



# HOW TO STUDY FOR THE MCAT:

Advice from actual 520+ students



## The Necessities



We want you to know what to use. So, from the people here at Premier MCAT Prep who have taken the exam and killed it, these are the absolute MUST haves for the MCAT.

- **Anki:** Arguably the most important in your long term recall. This is a spaced-repetition flashcard program that helps people learn. We recommend using the JackSparrow deck, as it is the most thorough. Some of our students have had good success with the Anking MCAT deck as well.
- **Books:** Yes, you need some books. We recommend using the Kaplan books. We are working on an entirely free resource that covers EVERYTHING, but this takes a lot of time and cross-checking, so hang in there, You need all of the Kaplan books, except for Psych/Soc.
- **Practice Questions:** There are a LOT of practice materials out there. Some of the best resources can be found under our “Free resources” section on our website. Jack Westin is a fantastic resource for now, though we plan to create a bank of our own. We also offer full lengths exams. We warn against UWorld, however, because it is typically measurably more difficult than actual test questions. The MCAT is a lot about strategy, not just content.
- **More Books:** What we mean is, READ. The CARS section is a lot of technique, but it is largely reading comprehension. The more you read throughout your studying (and not just MCAT content), the better you will usually score.
- **Tutoring:** If you want to kill the exam, the best way is to learn how to from people who already killed it. That’s where we come in (for now).

## The Number One Question?



Where do I start?

**Open those books and start from chapter one.** It may seem overwhelming at first, but trust us, it gets easier as you progress. The more you know, the more confident you will be, and it forms a positive feedback loop that gets you to places you never even knew possible. It doesn’t matter which Kaplan book, but one of them.



## SPACED REPETITION TECHNIQUE

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Anki. It's will probably be one of the flashcard programs you use most throughout your MCAT studying (and usually beyond). Spaced repetition is a learning technique that involves increasing intervals of time between subsequent review of previously learned material to exploit the psychological spacing effect. The Jack Sparrow deck is a well-known Anki deck used by many students preparing for the MCAT. It was created by a Reddit user named Jacksparrow2048 and has been updated over time. The deck is comprehensive and covers all sections of the MCAT, including the psych/soc section. It aligns very closely with the Kaplan books (though we are working on updated books of our own), so you can unsuspend cards as you read and study.

- **Employ Anki:** Previously made decks are most often being continuously updated. There are multiple studies demonstrating spaced repetition with flash cards is one of the best ways to learn. The new FRS algorithm is scientifically supported to be the fastest way to retain information over longer periods of time.
- **Begin with Active Recall:** Initiate active recall by trying to recall information from memory without depending on external prompts. This method fortifies memory recall and helps pinpoint areas that need additional attention.
- **Arrange Your Learning Resources:** Break down your study material into digestible sections or subjects. This approach aids in devising a systematic plan for revision sessions.
- **Identify Ideal Review Intervals:** Determine the best intervals for revisiting each subject based on your grasp and comprehension of the content. Initially, shorter intervals may be necessary, but as you become more proficient, you can extend these intervals.
- **Extend Interval Duration Gradually:** As you revise the material, lengthen the intervals between repetitions. For instance, if you initially revisit a subject after one day, extend the interval to three days or a week for subsequent revisions.
- **Give Priority to Challenging Concepts:** Concentrate more on difficult or unfamiliar subjects during revision sessions, as spaced repetition aids in reinforcing these areas and enhancing understanding.
- **Integrate Spaced Repetition into Your Study Routine:** Dedicate specific study sessions exclusively to spaced repetition. Incorporate it into your study regimen along with other revision techniques like practice problems, active reading, and note-taking.



## THE POMODORO TECHNIQUE

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The Pomodoro Technique is an efficient time management and study approach, particularly for pre-med students preparing for the MCAT. Break study periods into intense work intervals (usually 25 minutes, but can be altered) with five-minute breaks. The strategy, which employs time blocks and regular breaks, attempts to increase productivity and focus.

The technique uses a timer to divide study sessions into manageable intervals called "Pomodoros." Each Pomodoro is 25 minutes of continuous work, followed by a five-minute break. Some students prefer a 55 minute - 15 minute split. After completing four Pomodoro sessions, take a lengthier break, usually 15 to 30 minutes, before starting another set.

People VERY often build this into their Anki studying - there are even timers for it.

### What's the best way to use the Pomodoro technique?

- **Plan Your Tasks:** Outline the tasks or subjects you want to focus on during each Pomodoro interval.
- **Eliminate Distractions:** Put your phone away! No social media. It makes a HUGE difference!
- **Adjust Pomodoro Length:** Try a few different times for your Pomodoro timer. Some students like slightly longer timings.

### Why does this technique work?

- **Time Management:** By segmenting study periods into concentrated chunks, avoiding burnout, and boosting productivity, it aids in efficient time management.
- **Focus and Concentration:** Focus is enhanced, and mental weariness is avoided while working in shorter bursts with planned breaks.
- **Task Completion:** By encouraging students to finish assignments within allotted time, the structured method fosters a sense of achievement.

