

MCAT PREP ADVICE FROM FORMER ADVISEES

The advice contained in this document is a compilation of suggestions from dozens of post-bacc students who have taken the MCAT and generously have shared their hard-won insights and advice.

Please bear in mind that every person will develop an individualized approach that works best for them, but we hope that the following suggestions will point you in the right direction. We wish you all the best with your MCAT prep!

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1. FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH THE MCAT

Start Here:

1. To familiarize yourself with the scope of what is tested on the MCAT, start by reading the AAMC's free [What's on the MCAT Exam? Content Outline handbook](#). It explains the types of questions that are asked and provides a complete list of each of the topics you need to know. It can be helpful to cross-reference the content list to determine what you have learned in your courses and what you haven't.
2. The AAMC publishes a free [MCAT Essentials](#) document each year that provides key logistical information about registering for the MCAT and what to expect on testing day.

2. CREATE YOUR STUDY PLAN

1. Take a Diagnostic Test

After you have completed all of the courses with subject matter tested on the MCAT and are ready to start your MCAT prep, your first step is to take the AAMC Sample Test. This test will give you your first taste of working your way through MCAT questions. It will indicate which questions you got right or wrong, but does not provide a scaled score – look for a “score converter” online. Remember, this is just a starting point.

2. Create an MCAT Study Schedule/Plan

- The AAMC provides the following free document: [How to Create a Study Plan for the MCAT Exam](#)
- There are companies like BluePrint that offer free or paid personalized study plans.

3. **Plan to devote 250-400 hours to MCAT prep** (after completing all relevant coursework): This is a marathon, not a sprint! The total time estimates include subject review, running lots of practice problems, and completing (and then carefully reviewing!) several full-length practice tests. If you just completed all of the relevant coursework in the past year, you may be at the lower end of this total time estimate. If it has been a while since you completed some of the relevant coursework, plan to be on the higher end of the total time estimate.

“Most of your science prep comes from your prerequisite courses. The time to learn it is then: strive for comprehension. Unless you have taken either General Biology 2 or both Anatomy and Physiology, you’ll have to teach yourself the human physiology content. Most post-baccs have to teach themselves the psychology/sociology content, unless they took those courses as undergrads.”

“Make sure that you include enough time for practice questions when laying out your study plan. There is a lot of content to know, but knowing how to apply the content you learn is of equal importance. Additionally, it is essentially guaranteed that on test day you will come across material that you do not know or understand. Knowing how to interpret a passage and form conclusions from the material presented to you is a large part of being successful. This skill comes from doing many, many passages and practice questions, not just simply content review.”

4. **Changing your plan is OKAY!** If/When you realize the plan you’ve created isn’t working for you, adapt it. Don’t stick to a plan that’s not working for you just because someone else said it should work. Be adaptable and trust yourself.

“I found it helpful to tailor my plan to my strengths and weaknesses and to my high-return areas. If, on your practice tests, you are scoring high on one section and low in another, don’t continue spending equal time on each. But also, if your score on one section is rapidly improving on practice tests, then reallocate your time to high-return areas.”

3. STUDY MATERIALS

RECOMMENDED MATERIALS

1. **Purchase the [AAMC MCAT Official Prep Complete Bundle](#)**, which includes all of the AAMC practice tests and question banks.
 - Since these passages are from the AAMC, they are most similar to what you will see on your test day
 - Try not to be discouraged by scores and percentiles. Many people may repeat these questions, and many answer them using note and resources, both of which skew the numbers
 - Many people's test day MCAT score falls within a few points of their most recent AAMC full-length practice tests
 - Working your way through the entirety of the official AAMC materials can help you make sure that you are not missing any important topics or content.

2. **Purchase one complete set of MCAT subject review books**

Most commonly recommended:

- *Examkrackers*
- *Kaplan*
- *The Princeton Review*

A note about non-AAMC material: Some third-party materials do better on certain topics than others. There are many websites and videos where med students discuss which materials were most useful for which sections of the MCAT. Previous post-baccs may have helpful guidance, as well. Some books provide more detail than others, which can be good or bad depending on your time available and what you are looking for.

