

"I didn't use any of the study courses, as they're incredibly expensive. Instead, I bought the individual subject area review books from Kaplan (one book each for bio sciences, physical sciences, and verbal reasoning). I started taking practice tests (the ones you buy online from AAMC) before studying/reviewing material (3 years removed from college) to establish a baseline score that I knew I'd only improve from. Then I kept taking practice tests while simultaneously reviewing all the material. In hindsight, I think this was a great approach for me as it gave me an initial boost of momentum that kept reinforcing itself as time went on by being able to see the continual improvement. In the end, I found it useful to review the science subjects, but the overwhelming improvement came simply by familiarizing myself with the format of the test and deciphering how to think myself through MCAT questions. You don't have to know/remember everything you learned in undergrad science courses, it's more important to learn how the MCAT works. There's very little point in reviewing verbal reasoning study guides, in my opinion. I gained the most by just taking the practice tests and reviewing the answers with feedback. If I can say only one thing: don't be scared! I started off with a 26 and improved linearly in a couple of months up to a 35."

Gustavus Medical School applicant 2012

"I studied for the MCAT on my own time during J-term 2011, basically every hour that I wasn't at work. I studied my Organic Chemistry textbook, General Physics textbook, Kaplan MCAT Advanced ISBN: 9781419552304, The Princeton Review MCAT Workbook ISBN: 9780375766312, and The Official Guide to the MCAT Exam 1st Edition ISBN: 978157740885. I did not take any courses to study for the MCAT."

Gustavus Medical School applicant 2012

"I used the Examcrackers MCAT prep book. I did not take a prep course. I don't know if you've seen the particular Preparing for the MCAT Exam FAQ section on the AAMC site, but I think it is worth a look regarding MCAT prep courses. I remember that reading this directly from the AAMC site influenced my decision not to take a course. Since I took my MCAT in mid-September 2010 (start of my Junior year), I spent June, July, and early August taking a Physics class, working, and finding time to study when I was free from those two things. I'd say that on average, I spent 3-4 hours a week studying during this time. After the first week of August, my physics class ended and my work schedule was decreased so that I had one month to devote more completely to studying. I'd estimate I studied 10-15 hours a week during mid and late August and early September. So, to summarize, I spent about three total months studying. During the first two months I studied 3-4 hours a week, and during the last month I studied 10-15 hours a week."

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"I studied from the Princeton review MCAT book for a J-term, from 9 - 3 every weekday. In the morning, until 11:30 am, I reviewed material and in the afternoon, I did practice passages. For the second time I took it, I did practice exams online (they came with the book), and even more practice passages, but did not review material as much."

Gustavus Medical School applicant 2012