

MCAT 2015: What's Hype, What's Real, What You Can Do Today

Dr. Anthony Lafond

MCAT Content Director, Next Step Test Prep

Anthony@NextStepTestPrep.com



NextStep
TEST PREP.com

Introductions

- Dr. Anthony Lafond
- MCAT Content Director of Next Step Test Preparation
- Worked with thousands of MCAT students over the last 12 years
- Personally achieved a 40+ MCAT
- Holds an MD/PhD from Rutgers – New Jersey Medical School



- The MCAT in Admissions

- What's Changing? What's not?

- What Should You Do *Today*?

What is the MCAT? Who takes it?

The MCAT is required by students applying to all AAMC med schools.

While the importance of the MCAT varies by admissions department, generally the MCAT and GPA are by far the largest factors in admissions decisions.

Put another way – the MCAT is more important in med school admissions than SAT and ACT are in college admissions.

The MCAT serves important functions to admissions committees

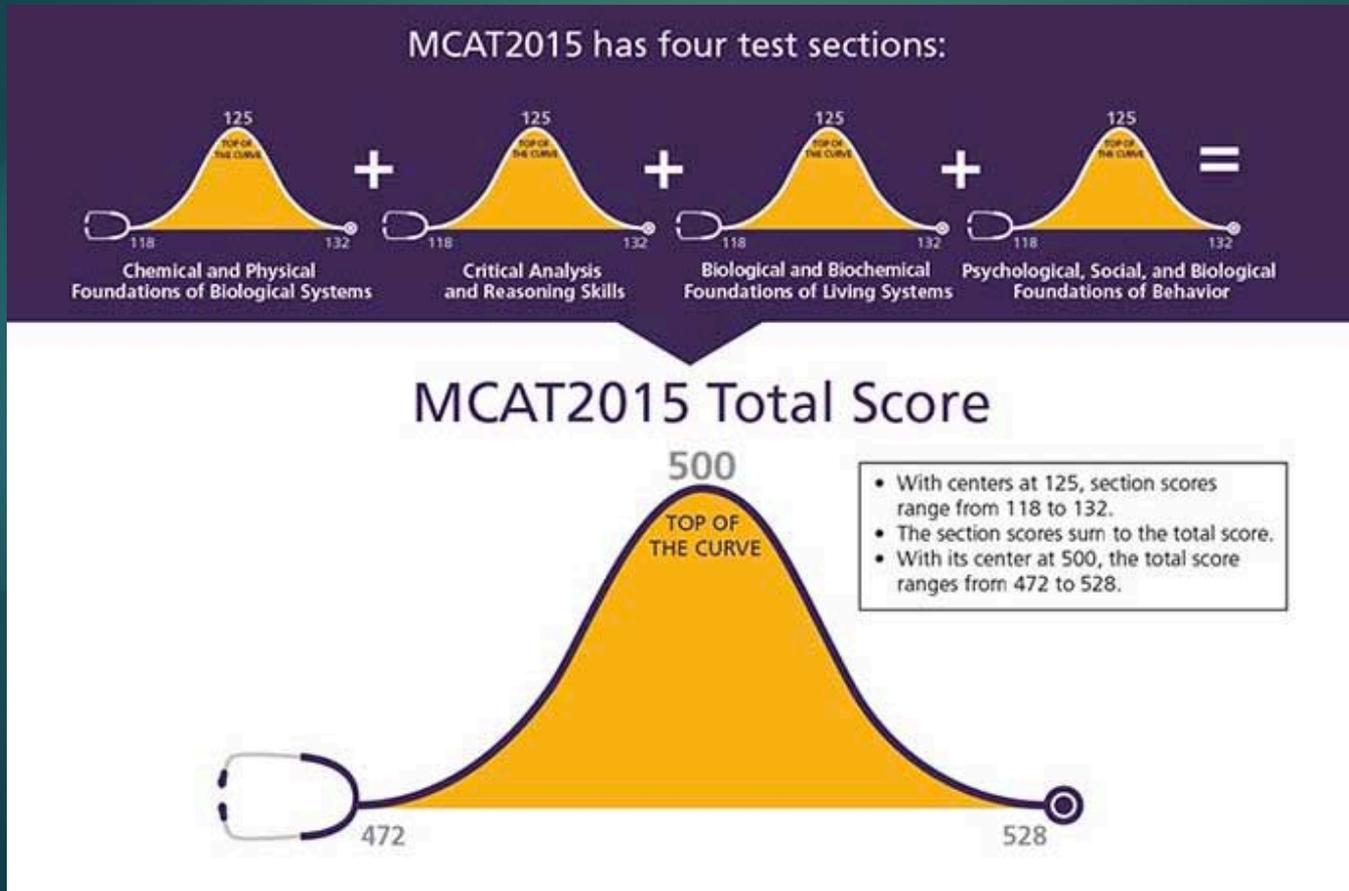
- Standardize applicants across undergraduate institutions
- Test med-school applicable skills (yes, you will use these skills!)
- Predict first-year success