"I lived with Kaplan's all-subject mini-review booklet for the last three weeks. It was always on my person and I broke it out whenever I had a moment. I figured that these were the most high-yield topics to just know flat out."

3. **Khan Academy's MCAT tutorials**

This free resource offers reliable videos for content review as well as AAMC-written practice problems.

- Note: When you go to the Khan Academy MCAT [landing page](#), the four sections at the top will take you to question banks. To find the sections that provide videos for content review, scroll down on the page, past the first four sections.

4. **Highly recommended resources for additional practice problems:**

- UWorld MCAT Question Bank
 - Used extensively with good results by 2020/21 and 2021/22 cohorts
 - UWorld is well known for their answers and explanations. They are detailed, easy to follow, and always accompanied by clear photos and diagrams. Many students use UWorld for both content review and passage practice!
- Varsity Tutor's *MCAT Prep* app
- BluePrint
 - Note: They'll tell you why the right answer is right, but not always why the wrong answer choices are wrong. Several students have reported that the program is frustratingly glitchy.
- Jack Westin's *Daily CARS Question of the Day*
- Shemmassian Consulting - Question of the Day as well as many resources, both free and paid

5. **Recommended resources for CARS prep from an experienced pre-health advisor, Dr. Doyen Rainey at UT-Dallas, who has taught CARS prep courses to his students for many years:**

"For a student looking for lots of CARS practice, I recommend the NextStep "108 CARS Passages" (~\$30 on Amazon) and ExamCrackers "101 Passages" (~\$50 on amazon)."

6. **Multimedia**

- Podcasts
 - MCAT Basics - bite sized topics
 - "Every time I listened to this on a run, I had a question on the topic soon after in my practice. Their summaries of the ethically and scientifically questionable psych-soc experiments we need to know were memorable."*
 - The PreMed Years - has some good episodes on MCAT strategy
 - The MCAT Podcast - has episodes where they go step by step over the Blueprint diagnostic test passages, which can be useful for how to think through answers
- Supplemental videos
 - YouTube MCAT Mnemonic Mondays:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8oZ6KQGKJEs>
 - "I used the electromagnetic spectrum, blot tests, and male reproductive system."*
- Anki
 - Most valuable: DIY from study questions, practice exams, and content
 - MileDown's MCAT Decks
 - Trade them!

NOT RECOMMENDED BY PREVIOUS TAKERS

- **User-Generated Online Resources**

“Beware of any resources you find online (Reddit, StudentDoctor, etc.) There is a wealth of misinformation floating through cyberspace.”

- **ReadyMCAT (Princeton Review’s mobile app)**

“The app uses flash cards that are poorly coded and are not relevant to the questions that follow.”

- **Gold Standard**

“Their questions are needlessly difficult to understand and their explanations are very poor.”

- **Kaplan Full-Length Practice Tests**

“I do not recommend the Kaplan full-length practice tests. They were frustratingly difficult and nothing like the AAMC practice tests. I scored a 503 on both Kaplan practice tests that I took but ranged 508-514 on the AAMC practice tests, which was more representative of my actual score.”

- **Kaplan QBank**

“Almost useless. Although this is advertised as being highly interactive, most of the material seemed pretty standard. I found that the answers mimicked what was already in the textbook.”

4. FULL-LENGTH PRACTICE TESTS

Students who have earned competitive scores on the MCAT most commonly report completing 6 to 8 full-length practice tests prior to taking the MCAT.

RECOMMENDED SOURCES FOR PRACTICE TESTS:

1. **AAMC Sample Test**

- As mentioned above, take this first. It is a representative test that will let you know which questions you got right and wrong, but it does not provide a scaled score.

2. **Official AAMC Practice Tests**

3. **Blueprint (formerly NextStep Test Prep) full-length tests**

Pro Tip: Third-party full-length exams can give you scores that are quite different from what you will receive on test day. Use these resources to gain knowledge and experience can be extremely useful, but take their scores and percentages with a grain of salt.

