

## Practical Steps to Maximize your Chances for Medical School Admission

**1. Aim for a high level of academic achievement.**

Medical school admissions committees look for consistent, steady progress. Schools want to admit serious students who can handle the rigors of medical school. The average GPAs of students admitted to medical school vary from year to year so you may want to find out this information from any school you're considering and see where you stand relative to other admitted students. Grades are not everything, but they are important. Also, while it is important that you build a strong foundation in the sciences, it is important that you get a broad education. Taking courses in the humanities and social sciences will help you prepare for the interpersonal side of medicine. You should obtain a copy of a publication titled Medical School Admission Requirements. It is published by the American Association of Medical Colleges (AAMC) and is updated each spring; new editions are usually available in late April each year. You may be able to obtain it through the University Bookstore, through AAMC ([www.aamc.org](http://www.aamc.org)) or through a local bookstore for \$25.00.

**2. Join a student organization related to your professional or academic interests; take on a leadership role.**

Schools want to admit students that are active members of their communities. They want to see that you have the ability to take initiative and be a leader. Check out CALS clubs at <http://www.cals.wisc.edu/students/stclub.html> or other UW organizations at <http://soo.studentorg.wisc.edu/>.

**3. Pursue a research experience.**

Pursue an independent study or pursue a paid position in a lab. Not only will you gain an understanding of what doing research is really about, but you'll gain the respect of a faculty member who can later write you a letter of recommendation.

**4. Gain clinical experiences, particularly ones where you work directly in patient care.**

Medical schools admit students that have a strong demonstrated interest in working with people. Service activities, particularly those reflecting public or health-related service, will demonstrate this interest and will allow you to explore the profession and determine whether it's truly right for you. Work in hospitals, clinics, nursing homes or anywhere you can help take care of people and patients.

**5. Prepare well for the MCAT.**

The Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) is a standardized, multiple-choice examination designed to assess problem solving, critical thinking, and writing skills in addition to the examinee's knowledge of science concepts and principles prerequisite to the study of medicine. Scores are reported in each of the following areas: Verbal Reasoning, Physical Sciences, Writing Sample, and Biological Sciences. Almost all schools use the results of this test in the admissions process. While it is not the only dimension they look at, it is certainly an important one. There are many ways to prepare, including studying on your own, taking practice tests and taking organized courses. The key is not necessarily HOW you prepare, but rather that you DO prepare.

Visit <http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/start.htm> for more information.

**6. Secure strong letters of recommendation.**

Begin thinking about this early and carefully select who will write your letters of recommendation because they are a very important piece of your application. Strong letters that speak specifically about you and your abilities will impress admissions committees more than letters from professors who can only say you received a good grade in his or her course. Although it may be difficult to get to know several professors well on such a large campus, you need to make the effort to do so.

**7. Research the medical profession as well as medical schools and their requirements.**

Schools want to admit students who have demonstrated they want to be doctors. They want students who've "done their homework," that is, students who understand the rigors of school and the profession and have a realistic perception of the education and ability necessary to be successful. Job shadowing MDs is one of the many ways to gain this perspective.

**8. Write an effective statement of purpose in your application.**

Do a careful self-assessment and decide what you want people to know about you. Anticipate that you'll need to write more than one essay (one for the AAMC application and one for supplementary applications) and plan accordingly--committees don't necessarily want to read the same essay twice. The purpose of the supplementary applications is to get more information about you, so repeating yourself in a second essay won't be particularly helpful. Don't save preparation of these essays until the last hour. Begin working on them well before you need to send them. Have several people, including advisors, mentors and professionals at the Writing Center ([www.wisc.edu/writing](http://www.wisc.edu/writing)) review them and make comments.

## Sample timeline for Preparing for Veterinary Medical School Admission

### Freshman Year

Fall	Spring	Summer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Connect with your advisor, express your interest in attending Vet school</li> <li>* Meet with a vet-school advisor</li> <li>* Focus on getting off to a strong academic start</li> <li>* Join a student organization related to your professional and academic interests (pre-vet club)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Get involved with volunteer, community, research, clinical activity</li> <li>* Familiarize yourself with the pre-requisite courses you need to apply to vet school--work on a 4 year plan to complete requirements</li> <li>* See your advisor every semester</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Job shadow and/or do an informational interview with a doctor or other professional in the area you're planning to pursue</li> </ul> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px; text-align: center;">                     Continuously learn about animal health care and about being a veterinarian!                 </div>

### Sophomore Year

Fall	Spring	Summer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* See your advisor every semester </li> <li>* Remain active in your student organization</li> <li>* Begin thinking about who you'll ask for recommendations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Continue volunteer, research, clinical activities this year</li> <li>* Maintain strong academic performance</li> <li>* Make sure you're completing prerequisite courses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> * Research vet schools</li> <li>* Consider a Plan B in case you are not accepted to vet school and start working toward it</li> </ul>