### More tips from us:

- **Use MCAT sections:** Break up your studying into smaller chunks, to make it more manageable
- **Use Interleaving:** Uhh, what? We talk about it on the next page. Basically, study several topics a day, rather than just one.
- **Use Breaks, as Breaks:** You should be resting, relaxing, disconnecting for those few minutes you have off. Your brain will thank you.



## MNEMONICS

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This general phrase refers to memory-enhancing techniques that aid in the encoding and retrieval of information. Mnemonics use vivid images, rhymes, acronyms, or relationships to make difficult information simpler to remember.

Mnemonics are successful because they involve active learning. Adding a distinct visual or audio element to information enhances its recall. This method improves memory and recall, particularly for complicated and abstract concepts commonly encountered during MCAT preparation.

Mnemonics can be acronyms (with each letter representing a word), rhymes, tunes, or visual pictures. The goal is to make them meaningful and interesting. The best ones are usually dirty ones, but you didn't hear that from us.

Remember to practice applying your mnemonic to recall information after you've developed or learnt it! Over time, this should improve your memory and make recall easier.

## INTERLEAVING

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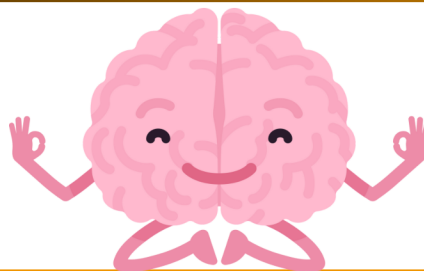
Interleaving is a study approach in which several topics or themes are combined during study sessions rather than focusing on one at a time. This strategy differs from the more traditional methodology of blocked practice, where you learn one idea thoroughly before going on to the next.

Interleaving is based on the cognitive effort necessary to switch tasks and recall various types of information. This method helps the brain to build many associations with the material, resulting in better long-term retention and recall. It aids in distinguishing between identical concepts, especially important for complicated courses like MCAT preparation.

Consider studying a combination of biology, chemistry, and physics in each session, rather than focusing solely on one area. Each item should be reviewed and practiced on a regular basis, but not in order. The goal is to keep the brain guessing what will happen next, which promotes better learning and recall.

Remember though, this technique is VERY individual. Some have huge success with it, whereas others prefer the more known ways.

## ACTIVE RECALL



We use active recall all the time when preparing for the MCAT, whether we realize it or not. Active recall is the process of recalling information from memory without the use of external signals. To reinforce learning and increase long-term retention, you challenge yourself to retain material without using your notes or textbooks.

This strategy varies from passive review, which involves simply reading or rereading information without actively participating. This technique improves neuronal connections, making it simpler to recall knowledge on test day!

Incorporate active recall into your study habits by combining it with other tactics like flashcards, practice quizzes, and teaching the topic to others. In addition, employ active recall during frequent review sessions to enhance learning and retain knowledge.

### How do I use active recall in my studying?

- **Write Questions:** Predict what you think the test writers will write. It is more time consuming, but generally it is effective in helping you actively use the information in a new way.
- **Test Yourself:** After a couple of days (when you might have forgotten the info), answer the questions you wrote yourself. It is, in a way, another form of spaced-repetition.
- **Review and Repeat:** Review your questions (and more importantly, answers). Did you really understand them? Did you guess? These are all things you must actively answer for yourself.
- **Use Spaced Repetition:** Did you forget the info? Then this is for you!! Time to make a flashcard (or a couple) based on what you got wrong. This is what we do in medical school too.

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Highlight    Strikethrough    Flag for Review

**Passage 1**  
Questions 4-9 are associated with the following passage.

Several alkenes can be simply hydrated by treating them with a strong acid in the presence of water. The disadvantage of this approach is that a carbocation is formed along the mechanistic pathway, which allows for rearrangements, as demonstrated in the sulfuric acid-catalyzed hydration of 3,3-dimethylbut-1-ene here:

The oxymercuration-demercuration sequence, as depicted below, is one solution to this problem:

Consider the hydration of 3,6-dimethylcyclohex-1-ene given two distinct circumstances, both of which may yield four distinct alcohol products:

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Section	Score	Confidence Band <sup>1</sup>	Percentile Rank of Score <sup>2</sup>	Score Profile <sup>3</sup>
Chemical and Physical Foundations of Biological Systems	132	131 ◀ 132	100%	118   125   132
Critical Analysis and Reasoning Skills	132	131 ◀ 132	100%	118   125   132
Biological and Biochemical Foundations of Living Systems	132	131 ◀ 132	100%	118   125   132
Psychological, Social, and Biological Foundations of Behavior	132	131 ◀ 132	100%	118   125   132
<b>MCAT Total</b>	<b>528</b>	<b>526</b> ◀ <b>528</b>	<b>100%</b>	

It seems overwhelming at first, because it TOTALLY is. But we want to make it the best experience possible for you. Let our tutors guide you onto the path you want to be on, and you'll kick the MCAT's butt. And yes, that score report is from one of our students!