ADVICE FROM STUDENTS ON THE TOPIC OF PRACTICE TESTS

“Take as many practice tests as you can. I took 6, but wished I’d taken 10.”

“Assess your progress by taking full-length exams. And by that, I mean the full 8 hours, not partial sections. Fatigue and loss of stamina are very real, as are the need for good time management and test-taking strategies. Train like you fight, as they say in the Army.”

“If you encounter a concept that is new to you, even if it only showed up in the context of an answer choice that was incorrect, be sure to teach yourself about that concept. In fact, a couple of the concepts

that showed up on my real MCAT were ones that I had only encountered in the context of wrong-answer choices on practice problems and practice exams.”

“Be sure to take ALL of the official AAMC practice exams. Other practice exams were helpful, but the AAMC ones were identical to the real MCAT. It is essential to make yourself take several full-length exams using the same timing as the real test to build up your endurance and pacing for the real test.”

“After each practice exam, go through every single question carefully. **In addition to understanding why the right answers are right, be sure you fully understand why every single wrong-answer choice is wrong.** If you encounter a concept that is new to you, even if only it only showed up in the context of an answer choice that was incorrect, be sure to teach yourself about that concept. In fact, a couple of the concepts that showed up on my real MCAT were ones that I had only encountered in the context of wrong-answer choices on practice problems and practice exams.”

“The full-length NextStep and Princeton Review exams felt more difficult than the real MCAT. It was good in that it helped you with a worst-case-scenario-type deal. It was bad in that it makes you think you’re going to do terribly, even if that’s not true.” (Note: This comment was submitted by a person who earned a 519 score on the real MCAT.)

“On the practice tests, try out various test-taking strategies such as skipping and going back to questions. **On the real test, you will be somewhat more fastidious and slow than on your practice tests**, so be sure you have a technically sound plan for getting the most high-probability-of-being-correct questions answered in the given time.”

5. ADVICE ON CONTENT REVIEW AND PRACTICE PROBLEMS

“Most of the 2022 cohort, based on recommendations from mentors, focused the majority of time on practice questions, primarily UWorld and all the AAMC practice questions (focusing on AAMC in weeks immediately preceding exam), combined with daily Anki review. Content study was supplemental to and around this primary daily routine.”

“Make an effort to understand not only the material tested but the test itself. The MCAT is not strictly a content-based test. Early on, get familiar with the format of its passages and questions.”

“The MCAT covers a vast amount of material, but generally to a lesser depth than you may have learned it in classes. Skimming through the AAMC MCAT Guide may be helpful to see what percentage of different concepts might be on the test and therefore what is ‘high yield.’”

“I made notecards and then exchanged them with a friend. I found I enjoyed looking over hers more because I didn’t know what would be on the other side, so I genuinely had to rely on my recall of the topic.” (You can do this with Anki too, exchanging decks.)

“Practice questions not only improve your understanding of how the test works, but also allow you to identify the content areas that need the most review. The best practice problems are those in the AAMC question banks.”

“My Kaplan books were great for content review, but you must do a lot of practice problems and not just read. Do not fall into the trap of obsessing over small details; aim for general understanding of the topics that come up recurrently on practice tests (amino acid chemistry, fluid dynamics etc.).”

“By learning the tools available to you in the test environment (most valuably, the review function), you can learn to move through the exam very efficiently.”

“If you are wanting to start studying early for the MCAT (before any dedicated study time), start with something that you will not be learning in class. The most common example is the P/S section. This material is not too difficult conceptually, but it is information that is important to know. Learning this information early will give you more time later on to practice its application with practice problems and passages.”

