

Resources

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Pre-Med Student FAQ's

1. Can I take Physics outside TAMU?

Yes you can, many medical schools will accept the community college or transfer course, however some do not. One I know of is Baylor School of Medicine in Houston, and it is becoming the trend of private medical schools. Therefore, to be the most safe and the best applicant, Physics at TAMU is suggested. Many of us on the officer team have taken the two courses at A&M without too much issue. Yes the class is very difficult, but you need to learn the concepts (especially those in Physics 2) in order to perform well on the MCAT anyways. The physics lab at TAMU is fairly easy, and almost never takes more than 40 minutes, and is actually easier than at some community colleges. The class is also curved a lot here, and if you can get Dr. Ford, you're set for a good semester, as he makes the exams and has lots of practice available.

2. What do I need to major in?

You can major in anything you want as long as long as the courses required by med school are finished before you enter the school. Specific prereq info for Texas can be found [here](#), but this usually means 2 semesters of Gen Chem & lab, 2 semesters of OChem & lab, 2 semesters of Biology & lab, 1 semester of Statistics, 2 semesters of Physics & lab, 1 semester of Biochem, and 2 semesters of English (Biochem is not always a required course but the subject is on the MCAT). Your major can be science intense, like Genetics/Biochemistry or Biomedical Sciences, where these prerequisites are met during the degree plan. This may be a more typical route, however your classes

will be rigorous. Another route is to choose a major that is less science and math-intensive, like Psychology, Public Health, liberal arts majors, etc. With these majors, you will have to add some of the coursework to your degree plan, but you get to learn about subjects outside of the medical realm. Choose whatever major fits your interest and plans better!

3. What do I need to do to become competitive?

- Competitive GPA (3.5+ overall or for last 60 hours is usually substantial)
- Competitive MCAT (505 is a good goal score- if you have a lower GPA, you'll need a higher MCAT score, or you can have a 4.0 GPA and lower MCAT score.)
- Clinical exposure hours (shadowing/scribe/etc)
- Community Service hours
- Work ethic, perseverance, empathy, listening skills, leadership, responsibility, and passion for community
- Knowledge of the field and a vision to help your future patients

4. How many hours do I need of:

-Shadowing, research, community service, etc.

- 100-200 community service hours is a good start, I would definitely not apply with less than 100. Community service hours are probably the most important in terms of quantity, emphasis if it's a commitment over multiple years, and quality.
- Shadowing/ Medical Exposure: there's no specific answer for this one. You need to have enough exposure to be able to hold a conversation about patient care, why you want to be a doctor, different specialties, how you want to change the field, etc. Admissions committees are aware of how difficult it is to get shadowing opportunities between HIPAA and our new pandemic, so these hours are more about quality than quantity. Pre-med advisors can help you with this question on an individual basis. Remember, clinical experience doesn't have to just be shadowing. You can be an ER scribe, medical assistant in a clinic, secretary in a clinic/hospital, etc. A good way I figured out how to do this is to concentrate on

volunteering and working in College Station during the school year, and shadow in Houston or Austin during summer and winter breaks, where more opportunities may be available.

- Research is not required but you should have involvement in something outside of school, volunteering, and shadowing. This can be research, or it can be a leadership role, or an extracurricular. What you choose should make you happy and refine skills of yours, not just check a box.

5. I hate being in lab, do I have to do research?

Unless required by your degree plan for your major (like Biochemistry/Genetics), you do not have to do research. I would say that there are different labs and different experiences out there, so just because you hate the lab, doesn't mean you have to completely rule it out. However, if you are gaining medical field exposure through working, volunteering, or shadowing, and building your competitiveness in other ways, research is not necessary to think about. Remember anything mentioned in your application will be asked about in your med school interview- so make sure you know what your time is going towards, and that you're passionate about it!

6. When do I need to take the MCAT?

Take the MCAT when you're ready, you have time to study properly, and when you've covered most of the material during your undergraduate career already. If you are following a traditional route, where you will graduate in four years and hope to **enter** medical school the summer after graduating, you will **apply** the May **before you graduate**. This means you will need your MCAT scores by May of the year before you intend to graduate, or 1 year and 3 months before you enter medical school. MCAT scores take a month to receive after taking the exam, so you will need to figure out which Fall you are planning to enter medical school and work backwards. It is important to remember that a non-traditional route, or taking more than four years, is totally fine. The best way to take the MCAT is to begin studying after you've initially learned the subjects covered in your undergraduate career- Biochem, Physics, Biology, General

and Organic Chemistry, Sociology/Psychology, and a section based on comprehension of articles called CARS. This is an 8 hour exam so you need to study for 3-6 months.

