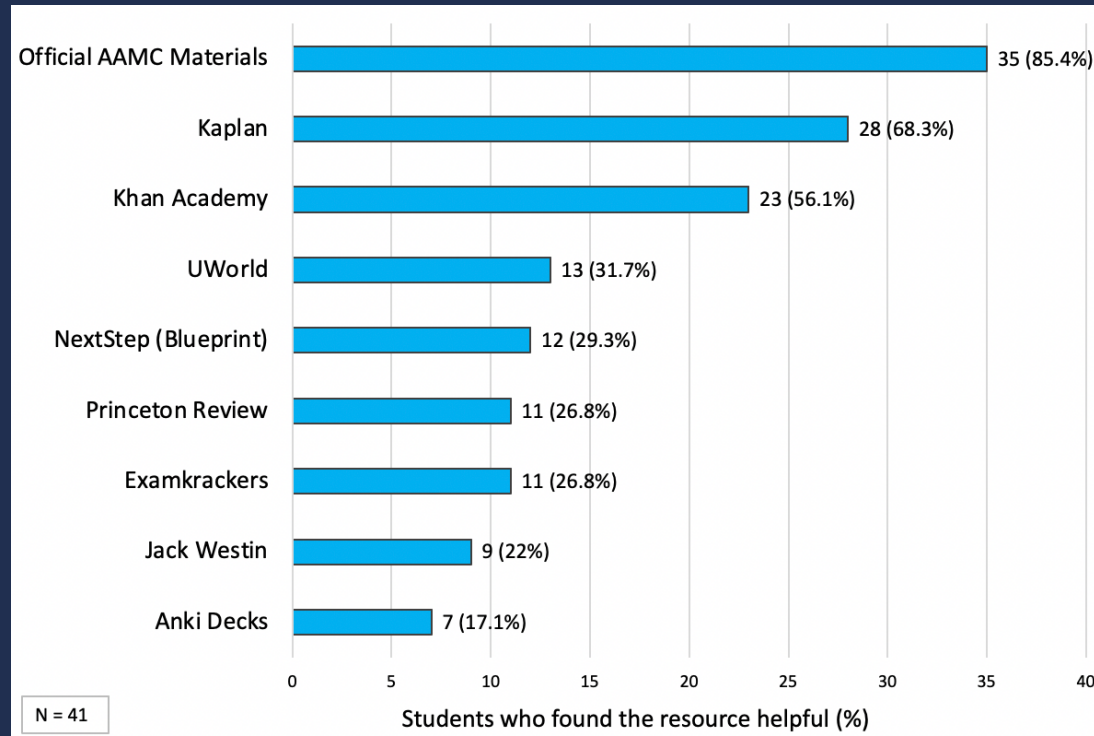


Suggested Resources

WHICH MCAT RESOURCES DID JABSOM STUDENTS FIND MOST HELPFUL?

JABSOM STUDENTS USED MANY RESOURCES

Explore different resources to find what works best for you!



TOP RESOURCES

*Official
AAMC
Materials*

Kaplan

*Khan
Academy*

OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES:

Reddit.com - subreddits: r/Mcat, r/premed

Altius Test Prep

Dr. Ryan Gray's MCAT Podcast

Quizlet

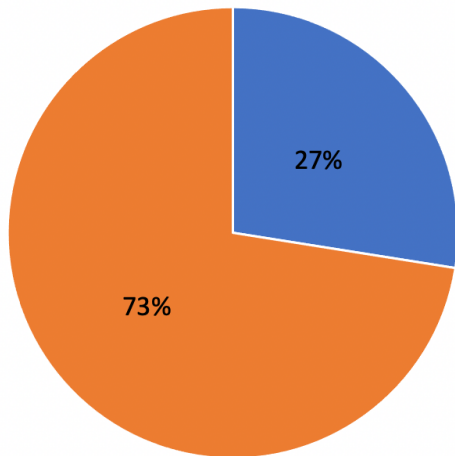
DID JABSOM STUDENTS TAKE A FORMAL MCAT PREP COURSE?

MANY DID NOT, BUT SOME FOUND THEM TO BE HELPFUL

Prep courses can hold you accountable for your studying, but may be expensive.

Did you take a formal prep course?

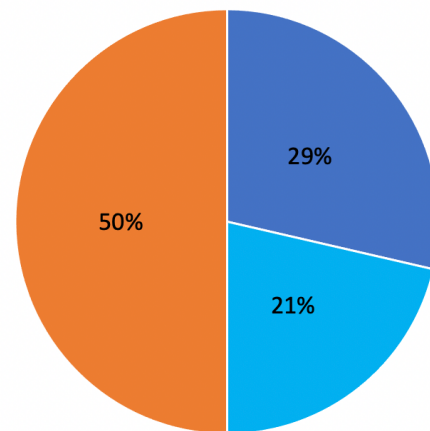
■ Yes ■ No



N = 40

Did you find your formal prep course helpful?

■ Yes ■ Somewhat ■ Not really



N = 14

PREP COURSES STUDENTS USED:

Kaplan (in-person, hybrid, or live online)

Altius Test Prep

Princeton Review

FAQ

WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO TAKE THE MCAT?

Ben: I would recommend taking it early Spring (<March) that way you'll have your score by April before applications open so you're ready to apply and not stressing about waiting for your MCAT score. Taking it during this time also gives you options to retake the exam in May/June without having your application being held up since secondary applications don't get sent out until early July in most cases.