But, importantly, it does NOT test your ability as a doctor.

How is the test scored?

- **Raw score:** number of questions right out of total
- **Scaled score:** 118-132 on each section, 472 – 528 total
- **Percentile rank:** How many students scored below you





- The MCAT in Admissions

- What's Changing? What's not?

- What Should You Do *Today*?

Four Sections. Seven Sciences. 7-9 Hours of your Life

Chemical Foundations: 95 min

Critical Analysis: 90 min

The Bio Section: 95 min

The Psych Section: 95 min

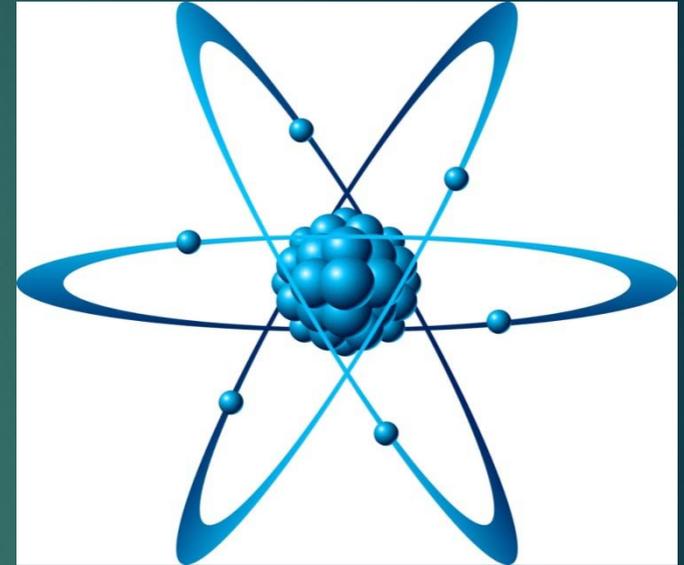
Chemical Foundations: Physics, Gen Chem, Organic Chem, Biochem

Bio: Biology and Biochem

Psych: Psychology and Sociology

Hard Sciences and Social Sciences

- 95 minutes, 59 Q's, 10 Passages
- It's NOT a science test, actually tests:
 - Critical reading/thinking
 - Time / Anxiety management
 - Problem-solving skills
 - Some pure recall
- Requires only basic science: one year of freshman chem, physics, bio, organic, one semester of biochem, psych, soc
- Fundamentally the same as the old MCAT – a test of critical reading.



Psychology Practice Problem

A psychologist conducts an experiment in which a dog is trained to roll over. The dog has a small device strapped to its back. Rolling over depresses a button on the device. If the dog rolls over in time, the button is pressed and the device does not shock the dog. This form of conditioning would best be described as using:

- A. negative reinforcement through escape
- B. negative punishment
- C. negative reinforcement through avoidance
- D. positive reinforcement

O-Chem Practice Problem

Which compound can form hydrogen bonds?

I. R-COOH

II. R-NH_2

III. CH_4

A. I only

B. II only

C. III only

D. I and II

Critical Analysis: Like verbal but more so



Like the ACT/SAT, except much MUCH harder.

- 9 passages covering the humanities and social sciences
- 53 total questions
- The challenge: answer choices are cleverly designed for you to get them wrong
- Significantly harder than the prior version due to fatigue and focus. More time per passage, but that may not be good!

- 
- The MCAT in Admissions
 - What's Changing? What's not?
 - What Should You Do *Today*?



Step 1: Take the one official practice MCAT. Watch our review videos!

Step 2: Get our free MCAT content transition guide!

