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# How to Start Studying for the MCAT as Community College and 1st & 2nd Year Undergrad



# Meet Your Speaker



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MedSchoolCoach**



# Introduction

What we'll cover in today's webinar



Strategies for Preparing for Each Section of the MCAT



How to Develop Study Skills as a Community College or 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> year undergraduate student



MCAT Prep by MedSchoolCoach



# Why is the MCAT Chem/Phys section so difficult?

(The Chemical and Physical Foundations of Biological Systems)

1. Integrates a broad range of subjects
2. Luck Factor
3. Requires a complex set of reasoning skills
4. Math
  - Time pressure from calculation questions
  - Equations and constants

## Subjects

- 30% General Chemistry
- 25% Biochemistry
- 25% Physics
- 15% Organic Chemistry
- 5% Biology

## Skills Tested

- Knowledge of scientific concepts and principles
- Scientific reasoning and problem solving
- Reasoning about the design and execution of research
- Data-based and statistical reasoning

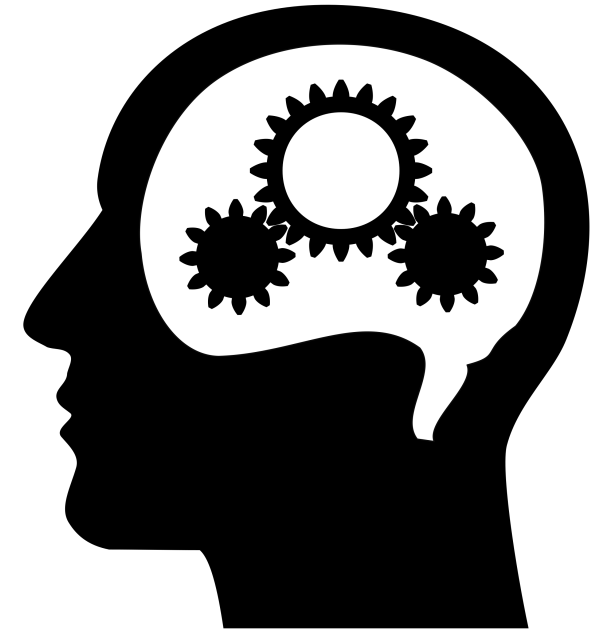
# Tip 1: Practice, Practice, Practice

- A strong foundation in content is important, but not enough
- Simulate MCAT conditions (timed, no calculator, multiple choice, passages, etc.)
- Review your practice problems
- Devote additional time to your weaknesses



# Tip 2: Commit high yield content to memory

- Keep a running list of physics/chemistry equations in your notebook
- Review those formulas often
- Memorize the key biochemical pathways and the amino acids
- Study important lab techniques in chemistry and biochemistry





# Why is the MCAT CARS section so difficult?

Critical Analysis and Reasoning Skills

1. No content knowledge required
2. Critical analysis and reasoning skills can be difficult to obtain
3. Passages cover a variety of disciplines (humanities and social studies)
4. Time pressure (90 minutes, 9 passages, 53 questions)

## Humanities Disciplines

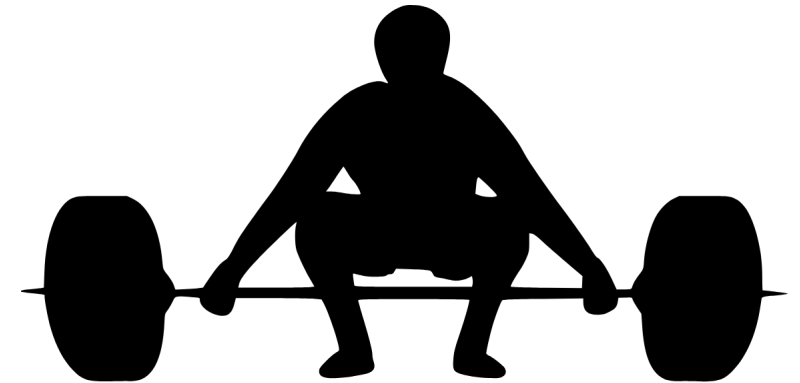
- ☑ Architecture
- ☑ Art
- ☑ Dance
- ☑ Ethics
- ☑ Literature
- ☑ Music
- ☑ Philosophy
- ☑ Popular Culture
- ☑ Religion
- ☑ Theater
- ☑ Studies of Diverse Cultures

## Social Studies Disciplines

- ☑ Anthropology
- ☑ Archaeology
- ☑ Economics
- ☑ Education
- ☑ Geography
- ☑ History
- ☑ Linguistics
- ☑ Political Science
- ☑ Population Health
- ☑ Psychology
- ☑ Sociology
- ☑ Studies of Diverse Cultures

# Tip 1: CARS is like strength training: you have to do some heavy lifting to see any gains

- Regular CARS practice is the best way to improve your score in this section.
  - If you are close to your CARS goal score 1-2 passages per day is sufficient.
  - If you are far from your CARS goal score you need to add even more practice.
- Teaching others is an amazing way to learn! With a friend who is also studying for the MCAT, presenting CARS passages to each other back and forth will help get you both into the mind of the test makers.





