The MCAT®

Foundations for Success

Hosted by Med School Tutors

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What We'll Cover Today

- "How much time does it *really* take?"

- The biggest mistakes students make

- Recommended resources & study organization tips

- CARS passage dissection & tips

- Tips for understanding/analyzing visuals on the MCAT

- Scientific reasoning basics

- *Live Q&A*

Who We Are @ MST

Passionate educators with MCAT scores > 515

1:1 personalized tutoring—from pre-med to residency!

Proven track record of success—since 2006!

Collaborative, diverse & supportive team

How much time does it *really* take?

Average Prep Time

- Varies by student & when you're taking the exam
- The average successful student puts in 300-500 hours of study time
  - *This is by no means a hard rule!*

Make A Plan & Stick With It

- What's your baseline score?
- What score are you aiming for?
- Reflect back on your performance to date in your courses…
  - *But don't assume that will predict how you'll do on the exam*

Always keep the BIG PICTURE in mind!

What's your baseline score?

AAMC Full Lengths are the gold standard

- There are now **4** Full Lengths and one "Sample Test"

To take an AAMC assessment or not to take...

- If so, take one ASAP once you start studying
  - *Then save the rest for later in your studies*
- If not, take a full-length assessment from another MCAT material resource
  - *NextStep has a free diagnostic and full-length*

What does my score mean?

The MCAT is scored by percentile rank

Last year's average score for US MD school matriculants - **511.5**

Last year's average score for US DO school matriculants - **503.8**

Last year's average scores for "Big Four" Caribbean MD school matriculants - **496 - 498**

Total Score	Percentile Rank
472	<1
473	<1
474	<1
475	<1
476	1
477	1
478	2
479	2
480	3
481	4
482	5
483	6
484	7
485	8
486	10
487	12
488	14
489	16
490	18

Total Score	Percentile Rank
491	20
492	23
493	25
494	28
495	31
496	34
497	37
498	41
499	44
500	47
501	51
502	54
503	58
504	61
505	65
506	68
507	71
508	74
509	77

Total Score	Percentile Rank
510	80
511	83
512	85
513	88
514	90
515	92
516	93
517	95
518	96
519	97
520	98
521	99
522	99
523	99
524	100
525	100
526	100
527	100
528	100

So how can we get there and beyond?

Sources: AAMC, AACOM, SGU / AUC / RUSM Websites

Learn How You Learn!

Practice Questions and Passages
- Don't fear them – they're *the best* methods you can use to learn & prepare for the MCAT

How do you learn best?
- Visual, Tactile, Auditory, etc…
- *Figuring this out now will also give you a leg up for med school*

Active vs. Passive Learning
- Creating diagrams/flow charts
- Flash cards/Anki
  - *"If I had a nickel for every time I wished I had started using Anki prior to med school…*
- Video tutorials
- See it, do it, teach it!
  - *Studies show that teaching someone else material forces your brain to reorganize it in way that's better for comprehension, application and long term memory storage!*

Top 5 Mistakes Students Make

- Cramming/not starting early enough

- Not balancing passages/questions and content review

- Not utilizing the AAMC practice materials

- Resource overwhelm

- Underutilizing practice tests

Recommended Resources

Content Review

- Examkrackers
- Kaplan
- NextStep
- *These are largely the same material, pick one and stick with it!*

Practice Questions and Passages

- AAMC Material
- UWorld MCAT Question Bank
- Khan Academy Passages (Free!)

Full Lengths

- AAMC
- Most resource bundles will include Full Lengths
- Examkrackers, NextStep, etc.

Get Organized

Don't Wing It!!!

- Make a schedule
  - *And change it if it's not working*
- Prepare for a marathon, not a sprint
- Realistically account for your weak areas
  - *If you're not uncomfortable when you're reviewing, you may not be learning enough. It shouldn't be "easy"!*

Hold yourself accountable

- Accountabilibuddies
- Celebrate mini milestones & accomplishments

What To Do If You're Struggling

Ask for Help

- Get a fresh perspective
- Talk to your advisor or tutor

"Am I trying to do too much too fast?"

- Adjust your study plan if it quickly becomes overwhelming
- Balancing act
- Consider your resources

Check In With Yourself

- Are you getting ample rest?
- Are you pushing yourself too hard?
- When was the last time you moved your body?