6. SECTION-SPECIFIC ADVICE

On exam day, you will complete the sections of the MCAT in the following order (each section is 90 minutes in duration):

1. Chemical and Physical Foundations (C/P)
-10 minute break-
2. Critical Analysis and Reading Skills (CARS)
-30 minute lunch break-
3. Biology and Biochemical Foundations (B/B)
-10 minute break-
4. Psychology and Sociology Foundations (P/S)

A. CHEMICAL AND PHYSICAL FOUNDATIONS OF BIOLOGICAL SYSTEMS

“The best advice I have for this section is to not let the passages intimidate you! This is the first section on the exam, and the AAMC will purposely try to scare you out of the gates at every turn with terms, units, concepts, and dense passages filled with useless information. Practice is your best friend here to build confidence. Also, make sure you are very comfortable with physics, chemistry, and biochemistry concepts, because only a handful of questions will involve actual calculations. I recommend watching Khan Academy videos and doing textbook questions on your own for any concepts or physics/gen chem equations you don't think you grasp well conceptually.”

Several students provided the same tip as this student: *“My strategy for this section was to flag and leave most of the calculation questions for the end. I learned this the hard way, after running out of time on a practice test because I spent too much time trying to remember some equations to use or how to rearrange them under pressure.”*

“There are a bunch of formulas that you must memorize in preparation for the test. I found a comprehensive list online that provided all the formulas needed for the MCAT; definitely look for that list.”

“For the calculations, if you are like me and aren’t the most intuitive math person (or it’s just been a while since you’ve done math without a calculator), there are a ton of great videos on YouTube about how to estimate, work with exponents and fractions, etc. without a calculator. I had to spend a lot of time practicing this, personally. The calculation questions should be a piece of cake if your skills are up to par and you can remember the equations.”

*“Be able to evaluate data representations of **all types**. This is also true for the Bio/Biochem section. I ran into passages with multiple questions that hinged on correct data interpretation. You should try to make this intuitive for you. Familiarize yourself with scatterplots, stem-leaf plots, boxplots, normal distributions, etc. Really, I recommend getting to the point where interpreting data is intuitive. You will save yourself SO much time on the C/P & B/B sections.”*

“I found that the Kaplan books were very helpful in prioritizing information. For example, I briefly went over the anatomy of the intestines/gut, but this was rated a very low priority on Kaplan, which was helpful. (There may be one standalone question that asks about this, but it is necessary to prioritize.)”

“You may know the material, but it will often be presented to you in a format that looks unfamiliar. There will be a great deal of graphical interpretation, so you will need to rely on your ability to think critically to solve these problems. You cannot get away with regurgitating information if you want to be successful on the MCAT.”

“Biggest piece of advice here is to know your units! Oftentimes, if you know what a unit is composed of (Newtons = $\text{kg} \cdot \text{m}/\text{s}^2$), you can often intuit what you need to do with the provided information to get the right answer.”

“Many answers can simply be found by looking at and interpreting the graph. Don’t get overwhelmed and caught up in all of the details presented to you in the passage. Many of them are not necessary in order to answer the questions correctly.”

B. CRITICAL ANALYSIS AND REASONING SKILLS (CARS)

“My method was, first, to read through the whole passage once without losing focus. During that read, I made a mental note of which paragraphs I understood well and which ones I didn’t. Then, I’d just start answering the questions. If a question used information from a paragraph I thought I didn’t understand well, I’d read it again, then answer the question. If you must highlight, do it as sparingly as possible. I also flagged a ton of questions and would go back on a second pass, if I had time, to make sure I didn’t get myself into a logic trap.”

“CARS is a QUESTION-reading comprehension test as much as it is a PASSAGE-reading comprehension test. In other words, I found that understanding what the question was asking was more or just as important as understanding the actual passage. Pay attention to this when you review your practice tests and understand each question you got wrong as well as the ones you got right. Also pay attention to the question codes the AAMC provides for each type of question during your review. This helped me to categorize the questions in my head going forward.”

“The CARS section tests your reading comprehension of dense passages. Get familiar with the types of reasoning that is commonly needed to respond to CARS questions. With lots of practice, you will develop your own strategy for tackling tough passages during a timed test.”

“The hardest part about CARS was how much internal debate I had around how the questions were written or what the text was telling me. I used a lot of TPR passages to prepare for the CARS section and I felt more confident as time went on. For me, a lot of the work revolved around not ‘arguing’ with the passage.”

“It is all about time. Learn to read quickly and try not to let yourself get hung up on specific questions or passages. If you manage to complete the section in its entirety, you’ll be better off than most test-takers.”

