



Steps to Become a Better Medical Student

Congratulations! You've made it through O Chem, survived your MCAT, traipsed around the country to every interview you could fit in your budget, and received that elusive acceptance email. Once you take a moment to celebrate, you will realize that the real challenge lies ahead.

Medical school serves as the launch pad to your career and excelling there can open the door to opportunities. Whether you want a career in academics or private practice, psychiatry or radiology or orthopedic surgery, doing well in medical school is critical to getting into the residency that will get you there. But how do you "do well"?

LEARN HOW YOU LEARN. *Then just do it.*

Medical school can be a bit of a shock. We all know it will be hard, requiring long hours, but the sheer enormity of knowledge we need to master (or at least make a passing acquaintance with) can be overwhelming. You will need to figure out how you learn best, and most efficiently. Is it taking copious notes in class? Drawing pictures of dissections? Re-listening to lectures on your iPhone while out for a run?

The field of medicine is one of life-long learning. We will constantly need to update our knowledge of our field by reading journals, attending conferences, and discussing interesting cases with our colleagues.



LOOK BEYOND YOUR BOOKS

You may feel like you need to study 24/7, but if you never leave the library, you will miss out on a lot your medical school has to offer. Join clubs, get involved with student government, sign up for a committee. Not only will you contribute to the culture of your medical school and help make it a more enriching place for other medical students, you never know what connections you might make. One peer who joined the student government found herself rubbing shoulders with many faculty, including department chairs. When she decided she was interested in radiology, she was able to set up a time to have an informal chat with the department chairman, as she already knew him. By being involved, you will be learning how to network and establish connections that will serve you throughout your career.



GIVE BACK

We all spent time in our pre-med years scurrying amongst volunteer experiences in an attempt to become a better applicant, and to give back to the community, of course. Don't stop with that acceptance letter. Medical school provides lots of opportunities; you have a chance to contribute to the community, make connections, develop new skills and, yes, they can go on your residency application.

ESTABLISH A CIRCLE OF MENTORS

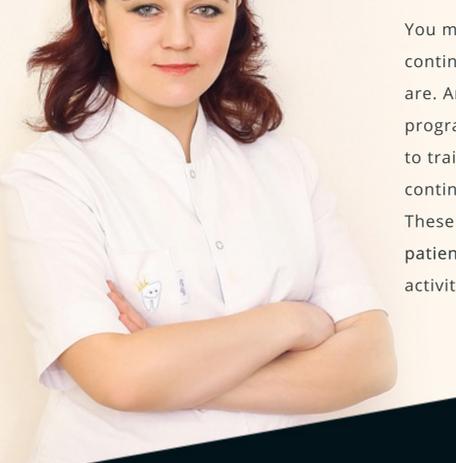
Some schools have formal mentoring programs, connecting students with faculty or senior medical students with junior medical students. Take advantage of these. If your school doesn't have one (and even if it does), be on the lookout for others who may serve this role. Mentors come from various backgrounds and fields – a radiologist, a pediatrician, a psychiatrist, a bench scientist and a number of more senior medical students, to name a few. Other medical students can provide invaluable advice on issues they recently dealt with, ranging from how to study for boards ("Make a schedule!") or how to survive surgery ("Always eat breakfast!"). Faculty mentors help to provide perspective; they've seen many students go through the ups and downs of medical school and can give a broader view, or at least assure you that how you're feeling is not unique.



BE WILLING TO BE SELFISH

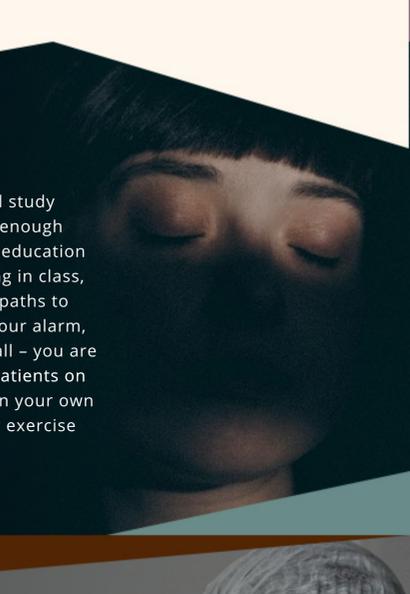
You must be willing to prioritize personal time and to continue to do the unique things that make you who you are. And trust me, the time can be found in any rigorous program. Doctors aren't robots, and you should never plan to train like one. Medical school must be a time for you to continue to develop your hobbies and your personality.

These are the individual characteristics that will make your patients love you one day. More importantly, these are the activities that will keep you both sane and free from stress.



GET 8 HOURS OF SLEEP

No debating this one. First the benefits – you will study better, be healthier, and feel happier. There are enough distractions and obstacles built into the medical education that you should not be adding to the list. Sleeping in class, rereading text, and mental sluggishness are not paths to engaging the curriculum. Turn off the light, set your alarm, and keep track of your sleeping schedule. After all – you are training to be a doctor who will one day advise patients on healthy practices. Limit the sacrifices you make in your own health along the way. Healthy eating and regular exercise follow, as well.



STUDY SMART

There is a difference between studying for a test and studying to be a doctor. While these two goals sometimes coincide, they are often very different in nature. For some reasons, around this concept. Medical students often look to prepare for exams as if they need to know everything about a given subject. Buying multiple textbooks and review guides is more than common. Gaining this knowledge is the right thing to do, and will make this a better doctor in the long run. But it may distract you from your goal of doing your best on given test – and worse, it may lead to burnout. If an exam has questions that are drawn from lecture, then information outside of lecture is irrelevant for the scope of that test. You need to make a personal decision as to how much supplemental information you need to be successful.



REMEMBER YOUR LONG-TERM GOALS

Becoming a doctor is not easy, you will be responsible for patients life that means if you are lazy studying now, you may be a direct cause of a case of preventable death. That means- please study hard understand your responsibility.



HAVE A MOTIVATION POSTER

Place the poster so you see it while you study. The poster should include positive words and a picture depicting success. You can buy one or even make your own. You can also read inspirational stories about real people who have achieved success through effort, for example read the successful story of Dr. Ben Carson.



ELIMINATE DISTRACTIONS

It is a must for you to eliminate distractions, close your room door, shut down your laptop, make your mobile silent, bring a bottle of water and snacks near you before starting your study session.