Cultivate Your Test Day Mindset —in Advance

Practice like it's test day on your assessments

- Time yourself appropriately
- Plan your snacks and attire

Get comfortable working through passages under pressure

Utilize the process of elimination to avoid getting stuck

Get to know the route to the testing center —before the morning of the exam

Pro Tips for Test Day:

- *Wear your most comfortable clothes*
- *Bring your favorite snack/drink*
- *Beware of caffeine!*
- *Move during your breaks*

Let's break down a CARS passage!

Please see the handout!

Question 1

1) How would the author respond to the notion that juries are given too much power to decide the outcome of a criminal trial?

    a) The author would agree, noting that judges should be the ultimate deciders of a case as they have more law experience than the jury members.

    b) The author would disagree, proposing that the juries serve a necessary function by checking governmental overreach.

    c) The author would agree, citing the case in which John Peter Zenger was deemed not guilty even after admitting he had broken the law.

    d) The author would disagree, noting that most laws are fluid and can be interpreted in many different ways.

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Question 2

2) In the last paragraph, the term "flag-waving of yesteryear" is most synonymous with:

    a) A proud celebration of American history.
    b) Examples of government power conceding to the will of the people.
    c) The notion that public patriotism has declined.
    d) Incidents of public outcry over case verdicts.

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Question 3

3)   Suppose the Southern District of New York indicted Greg Craig initially and he was found innocent. How would this change the author's central argument?

   a) This would strengthen the central argument because the power of the trial by jury checked the federal government from overzealous prosecution.

   b) This would weaken the central argument because the Southern District of New York is classically an aggressive prosecutorial staff.

   c) This would weaken the central argument because it now fails to demonstrate the political impact of indicting someone who was not indicted by a different group.

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Question 4

4) **The author most likely mentions the cases of Edward Bushell and John Peter Zenger in order to:**

    i)   Provide context for the Greg Craig case.
    ii) Explain the origins of the powers authorized to a jury and individual jurors.
    iii) Expand on the powers of the jury and individual jurors.

   a. II only.
   b. I and III only.
   c. III only.
   d. I, II, and III.

Question 4

4) The author most likely mentions the cases of Edward Bushell and John Peter Zenger in order to:

    i) Provide context for the Greg Craig case.
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    b. I and III only.
    c. III only.
    d. I, II, and III.

Critical Thinking & Scientific Reasoning

"You've got to learn your instrument. Then, you practice, practice, practice. And then, when you finally get up there on the bandstand, forget all that and just wail." - Charlie Parker

It's about more than knowing the content

- We also have to know WHEN and HOW to use the content

The AAMC outlines 4 principles of Scientific Reasoning

- Knowledge of Scientific Concepts and Principles
  - *The WHAT*
- Scientific Reasoning and Problem Solving
  - *The WHEN and HOW*
- Reasoning about Design and Execution of Research
  - *Learn to quickly identify hypothesis, IV, DV, control groups, etc.*
- Data-Based and Statistical Reasoning

Analyzing Visual Data

Know When to Use the Charts/Graphs, Passage, or a Combo
- It's all in the phrasing
  - *Practice is THE BEST way to find the nuance here*

Don't get lost in the weeds!
- ALWAYS look for the big picture
- Start with the basics
  - *What's the title?*
  - *What's on the x-and y-axes?*

Get comfortable putting the data into your own words
- Make simple correlations from complex pieces of information
- A flow chart can be your best friend
  - *Ex: A>   B>   C*

Tying it All Together

Come to test day with a strong foundation

- Make sure you work to understand<u>all</u> visuals in your practice material
  - *If you're mastering the material, you should be able to describe in simple terms what each visual is saying*
- Get comfortable working with data and experimental designs

Repetition is Key!

- Especially at the beginning of your studies
- Actively review concepts you do not understand
  - *Use multiple resources if necessary, but try to avoid rabbit holes*

Work With Your Peers

- People on the same level & those you're teaching can help you improve
  - *E.g. Meet up to do a full length CARS section together once a week*

Parting Thoughts

The road to your MD or DO degree is a long one. Be patient with yourself now as you study for this exam.

Avoid comparison! Even the highest scorers will struggle and get frustrated.

Remember: You are NOT your score. Med schools look at more than just your MCAT scores & GPA/academic performance.

We believe in you!

Thank you!