

# BeMo

## Six-Month MCAT Study Schedule

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### Month 1 – 24 Weeks to Exam Day

#### Week 1

1. Begin by determining your baseline MCAT score by taking a full-length MCAT diagnostic test. Don't worry about trying to ace it but do your absolute best: the goal is to understand exactly where you stand on day 1. For your diagnostic, we recommend using one of the AAMC's full-length practice exams, and be sure to do this in one sitting and in an environment that mimics actual testing conditions, i.e., alone and in a quiet room without any additional gear besides your computer and the AAMC's somewhat limited periodic table. Your diagnostic test results will indicate which areas you need to focus on the most, and from this you can adapt and hone your study plan to match your needs.
2. Create a study outline that includes each subject you'll need to study. Be specific: don't just list "biology," but try to break each content area down into manageable subjects like "cell theory" and "nervous system." As you review these specific subjects, ensure you feel comfortable with the information you've covered by restating information aloud to yourself without looking at your study materials. Continue this for each of the main content areas: biology, biochemistry, organic chemistry, inorganic chemistry, physics, psychology, and sociology.
3. Gather the study materials you'll need for the coming months. This includes textbooks, challenging reading materials to strengthen your critical thinking skills, review videos, and course notes and projects that touch on these subject areas. As noted above, about 70% of your study time in these first few months should be spent reviewing content, so make sure you've got the right content to review!
4. Begin developing your CARS strategy by reading books/texts that are somewhat outside your comfort zone. CARS is unique in that it doesn't pull much from specific medical school prerequisites and coursework. It demands application of critical thinking and reasoning skills, so spending time closely reading and analyzing non-science texts is key. CARS passages and questions will therefore require you to do things like determine an author's thesis, evaluate the strength of their arguments, and identify evidence, among much else. This doesn't need to take up a ton of your time, but you must dedicate a consistent amount of time to it each week—we recommend about 30 minutes of challenging reading every day. For this first week, start with something fairly accessible: Vanity Fair.

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### Week 2

- Content Review: biology, biochemistry, and organic chemistry in preparation for the Biological and Biochemical Foundations of Living Systems section of the MCAT.
- Challenging Read: The Economist.

### Week 3

- Content Review: inorganic chemistry, organic chemistry, and physics in preparation for the Chemical and Physical Foundations of Biological Systems section of the MCAT.
- Challenging Read: Drift by Rachel Maddow.

### Week 4

- Content Review: psychology and sociology in preparation for the MCAT Psychology section.
- Challenging Read: The Book of Negroes by Lawrence Hill.

## Month 2 – 20 Weeks to Exam Day

### Week 1

- Practice Exams: CARS and Biological and Biochemical Foundations of Living Systems (BBLs). When you take these, begin a “mistake log” in which you write down missed questions along with their solutions and key definitions. Refer to your log regularly to reinforce concepts moving forward. If you find yourself missing questions on content that you have already covered, try to determine why.
- Create a Pop Quiz after reviewing your mistake log for these practice exams, and then complete it 2-3 days later. See if you can explain a topic to yourself and to a classmate: ask them if they understood your explanations and, if not, what specific points you were unclear on. Ensure that you can do this without directly consulting course materials.
- Catch up on any review/reading leftover from Month 1.

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### Week 2

- Content Review: Biology, biochemistry, and organic chemistry. Also review our MCAT Chemistry questions.
- Challenging Read: Start reading *Guns, Germs, and Steel* by Jared Diamond

### Week 3

- Content Review: Inorganic chemistry, organic chemistry, and physics. Also review our MCAT CARS practice passage.
- Challenging Read: Finish reading *Guns, Germs, and Steel*.

### Week 4

- Content Review: Psychology and sociology
- Challenging Read: *The Ever After* of Ashwin Rao by Padma Viswanathan.

### Month 3 – 16 Weeks to Exam Day

#### Week 1

- Practice Exams: CARS and Chemical and Physical Foundations of Biological Systems (CPBS).
- Catch up on any review/reading leftover from Month 2.

#### Week 2

- Content Review: Biology, biochemistry, and organic chemistry.
- Challenging Read: *Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdie.

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### Week 3

- Content Review: Inorganic chemistry, organic chemistry, and physics.
- Challenging Read: Pedagogy of the Oppressed by Paulo Freire.

### Week 4

- Practice Exams: CARS and Chemical and Physical Foundations of Biological Systems (CPBS).
- Catch up on any review/reading leftover from Month 2.

