MCAT Preparation Strategies from fellow Yalies

Cramming actually works / is better

Taking test and reviewing answers was more impactful than simply reviewing text or watching movies

Start studying several months in advance, do a little bit every day (with one day off each week), take practice exams every 2-3 weeks and use those to guide your future studying.

Don't leave all your studying for the last three weeks like I did. Not fun. Didn't have a winter break

I think I made the mistake of assuming I could study during the school year, and that was a big mistake. You can, but you have to make sacrifices I was not willing to. I crammed right at the end and did well, but could have and should have done better.

Make a schedule! Don't study too far out in advance, like 2 hours every weekend for 6 months, you'll forget everything. I would recommend doing 2 months of moderate studying (10-20 hours per week) and then one or two weeks of sprinting 40-60 hours per week right before the test.

Taking practice tests is just as important as covering content. The key to success on the MCAT in the least amount of time is covering content swiftly, then transitioning to practice tests. Practice tests provided by private companies should be used first to work up your stamina and fill in knowledge gaps. After, and only after, feeling confident in your content knowledge as well as becoming comfortable with the length of the exam, you should start with AAMC official material as the bundle sold by the AAMC closely resembles and the real test and the official tests provided in that bundle should accurately predict your grade.

If you can find an untimed practice test, take the content-based sections (i.e. everything but CARS) and look up any information you don't know, and make sure you understand the whole subject. That was one of the best ways I found to fill holes in my knowledge, even moreso than simply going over questions I missed

Taking as many practice tests as possible is key. Somewhere in the ballpark of 8-13. That being said all the practice tests aren't created equally and taking all of them from one company is generally considered a bad move. Luckily there is a lot of information online recommending and rating the various practice tests viability. The ones that need to be taken are the AAMC practice tests as those are the most similar to the tests that AAMC will be giving.

Do not wait to take the practice exams, do them each week as you study.

practice tests in a simulated environment

Take the AAMC practice tests close to your actual test day. They were very accurate and helpful.

Memorize only what is necessary, and practice is really the best way to prepare. Doing practice passages and questions as well as carefully reviewing after helps.
MCAT Preparation Strategies from fellow Yalies (con’t)

Taking the official AAMC practice tests was immensely helpful. My strategy was to do a quick self-review of the material using the Kaplan 2015 books, then to take the first official test. That narrowed my studying down to one section of the test. I took the second official test after studying for two months, and the final official test the week before the real MCAT.

Understand the test structure and the types of questions before you start studying. Identify weaknesses and focus on those for the first month of studying. Use ExamKrackers if you have a good grasp on material- otherwise use Kaplan. If you aren’t disciplined about setting up a study schedule and sticking to it, then definitely enroll in a class. Private tutors - if you’re financially capable of hiring one - are much better than group classes.

Draw diagrams for all material you go over in content review at the end of studying a topic or something similar. Just one of many methods of creating personal mnemonics and mental flow charts of all the material, which can be overwhelming if unorganized in your mind.

If I could afford to, I would take a class. Helps to keep you focused on learning the material when life stays busy.

Invest in the AAMC practice exams and take as many as possible under the conditions of the actual exam

Keep reviewing and re-reviewing the material over the course of your entire studying period – it’ll become second nature by the end!

I didn’t use a commercial company's course - I bought the 2nd edition Kaplan MCAT books, and used those for the majority of my studying. I bought them second-hand, and found them incredibly useful. From the AAMC, I just bought their practice tests, which were also extremely helpful; I also took the Princeton Review's free online practice test, which was a good prompt for study topics, but not particularly useful in its own right.

Use Kaplan review books, go through all books once. Then flash cards on topics you need to review

Doing practice tests and problems is the best way to study in my opinion.

I made detailed outlines of the material up until two weeks before the test. Then I spent the last two weeks integrating those details and drawing diagrams.

Give yourself at least 3 months of consistent study time, do as many practice problems as possible (either from AAMC, Khan, or Kaplan), prepare with friends (as long as it doesn't become distracting), practice self-care (sleep, spend some time doing things that make you happy, make time for others, etc.)

Don’t pay for a course, just buy commercially available practice tests and take a bunch under time conditions
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I would have taken more than 10+ tests. People are always stressed about content, but ultimately test taking skill counts a lot more than content at this point in most premed Yale careers.

Since I was taking the MCAT in January, I started studying over winter break. I took a AAMC practice test first to see where I was at and adjusted my studying from there. After reading through the Kaplan set materials, I just did a bunch of practice problems in areas that I know I needed to improve. The AAMC question banks and practice tests are very helpful!

I used a live online class from Princeton Review - I ended up using the timing strategy of the course but reading the material and not watching the classes. Make sure you recognize the hours of class time vs. personal study you want to dedicate to your prep. Take as many practice tests as you can.

I took relevant courses (physiology, biochemistry) right before taking the test and read books from multiple companies.

I just bought the Kaplan book set and two of the Princeton Review books (to gain access to more practice exams) and self-studied.

Minute details are not really tested, know important relations between the subjects (e.g. how gas laws are related to breathing)

The AAMC practice full-length tests were particularly helpful in simulating testing format in addition to providing practice.