“Be very aware of linguistic polarity (is the statement positive or negative?). The simple presence or absence of the word ‘not’ can invalidate some of the answers to a question.”

“Force yourself to smile during CARS! Pretend everything is the most interesting thing that you’ve ever read, and you’ll fool yourself into believing it.”

“I found it helpful to highlight the names that were presented within the passage. If a question would later ask about a certain person’s opinion, it would take me less time to find where that individual was mentioned. This very helpful in passages that are comparing several different opinions, or when the names are similar and can be confused.”

C. BIOLOGICAL AND BIOCHEMICAL FOUNDATIONS OF LIVING SYSTEMS

“Here is an important tip: A lot of science questions aren’t really science; they’re CARS questions disguised as science. A person with good reading comprehension but no background in science could get this type of question right by reading the answers carefully. Remember that if you run into any questions where you don’t remember the content.”

“Biological sciences needs studying supplementary to the MCDB 1150 and 2150 sequence. You’ll need to learn human physiology on your own. Focus on the kidneys, heart, brain, eyes, ears, and lungs. Do not let yourself get overwhelmed by the scope of the exam. A few days of self-study beyond the concepts covered in the MCDB sequence will get you where you need to be.”

“Know your amino acids and metabolism! These are very high yield subjects and will break you if you aren’t super comfortable with them. I used my notes from biochemistry class a fair amount while reviewing the questions on my practice test from this section to check that my understanding was thorough.”

“Like the C/P section, the passages are designed to confuse you, so try not to let that intimidate you and trust yourself. Also, since I didn’t take physiology, I had to spend a good deal of time learning all of that content from scratch, as it’s fairly high-yield in this section. I found that, after mastering physiology content, my score improved dramatically. Also, repeat this like a mantra: kinases phosphorylate and phosphatases dephosphorylate!!! ☺”

“Amino acids are very high yield; I strongly suggest making flash cards and flipping through them when you don’t have enough energy for a serious study session. I recommend the following link: <https://www.sporcle.com/games/sproutcm/amino-acids-from-structures>”

“ExamCrackers has a book on Biology that is specifically on Systems – I would highly recommend this book to anyone who hasn’t taken anatomy and physiology coursework.”

“Taking Human Physiology before studying for the MCAT was very helpful. In contrast, there were very few questions on genetics and cell bio on my test—if you can take it, great, if not, focus on the high-yield topics (e.g. Kidneys, Immune System).”

D. PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY

“This section involves reading excerpts from sociology and psychology papers to come to a conclusion. There is a significant amount of subject-specific vocabulary that you must learn.”

“I spent a significant amount of time studying Psychology and Sociology. I made hundreds of notecards as most of the material was simply rote memorization of very specific terminology. Psych/Soc seemed to be one of the easiest sections to focus on for a score increase, as the material wasn’t complex or difficult to understand; it just took time.”

“Even though I was an anthropology major, I found this section to be the most challenging to master. The content is just so picky and detailed! It was consistently the lowest section on all of my practice tests, but I was able to pull a 132 on the real thing, largely thanks to running flashcards for hours and hours. Hard work and memorization pays off for this one. A lot of people online say the Kaplan books are weak for this section, but the Khan academy (and the “Khan Academy Notes” 300-page document on Reddit) is strong.”

“I used Khan Academy exclusively to prepare for Psychology/Sociology. This section was the most straightforward; there wasn’t as much logical deduction. In fact, many of the questions were basically just identification. (Do you remember what stereotype threat is? How about the foot-in-the-door principle?)”

“Everything you need to know about PSYC/SOCY can be found on the AMCAS subject list and in the ExamCrackers books. You will absolutely be able to score in the upper percentiles if you just follow those sources.”

“The Kaplan book covered the Psychology/Sociology section well. I started studying this section over winter break then hit it hard in the summer. It’s just lots of memorization.”

“Khan Academy videos, and the transcripts/100 page reddit resource were INVALUABLE for the psych/soc portion of the test. I read the ExamCrackers book beforehand but found it did not have the exact same understanding of the topics that the AAMC did.”