7. How do I study for the MCAT/which prep course(s) do you recommend?

In general, the best option is to buy a prep course which comes with books, material, videos, and the brand's practice tests as well as a calendar with structure for the time you have allotted to study. Pre-Medical Society has partnerships with two companies to bring discounted courses to our members. You can contact our vice president for more info. To access one of the discounts below, contact [one of the officers](#).

Kaplan- 15% discount off courses for members & officer team discount

Next Step-15% member discount off courses, free practice exam, and free interactive study calendar & officer team discount

You can buy additional practice tests and less expensive study materials from AAMC, the committee which administers the MCAT, [here](#). You can also purchase books from Kaplan, Next Step/Blueprint, Princeton Review, etc for less expensive than their courses.

8. What is the OPSA Portal?

This is a free service that the Office of Professional School Advising (our Premed advisor, Rachel is located here) offers. Letters of evaluation are collected for students and former students applying to medical or dental school through this portal, and the office also makes a letter, called the HPAC letter, which is a great addition to your medical school application. This service provides students with the assurance that proper materials are being submitted to the schools they have selected. Portal workshops are offered by OPSA every year, and you should sign up for one the fall before you apply (you apply in May).

9. Currently, what do I do about S/U?

Take the letter grades, it will be the most competitive option, unless you are failing, then q-drop! Talk to a premed advisor. This semester may or may not be counted GPA wise, but pass/fail options set you up for failure if that grading option is not accepted by a medical school.

10. What schools should I apply to?

Definitely all in-state schools. TMDSAS is a great portal which allows you to apply to 8 schools in the state of Texas (more each year) at once, for one price. AACOM, which is used for D.O. schools also allows you to apply for a few more Texas schools, as well as D.O. schools in the rest of the states. AMCAS is the application for M.D. schools in the rest of the U.S. The more schools you apply to, the better your chances. There's no reason not to at least do all in-state schools since it's not very expensive for applications or for tuition compared to almost all out of state schools.

11. What is the difference between DO & MD?

The simple answer is that both an MD (Doctor of Medicine) and a DO (Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine) are doctors licensed to practice in the United States. They are similarly educated and certified, but there are differences in their training and philosophy of patient care. As part of their medical education, DOs receive additional musculoskeletal training known as osteopathic manipulative treatment (OMT), as well as everything taught in an allopathic (M.D.) medical school. DO and MD training move more and more close to each other every year, and both types of schools educate doctors who go into all fields. You should apply everywhere you can, and choose the school with the mission and lifestyle you see yourself in for four years.

12. Should I accept my AP/IP/CLEP credits?

If the credit fits in your degree plan and fulfills a required course, accept it. If not, do not accept it as you may need the extra hours between now and when you graduate. Many people do not run into the issue, but if you complete over 150 hours, you have to pay out-of-state resident tuition rates, which are about double the in-state tuition. This

problem often arises for transfer students or those who change their major. Talk to your advisor with specific questions.

13. If I have bad grades can I still be a doctor?

Yes- everybody's journey is different, and success is not always linear. If your application isn't competitive enough, you need to address it in order to matriculate into medical school- this can be in terms of service hours, clinical exposure hours, or academic metrics. If your GPA is not strong right now, the best thing to do as a Pre-Med is to focus on addressing why that is and learning new studying skills. You should try to aim for an upward trend after grade stumbles, and if your grades or GPA have not recovered enough by the time you graduate from undergraduate, you can consider taking extra science classes or pursuing a Master's or certificate program to demonstrate your acclimation to the academic rigor and passion for the field. Some programs are specially designed for students who want to go to a professional health school and need to improve their application and even accept MCAT scores instead of GRE scores. (Texas A&M BIMS Masters non thesis or thesis- 2 years, TCOM Masters of Medical Sciences) You can also pursue master's or certificate's in other science related fields.