Step 3: MCAT Question of the Day!

Step 4: Register for the test and make a plan!

Applying early can have big benefits

Almost all med schools practice “rolling admissions.” There are more seats available in

August than there are in **January**.

What skills do I need to build?

Critical Reading.

Ok, and science content, and time management, and tolerance for pressure.

What materials should I use?

Good question.

- Start with getting ALL official AAMC materials: practice test, official guide, and practice sets
- Use our AAMC practice test review videos
- Next, use the official AAMC partner: the Khan Academy
- Finally, get a good set of prep books and practice tests from a reputable company like Next Step.

How many tests should I take?

Taking full tests under timed conditions is one of the most important parts of MCAT prep

You wouldn't consider yourself ready to take the test until you've done something like 6-8 full practice tests.

There is only 1 official AAMC practice test for 2015, meaning you will need to buy additional materials.



How many times should you take the MCAT?

Once.

- **Don't** use the official test, as your practice test
- Med schools get to see ALL of your scores and they might:
 - Take the most recent score
 - Take the highest score
 - Take the highest of each section score
 - Average your scores (most common)
- Further, students may only take the MCAT a limited number of times.

Will you improve on a retake?

Be careful! As many as 30% of test-takers see a DROP in their second MCAT score, and another 10-20% see NO CHANGE in their retake.

When to re-test:

- Your score is so low you won't even bother applying with it
- Something disastrous happened on the day of the exam (left half a section blank, had the flu, etc)
- You scored lower than your lowest practice test
- You can point to a specific deficiency in your MCAT prep (only studied with bargain MCAT prep books, did not yet take physics, etc.)

Ideal Prep Calendars

Most students take 3-4 months of full time work to prepare for the exam.

- Part time prep schedule will take 5 to 6 months.
- Less than a month is not enough time to reach your top score
- Plan to take the MCAT in the spring the calendar year before you want to start med school:
 - Want to start in Fall 2016? Test in April/May/June of 2015

Registering for the MCAT

- Register for your chosen test center early (especially in major metro areas)
- Fees include:
 - MCAT Registration \$300
 - AMCAS \$160
 - Late Registration \$50
 - Test Center Change \$125



<https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/mcat/reserving/>

A basic 3-month study plan

If you are working with a tutor or taking a course, a professional will recommend a study plan for you.

If you are studying on your own, consider the following outline:

Month 1:

- Take a diagnostic exam; purchase prep books and AAMC materials
- Do 2-3 chapters a day from your prep books to review all content
- Start doing reading passages every day to build up your critical analysis skills

Month 2:

- Finish content review, and go back to your books as needed
- Start taking a full test once a week
- Analyze every practice question carefully! LESSONS LEARNED

Month 3:

- Complete remaining exams, re-take your diagnostic
- Complete any other AAMC practice questions you have

Top 10 MCAT Strategies

1. Critical Analysis! Start early to find YOUR strategy
2. Passage analysis: Note-taking
3. Passage analysis: Highlighting
4. Passage analysis: Skimming
5. Science Content: the Rule of 2's
6. Equations: Don't just memorize, *understand*
7. Use your time effectively: skip a passage
8. Lessons Learned Journal
9. Study Group
10. Know what to expect on Test Day



MCAT Prep Options



	Self-Study	Prep Course	1 - on - 1 Tutoring
PROS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lowest price (~\$500)• Self-paced• Focus on need areas• Roughly 30% of test-takers report self-study	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Generally good materials• Schedules keep students on pace	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Study plan completely tailored• Help identifying and fixing weak areas• Work on concepts until <i>you</i> understand them
CONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hard to know what you don't know• Few resources to answer questions• Score plateaus• Every point counts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of personal attention• Valuable time devoted to unnecessary areas• \$\$\$\$	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Costs more than self-study• <i>Used</i> to cost 3-4x more than a prep course

Thank you for listening!

Contact me if you've any questions about the
MCAT or coming test change.

 LIKE US
ON FACEBOOK

<https://www.facebook.com/nextsteptestprepmcat>

 FOLLOW US
ON TWITTER

[@NextStepPrep](https://twitter.com/NextStepPrep)

Dr. Anthony Lafond

Anthony@NextStepTestPrep.com

www.nextsteptestprep.com

888-530-NEXT

NextStep
TEST PREP.com