# Tip 2: Who is the author?

- Try to paint an image of the author in your head based on their opinions
- Language of emphasis like “undoubtedly, surely, especially” are the best places to locate the author’s opinion.
- Also, you need to figure out the audience of the piece and why the author bothered to write it in the first place. Every author has a reason for why they wrote a piece, so what is that reason?





# Why is the MCAT Bio/Biochem section so difficult?

(The Biological and Biochemical Foundations of Living Systems)

1. Covers a broad range of topics
2. Requires a complex set of reasoning skills
3. Complex research passages

## Subjects

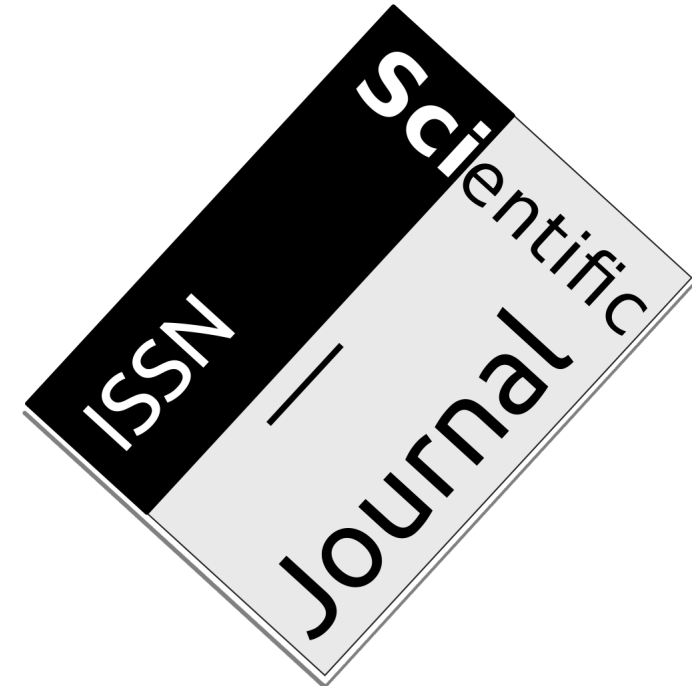
- 65% Biology
- 25% Biochemistry
- 5% General Chemistry
- 5% Organic Chemistry

## Skills Tested

- Knowledge of scientific concepts and principles
- Scientific reasoning and problem solving
- Reasoning about the design and execution of research
- Data-based and statistical reasoning

# Tip 1: Practice analyzing scientific literature

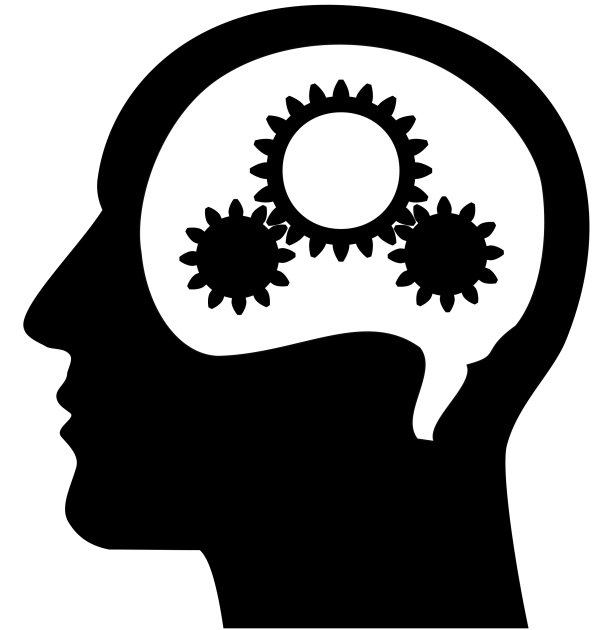
- Try reading cover publications from scientific journals in your free time
- While reading the passages, try summarizing figures/graphs/tables
- For signaling pathways, draw a quick signaling map





# Tip 2: Study using high yield strategies

- Build time into your study schedule to review previously learned concepts
- Commit frequently tested concepts to memory
- Organize notes into concept maps, Venn diagrams, etc.
- Try explaining detailed concepts/systems to a friend





# Why is the MCAT Psych/Soc section so difficult?

The Psychological, Social, and Biological Foundations of Behavior

1. A lot of vocabulary terms and names that need to be memorized
2. Newest section of the MCAT
3. Research-focused passages
4. Exam fatigue