“Kaplan offered some helpful strategies to identify common ‘wrong answer pathologies.’”

“If you study Psych/Soc material over winter break, continue to spend an hour on it per week throughout the spring.”

“I found that studying Psych/Soc after an 8 or 10 hour workday was very helpful. This is the last section of the exam and I found it helpful to practice when I was really feeling tired. That prepared me to not be tired when I got to the last section of the MCAT.”

7. TEST DAY ADVICE

“Bring snacks, layers, a thermos if you like tea or coffee, and remember to breathe deeply and do your best to center yourself. You will not be able to take anything with you into the exam room. They will give you a locker for your stuff, and you will need to empty pockets and sign into and out of the room every time. (Do not decide to super-hydrate on test day, or else you will spend a lot of time checking out and in whenever you have to go to the bathroom.) You may start your actual exam after your start time due to check in times; that’s okay. You will feel nervous; that is normal. Just focus on staying centered.”

“If not starting at the scheduled time might stress you out, then get to the testing center early so that you will be one of the first in line to get in and get processed. It’s a bit of a laborious process for each person to go through.”

*“When you are sitting there on exam day, staring at the computer screen, **force yourself to smile**. Notice if your shoulders are trying to paste themselves to your ears. Take 5 seconds, close your eyes and breathe deeply. This is all just an elaborate game my friends! **All of you are intelligent and capable enough to succeed**, this is just the game we have to play to advance. So, play it beautifully!”*

“Be confident! Confidence is the lubrication that allows all of that great post-bacc science knowledge to be released. And try to relax; unfortunately, I only got 2 hours of sleep before I took the MCAT because I was nervous, but this may have been a blessing—I went in with low expectations, which allowed me to feel calm.”

“Do NOT share your practice exam scores (or your test-day score!) with any other pre-meds—and stay off Reddit! Don’t get too down on yourself when you inevitably get a practice exam score you don’t love—just take the rest of the day off, and start targeting the next day!”

“It is a stressful test, and it will feel gross—it is designed to feel like that. Take a deep breath and don’t forget to like yourself. After two weeks of almost non-stop studying, my scores started to drop because I was miserable. I took my last week off from practice tests and loosened my iron grip on reviewing and found that when I was happier I did way better. Smile through the test, and remember it isn’t everything.”

“During the test, right before every section, I would write myself a little inspirational message to get psyched. I would try and trick myself into being excited: ‘Oh boy! This is my favorite section!’ Even when it was sarcastic and it felt cheesy and silly, it definitely helped center me during the test.”

“A lot of people say to rest and veg out the day before the test. I didn’t do this. I pretty much ran Anki flashcards that entire day, which I think paid off. I think it’s a bad idea to watch Netflix or a movie the day before the test. Research has shown that the more unrelated information you intake in between encoding and testing, the less you’ll be able to recall. Try testing this for yourself before the practice tests if you don’t believe me. If anything, exercise is probably the best thing to do on this day so you can sleep well. Avoid social media and distractions at all costs! One more thing: Unlike midterms and even finals during undergrad, it’s impossible to mentally run through all of the material in your head leading up to the test, so you’ll likely feel unsure about how prepared you are. I think this is normal. Trust your preparation and you’ll be just fine!”

“In retrospect, I think I probably went a little bit too hard during the last week of prep, to the point where I think I was pretty burnt out by the time exam day came around. Depending on who you are, and whether or not you are OK with pushing preparation right up until the very days and hours before a big exam, presentation, etc., I would highly recommend tapering off in the week leading up to the exam. Trust in your preparation and give yourself the gift of extra rest in the last few days before the test so that you are feeling refreshed and ready to go on the actual test day.”

[For students in the formal post-bacc program:] *“I really would stress the importance of NOT working between the end of the program and taking the exam. Just focus on test prep until you take the test at the end of June.”*

8. MISCELLANEOUS ADVICE & WELL WISHES

“Make sure you work out regularly, even if it’s just a walk at the end of the way. Remember that some of those around you are not preparing for the MCAT. It’s up to you to set boundaries in your personal life, and make time for your loved ones when possible.”