I took the full length tests as close to test-day procedure as possible, and then fully reviewed every question on the tests, whether I got them right or not. I made sure I completely understood why I got each question right or wrong and what material I needed to review/learn. This was a nice way to focus my studying as it can be a bit overwhelming looking at the big picture.

Making flashcards to memorize material

take lots of practice tests! And don't read the passages in the science sections!

Kept a notebook of all practice questions I missed and reviewed it in the weeks leading up to the exam.

Practice questions is more helpful than content review, AAMC practice tests and question banks are good, I used the examcracker book set and liked their content review and regular questions. I used Khan Academy videos to supplement subjects I hadn't taken or was weaker in - their online questions were good. For full length practice tests, I used NextStep but those were difficult - I scored 10 points higher on the real MCAT than I did on average on my NextStep tests. I used Kaplan books too, but the content was I found denser than necessary. I would use the questions though. Altogether, practice, practice, practice, and practice. Use the AAMC question banks to get lots of that. And I’d recommend practicing several full-length exams AND replicating real test settings - no water, no breaks other than the designated ones, etc. It takes practice to gain stamina to take the exam at its length.
**MCAT Preparation Strategies from fellow Yalies (con’t)**

Not getting too hung up on the commercial company practice tests. They are focusing more on content whereas the AAMC practice tests are more similar to the actual exam

Khan Academy should be a staple for every person's studying

Use the Kaplan books. Supplement with Khan Academy, which is a lifesaver, especially for the Psych/Soc section. Take as many practice tests as you can. Don't focus on details - focus on patterns.

Take lots of practice tests and carefully review your answers afterwards!

Don't waste too much time on pure content review. Take practice tests and review each question afterwards, even the ones you got correct. Any concept you don't understand you should look up. Combine the content review with test practice. Do every single question released by the AAMC.

I found it really helpful to not look at the clock when preparing. There's so much material to go through that I felt like I needed to keep a tight schedule in order to get through it all. However, I found it more helpful to be more flexible with the pace at which I absorbed content. Best of luck!

Do many, many practice problems. Content review and practice.

Start early and map a week-by-week strategy. I did not buy the expensive Kaplan course—just the books—and I was studying while fully employed. I worked through the Kaplan books, taking notes and highlighting passages. For the last 8 weeks, followed this schedule: (1) Monday - Friday: do Khan Academy practice questions and review relevant Kaplan chapters, (2) Saturday: full practice test/or multiple AAMC question packs, (3) Sunday: review the test. In total, I probably studied 400 hours, and it paid off. I was able to earn a 522 (99th percentile) without a Kaplan course, without Yale's study resources, and while fully employed.

Alternate what you study so that you don't forget one subject while focusing on another.

Berkeley Review is the best for text material and practice tests. Next step is also good for practice tests

Kaplan books are excellent review of material, biochem is high yield so spend much time on that, take a variety of practice tests from different companies, complete all of the AAMC question packs and practice tests

Take more practice test and focus on timing. Review content as part through practice tests, instead of waiting to learn all material first before engaging with practice test.

emphasize practice over content review. you will never feel 10000% confident with all of the content and you dont need to in order to succeed. do all of the aamc practice material!
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Make a schedule and stick to it. I had to study over a longer period of time since I was working full-time, so the schedule was key to making sure I kept on track!

Can't stress the importance of taking practice tests! Keep practicing, even if you haven't covered all the material.

r/MCAT's 300-page Khan Academy P/S doc is pure gold

Take as many practice tests as possible. I took approximately 7 and was very happy with my score. Use Examkrakers 30-min exams too that come in their books, since those really are similar to the test. Also, it's good if you have ~2-3 weeks right before the test to be able to just study all day and synthesize everything you've been learning during the time you've been studying. But don't study the day before the test! Really helps to clear your mind so you can sit down and focus.

Find a study schedule that works for you and stick with it and take practice tests regularly.

Practice and memorization. The test demands that you memorize a certain amount of basic knowledge, but the I believe what makes the test difficult is the the structure of the questions and the style in which they're asked.

Take as many practice tests as you can and take them as if you're taking the actual MCAT! Set aside a Saturday or Sunday, get up at 7am, and take the exam straight through with the designated break times. Nothing makes you feel more comfortable on test day than simulating the actual exam.

Take plenty of practice tests, especially the ones provided by the AAMC themselves. Their material was quite representative of the types of questions on the actual MCAT, so if you have the money, I highly recommend investing in the AAMC's resources.

Created quizlet vocab cards for all chapters of all MCAT review books.

I used the Kaplan books but did not purchase the classroom or video courses, and I found that using those books in combination with the Khan Academy videos was a very useful strategy for gaining the material and assistance I needed in a slightly more economical manner. I also found making quizlets for essentially all of psychology and significant parts of biology very useful for memorizing the necessary terms. Same with physical flashcards for formulas and equations. I also definitely would recommend leaving a week or so right before the test completely free to JUST study every day, that definitely helped a lot.

Content review for 1-2 months, then practice questions for 1-2 months, then 1 month of full practice exams 2-3 times / week.

Taking a practice test a week to get a feeling for the pacing so that test day does not seem as jarring.
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I found that rather than going through all the material that might be covered on the exam, it was more helpful to take practice exams as often as I could without burning out to get used to the format and length of the exam.

Conclusion is practice is best form of preparation, but one way or style does not fit all.

Find what works best for you and you will find success!