## Subjects

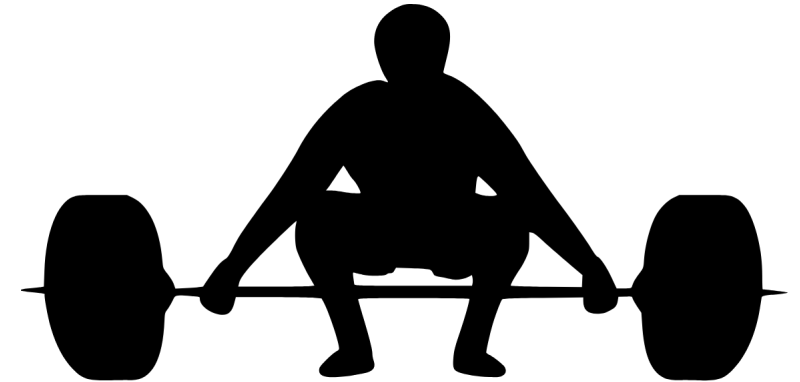
- 65% Psychology
- 30% Sociology
- 5% Biology

## Skills Tested

- Knowledge of scientific concepts and principles
- Scientific reasoning and problem solving
- Reasoning about the design and execution of research
- Data-based and statistical reasoning

# Tip 1: Address Content Issues Early On

- Psych/Soc is highly memorization-based unlike some of the other science sections.
- In order to improve your score, it is important to have a thorough review of the relevant MCAT content.
- This may vary from what you've learned in classes, so reading an entire Psych/Soc MCAT book is crucial. You should review the terms several times throughout your studies.





# Tip 2: Read and Read Again

- Because many of the terms for memorization are similar, you must carefully read the passage and question stem to identify which answer choice is the best fit.
- After you choose an answer, reread the question in your head with each answer choice. You should be able to conclusively say why the other answer choices are wrong (process of elimination).
- Many students finish this section early, so always use the extra time to your advantage! First, review any questions you flagged. Then, review every question if you have time. Even a few missed questions in this section will significantly lower your score.



- Don't take on additional majors/minors because you want to "stand out" or "impress" medical school admissions committees
- Plan out your course schedule years in advance
- Research different classes and professors
- Don't pack too many difficult courses together





- Learn to use a calendar and map out your exams at the start of each semester/quarter
- Obtain all the study materials that you need to succeed in the class
- Be a good student. Go to class and pay attention. Consistency is important.
- Go to office hours or find and utilize other sources of help
- Use previous exams as practice



- Some students benefit a lot from studying with others while other students do better with independent study
- Some students enjoy studying in the library while others prefer cafés or their bedroom
- Some students like to take notes, make study guides, or create flashcards for review
- Some students like to go class and others like to watch class recordings



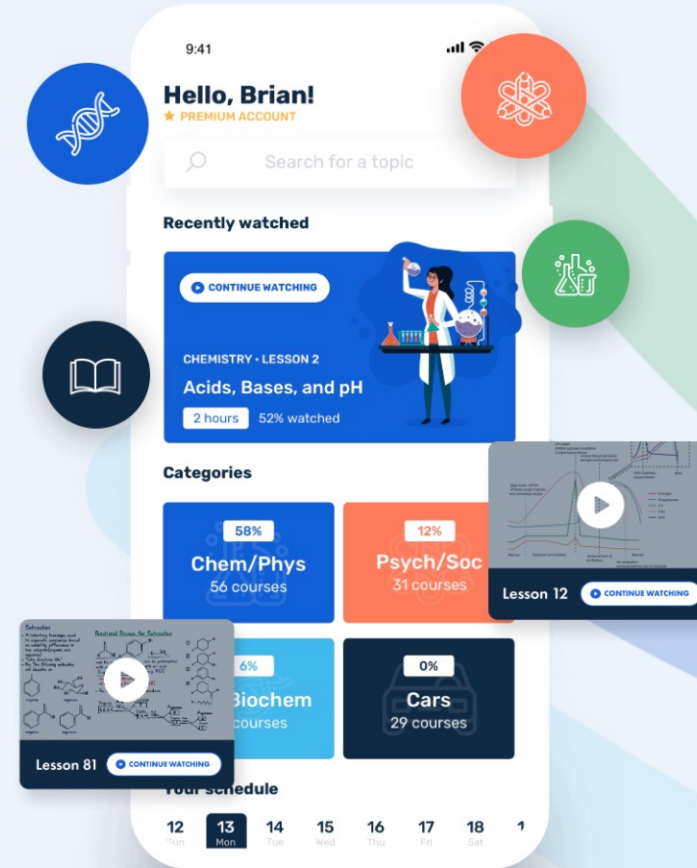
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**Q&A**

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If you have any questions, please  
feel free to reach out to me at  
[ktao@medschoolcoach.com](mailto:ktao@medschoolcoach.com)