### Month 4 – 12 Weeks to Exam Day

At Month 4, you'll begin transitioning away from content review and into MCAT practice questions and more active learning strategies. Continue with your mistake log to keep track of questions you miss and concepts with which you are struggling. Focus your now limited content review time on topics you find yourself missing during your practice. Although you've now switched to privileging answering practice questions, you'll need to make sure you're still learning from your mistakes, and careful, targeted review is the way to do this. Take ample time to understand why you missed a question so you can approach your next round of practice with updated information. Approaching each full-length practice test or sets of practice questions with an improved knowledge base is essential for improving your MCAT score.

### Week 1

Practice Exams: A full-length practice MCAT. The goal here is to see how you've progressed since your first diagnostic full-length exam. Also complete a Psychological, Social, and Biological Foundations of Behavior (PSB) practice test this week. Be careful and detailed in writing and reviewing your mistake log following these practice tests.

### Week 2

- Practice Questions & Review: BBLS
- Challenging Read: Continue Tolstoy's War & Peace.

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### Week 3

- Practice Questions & Review: CPBS and MCAT Physics equations.
- Challenging Read: The Economist
- Optional: If an evening MCAT prep course is a part of your study plan, now is the time to start!

### Week 4

- Practice Questions & Review: PSB.

### Month 5 – 8 Weeks to Exam Day

Month 5 will be the most demanding so far in terms of practice questions and exams. Each week, you'll complete a full-length practice MCAT and utilize your remaining study time for highly targeted review and practice. You'll also continue with your MCAT prep course if you've enrolled in one.

### Week 1

- Practice Exam: Another full-length practice MCAT. Remember to do this in conditions resembling the actual test environment. As you get closer to the actual date of your test, you want to make sure you're doing all you can to reduce anxiety on exam day, and making sure you're comfortable with actual testing conditions is a big part of that.
- Challenging Read: Wrap up Tolstoy's War & Peace if you haven't yet.

### Week 2

- Practice Questions & Review: BBLS
- Practice Exam: Another full-length practice MCAT.

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### Week 3

- Practice Questions & Review: CPBS
- Practice Exam: Another full-length practice MCAT.

### Week 4

- Practice Questions & Review: PSB
- Practice Exam: Another full-length practice MCAT.

### Month 6 – 4 Weeks to Exam Day

You're in the home stretch! The last few weeks leading up to exam day you'll continue focusing on practice questions and exams and wrapping up your prep course, but you'll also need to start preparing for the big day by keeping calm and resting/recuperating from the last few months of intense study.

### Week 1

- Practice Exam: Another full-length practice MCAT.
- Review: Spend some time reviewing your strong content areas. These are topics that you felt confident in before you began your MCAT preparation, so it is likely that you have not reviewed these content areas recently.

### Week 2

- Practice Exam: Another full-length practice MCAT.
- Test Day Prep: Now is a good time to confirm the time of your scheduled MCAT. Exams generally begin in the morning, so if you're a night owl, start adjusting your sleep schedule to ensure you can perform at your best for a morning MCAT. Start going to bed a few minutes earlier each night until you've achieved this goal.

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### Week 3

- **Practice Exams:** This week you'll take \*TWO\* full-length practice MCATs, but the good news is that this is the last time you'll deal with the full exam before the big day. Take these on separate days, of course, and give yourself the rest of the day off afterward. Come back the following day to review and clarify anything of which you're unsure.
- **Test Day Prep:** Sleep! If you've been getting less than 7 hours of sleep do everything you need to replenish your energy stores and get a full night's rest. Ensure that any environmental distractions are dealt with before heading into the week of your exam.

### Week 4

- **Review:** You'll want to minimize your studying this week, so focus on only 3-5 topics or subtopics you've had trouble with recently. Most importantly, don't try to cram—you need to taper your studying from several hours at the beginning of the week to just 1 hour per day in the days before your test. If you can't comfortably review a topic in an hour or less, focus on something more manageable instead.
- **Challenging Read:** As you wrap up your studying, continue reading and analyzing challenging texts in preparation for the CARS section. You obviously won't have time for an entire novel at this point, so instead dig into intellectually challenging articles, poetry, or short stories.
- **Test Day Prep:** Be very mindful and conservative about your activities in these final days before the exam. A well-rested mind will fare far better on a day-long exam than one that's been frantically cramming up to the last minute. Take the day before the test completely off and try not to obsess over whatever uncertainties you may still have. Rest assured that you've put in the work, now it's your time to shine!