Eduardo: Based off advice I received from other peers taking the exam or applying to medical school, I decided to take my MCAT around the Spring (March - May) during the same year that I was intending to apply to medical school. I would say know when you intend to take the exam early on, especially if there are limitations to the number of test centers and available dates to take the MCAT where you live. Additionally, slots fill up for test centers, and so it's important to know a rough time frame you are aiming to take the exam before the next testing cycle opens up. Always be on the lookout for dates for MCAT exams on the AAMC website for the MCAT.

HOW DID YOU STUDY FOR THE MCAT?

Ben: I took the MCAT multiple times and what worked for me that gave me the biggest jump in my score was enrolling in the Princeton Review MCAT course. I did the online course which gave me more flexibility (had a job at the time) so I could take the course during the early morning since all the tutors that taught were in the mainland. I know they have pre-built ANKI decks you can find on reddit and SDN as well.

Carley: I took my MCAT in March so I started studying around November. I didn't really have a set schedule but I would basically study whenever I could; I would try to go through some Ankis when I wasn't at home and I would try to dedicate ~6 hours when I didn't have work and was studying at home. The most valuable resource was definitely practice questions/tests. AAMC is always the best source since it's most similar to the real thing but if I remember correctly, they didn't have too many tests available since I was doing about 1-2 practice tests per week. Blueprint and Uworld also have really good practice tests/questions that are similar to the real thing. For me, practice really hammers stuff into my brain but I know someone who got a perfect on the psych/soc section by memorizing the whole section of a book so it honestly varies from person to person. I think the take home message would be to really discover how you learn best since everyone is so different. What works for someone else might not work for you and vice versa.

HOW DID YOU STUDY FOR THE MCAT?

***Luke:** I started studying in January and took my test in June. I was studying while in my junior year of undergrad, but I intentionally gave myself a lighter class schedule. I think it's important to give yourself sufficient time to prepare for the MCAT, but that amount of time often depends on whether you'll be exclusively studying for the MCAT or also taking classes/working. I'd say 2-3 months of solid studying is a good amount of time. I started studying in January using a Kaplan online test prep course, but didn't have much success with it. I felt that it wasn't very helpful because the course was different from how I usually study. I think it's very helpful to think about how you've successfully studied in the past and look for study resources that are similar. For me, that was using flashcards and watching videos. In undergrad, my bread and butter for studying was Quizlet and videos to clarify concepts, so I looked for similar MCAT resources. In February, I switched to exclusively using Anki decks (premade decks from reddit) to study and Khan Academy videos to clarify concepts, and saw my practice scores increase significantly. I used AAMC practice tests to gauge my progress along the way (these are a must buy) and also used Jack Westin to practice CARS. If you're struggling with CARS (I know I did), try reading every passage like it's the most interesting thing you've ever read in your life. It'll actually help a ton with remembering details and staying focused throughout that section.*

WHAT IS A "GOOD" MCAT SCORE? DO SECTION SCORES MATTER?

Ben: I would recommend subscribing to Medical School Admission Requirements (MSAR) on AAMC. It's an online database that lets you view all the GPA, MCAT, etc of the previously accepted class from that medical school. That could help you narrow down your list of safety, 50/50, and reach schools. You want to be as well rounded as possible for the individual sections. If you have a really low section compared to the other sections, just be ready to talk about why that happened.

Carley: It's hard to define what a "good" MCAT score is but you should definitely be looking at percentiles: [Data from 2021](#).
[Table comparing MCAT and GPA trends of applicants and matriculants throughout the years](#). [More facts](#).

If you compare the fact sheets, you can see that the average MCAT among matriculants was ~512, which corresponds with being in the 84th percentile. I would try to aim near here but remember that just because you score lower, it doesn't necessarily mean a school won't take you. Try to reflect on your application as a whole to gauge what MCAT score you want. All you can do is your best and I believe that you all will do well! As for the section scores, I think certain sections matter more for certain schools but you definitely want to do well in all the sections. There might be forums about this but to be honest, I didn't really focus on one section more than another.

DID YOU RETAKE IT? HOW DID YOU DECIDE TO RETAKE IT? WHAT DID YOU DO DIFFERENTLY?

Luke: I did not retake my MCAT, but it's definitely very common to do so. I think most people retake their MCAT at least once, and some people retake it multiple times. I think retaking it more than 3 times may be a red flag for some schools, so be aware of that. When thinking about retaking, I think it's important to reflect on what you did last time to study. Think about what you felt worked well, what didn't, and how those tactics reflected in your scores. Try other resources and methods to see if other tactics may work better.

Carley: I retook the MCAT multiple times so please don't feel bad or discouraged if your score isn't what you wanted it to be. The MCAT is honestly such a grueling test. When I retook the MCAT, I tried to think of things that I didn't do/try the first time because clearly what I did before wasn't working out. In the end, I realized that I didn't take as many practice tests as I should have and I believe this is what really changed my score. If you don't do well the first time, just try to think of things that didn't work for you. If you need more content review then maybe try a different resource. If you feel that you're solid in your content but you're still not getting the score you want, take more tests.

THANKS FOR READING!

Our emails:

Luke Taylor - lukert@hawaii.edu

Kylie Popovich - kpopovic@hawaii.edu

Benjamin Lee - benlee@hawaii.edu

Eduardo Biala Jr. - bialae@hawaii.edu

Carley Kida - kidac@hawaii.edu

Send us suggestions to improve future
issues at msmp.jabsom@gmail.com