### Junior Year

Fall	Spring	Summer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* See your advisor</li> <li>* Pursue a leadership position in your student organization</li> <li>* Think about the GRE, take a prep course or begin preparing on your own--Preparing might be equivalent to a 3 credit course</li> <li>* Decide who you'll ask for letters of recommendation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Work on personal statement</li> <li>* Solicit letters of recommendation</li> <li>* Continue researching schools </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Complete primary applications online</li> <li>* Continue thinking about Plan B</li> </ul> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px; text-align: center;">                     Take GRE in April or Aug                 </div>

### Senior Year

Fall	Spring	Summer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* See your advisor</li> <li>* Complete and submit applications</li> <li>* Send letters of recommendation</li> <li>* Interview if required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Continue to perform well academically</li> </ul>	

## Consider Alternatives to Medical School

### Chiropractic Medicine

Doctors of Chiropractic focus their attention on the biomechanics, structure and function of the spine, its effects on the musculoskeletal and neurological systems, and the role these systems play in preserving and restoring health.

<http://www.fclb.org/>

Federation of Chiropractic Licensing Boards

<http://www.amerchiro.org>

American Chiropractic Association

<http://www.chirocolleges.com>

Association of Chiropractic Colleges

### Clinical Laboratory Sciences

CLS is a health care profession with special expertise in laboratory medicine. Members of this challenging profession are responsible for providing accurate, reliable laboratory tests for monitoring health and diagnosing and treating disease.

<http://www.clsmtech.wisc.edu/>

UW-Madison Clinical Science/Med Tech Program

<http://www.ascls.org/>

American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science

### Dentistry

Dentists are primary care providers who take responsibility for the diagnosis, treatment and management of oral health needs.

<http://www.adea.org>

American Dental Education Association

### Dietetics

Dietitians translate the sciences of nutrition and food to promote good health. Dietitians may work in hospitals, nursing homes, schools, public health agencies, the food industry, research labs, and clinics.

<http://www.nutrisci.wisc.edu/>

UW-Madison Dept of Nutritional Sciences

<http://www.eatright.org>

American Dietetics Association

### Nursing

Registered nurses (RNs) provide direct health care to patients in a variety of settings, including hospitals, clinics, nursing homes, patients' homes and schools.

<http://www.son.wisc.edu/>

UW-Madison School of Nursing

<http://www.aacn.nche.edu/>

American Association of Colleges of Nursing

### Occupational Therapy

Occupational therapists help people with physical and mental challenges regain, develop, or master everyday skills in order to live independent, productive, and satisfying lives.

<http://www.aota.org/>

American Occupational Therapy Association

### Optometry

A Doctor of Optometry is an independent primary health care provider who examines, diagnoses, treats and manages diseases and disorders of the visual system, the eye and associated structures.

<http://www.opted.org/>

Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry

### Pharmacy

Pharmacists provide a range of care for patients, from dispensing medications to monitoring response to the medication; they provide education on the use of prescriptions and over-the-counter medications, and advise physicians and other health professionals on drug decisions.

<http://www.aacp.org/>

American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy

<http://www.pharmacy.wisc.edu/>

UW School of Pharmacy

## Physical Therapy

PTs specialize in understanding the interactions of body parts; they teach you how to do exercises and how to use your body properly to gain strength and mobility and prevent recurring injury.

<http://www.apta.org/>

American Physical Therapy Association

<http://www.orthorehab.wisc.edu/pt/>

UW Physical Therapy

## Physician Assistant Studies

PAs are licensed professionals that practice medicine under the supervision of a physician. Physicians delegate almost every type of patient care duty to PAs and they work in virtually all specialty and practice settings.

<http://www.aapa.org/>

American Academy of Physicians Assistants

<http://www.medsch.wisc.edu/pa/>

UW Physician Assistant Program

## Podiatry

Doctors of Podiatric Medicine are health care providers who exclusively specialize in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of problems affecting the foot and ankle.

<http://www.aacpm.org>

American Assoc of Colleges of Podiatric Medicine

## Public Health

Schools of Public Health and the field in general offers a wide variety of degree choices and career directions that focus on empowering people to live healthy lives, improving the quality of health care and protecting against threats to public health and safety.

[http://www.apha.org/public\\_health/](http://www.apha.org/public_health/)

American Public Health Association

<http://www.asph.org/>

Association of Schools of Public Health

## Other links of interest:

Careers in Allied Health--additional health-related occupations to explore

<http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/10481.html>

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