“I wish I had started MCAT prep earlier (easier said than done). I also would have paid more attention to my health; a lot of people (including me) sacrificed their health to study. I ended up getting very sick a couple of weeks before the MCAT, and I was mostly out of commission for 5 days. That was a disaster for my rhythm and probably cost me a point or two on the exam. I would have taken more time to relax if I could do it again.”

“What made the biggest difference for me: You have to have your life together! You can’t focus and study if your life is imploding, and you can’t do this on your own. You need support along with feedback, study time, and advice from your peers.”

“Although it’s ideal to take the MCAT just once and to get a good score and move on, I took the real MCAT twice. I took it the first time in the summer immediately after my post-bacc year when I was stressed and had only a month to prep (I got a 509), and then again after six months of part-time preparation (I got a 520). I found that the extra time allowed me to learn the ins and outs of the test.”

“Like any standardized test, this is a standardized test. IT DOES NOT MEASURE YOUR WORTH.”

“Within each section, I’d recommend scrolling through the menu and answering discrete questions first, then returning to those that are passage-based. Further, if you don’t know an answer, GUESS AND

MOVE ON! On test day, I encountered multiple ambiguous, noggin-scratching questions that were followed by an enchainment of easy ones. If you can't accept the resign-guess-move on approach, you'll lose a lot of time (and thereby points that you deserve!). Also, if you can, try to appreciate your MCAT prep for what it is ... a chance to integrate and connect all you've learned and to apply it toward medically themed situations!"

"The entire test can be boiled down to your ability to read quickly with good comprehension and to rapidly interpret charts and graphs. Practice reading quickly throughout your exam prep. If you can get to the point where you have 15-20 minutes to review each science section and double that to review the CARS and P/S sections, you'll be golden. The more time you have to go back and review answers/passages without the time crunch of completion, the more you'll re-read and find potential mistakes. Do not underestimate this. It can be tempting to just focus on pure content memorization, but outside of P/S and the amino acids, most answers can be determined right out of the passage or with some critical analysis/thinking skills."

"I hired a tutor specifically for my areas of weakness (chemistry/physics). This helped me improve my score significantly while saving the money I would have spent on a commercial MCAT prep course, when I could take care of the other topics myself."

"I wish I would have stopped stressing myself out so early. I took a practice exam in September and again in January ... and ended up feeling like a complete failure. But once I started studying full-time in May, I realized my mistake: when I had taken those practice tests earlier, I hadn't learned any Biochemistry, Physics 2, or Physiology yet! Don't be hard on yourself."

"A lot of my struggle with MCAT prep was trying to fit a mold. For the first week or two, I tried to follow the mechanics of studying for the MCAT as prescribed by my MCAT prep course: I did all the readings, did all the problems, and still felt horrible about my preparation. I wish I hadn't compared myself to others so much. I began feeling happier when I realized I need to study the way I found helpful. I used a white board a lot, color, diagrams, and videos. I explained a lot of concepts to my cat, and that helped me internalize concepts in an organic way. And I went back to my class notes a lot."

"As cheesy as it sounds, try to have fun when taking the test. Remember that this exam is not life or death. It should not have any power of your self-worth. Success on a standardized exam does not reflect all of what makes you amazing, including your ability to be a fantastic doctor one day! Do your best, and be proud of yourself!"

"The scope of the content tested on the MCAT is huge. They're testing you on about 47 credit hours of material, but I found that that the material they expect you to know is a mile wide and an inch deep, so don't spend too much time learning everything there is to know on a subject. Remember also that, since the material is an inch deep, they try to throw you off by dressing up really simple questions as really complicated ones—don't be fooled."

"Keep things in perspective. When I was studying at the coffee shop, I saw someone with an exam prep book that had sciency-looking stuff in it. I asked her if she was prepping for the MCAT—turns out she was prepping for the USMLE. It made me remember that there are hundreds of people who made it past the MCAT and are now in med school."