

How to Become a Doctor

Don Osborne / INQUARTA



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author

1: Introduction

Welcome to “How to Become a Doctor,” and thank for for accessing this guide. The effort, focus and commitment that you must make to become a doctor is greater than ever. My sincere hope is that this Study Guide plus Workbook will make the path a little – hopefully a lot – easier.

How to Use this Material

This is not a book, pamphlet or primer of any kind. The Study Guide Plus Workbook approach is designed for you to interact with and use this material to help you be much better prepared as you start the journey toward becoming a doctor.

Some sections have specific assignments for you to work through in order to better understand and appreciate what the process actually is as you step through each phase of your education ... an education that will ultimately lead to the coveted title of “Medical Doctor.”

I encourage you to use this – and other – resources you may find to inform yourself and to study the path. Include your parents, and get your family involved in the study process ... the effort involved in getting in to both college and then medical school will demand contributions from every member of your family. As they say, “It takes an entire village to create a doctor.”

This has never been more true than today.

With respect,
Don Osborne, President
INQUARTA

PS. I should introduce myself. I’m an admissions coach and expert, and I specialize in admissions to the health professions, including medical, dental and other allied health programs, plus law school and MBA school. I’ve been doing this work since 1994 and have coached nearly 10,000 students to successful admission to grad school. It’s nice to meet you!



2: The End Result

What is the End Result I hope to attain? At the conclusion of this Study Guide, I expect that you will:

- Understand the United States College Educational System
- Understand the United States College Admissions Process
- Understand the United States Medical School Admissions Process
- Understand the Medical School Educational System
- Learn what you should do in high school
- Learn what you need to know about college admissions
- Deciding the right college for you
- Getting ready for medical school admissions
- Applying to medical school
- Understanding special programs to accelerate the process to become a physician
- Learn how to stand out in the medical school application
- What to Do Next

While this Study Guide may not include every single detail possible, you will find that going through this material will greatly aid you in understanding what it will take to get accepted to college, medical school and what it will take to become a doctor.

3: Education -- It's Different in the United States

Read this section if you or your parents attended school outside of the United States.

The educational system that you may have been raised with is possibly very different from the United States educational system. As a result, you might have a tremendous disadvantage when trying to understand what the best approach is for college and medical school.

Describing the U.S. Educational System

The chart below describes the process of education in the United States:

Type of school	# of Years	Comments
Primary School	Kindergarten through 8th grade	Sometimes called grade school in the United States
Secondary School	9th through 12th	Commonly referred to as high school
College	Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior (Optional: Super Senior)	Most students attend college for four years. Some colleges refer to students as first year, second year, third year, fourth year. A super senior is a student who is taking a 5th year of college.
Medical School	M1, M2, M3 and M4	The first two years of medical school in the United States are classroom-based. The third and fourth years are practically-oriented and may be called "internship" or "rotation." Some 4th year medical students are called "interns." When you finish medical school, you graduate with an MD, but generally you cannot practice medicine.
Medical Residency	1st year resident, 2nd year resident, 3rd year resident, 4th year resident	Residency programs are paid positions; the medical resident begins to practice medicine under supervision of a qualified faculty member. At the conclusion of the residency experience, the student is a fully licensed doctor and may now practice medicine independently. Some 1st year medical residents are called "interns."

Workbook Exercise: If you were not born in the United States, or your parents were not born in the U.S., write below the educational path of the country that you or they were raised in. Note the differences between that system and the United States educational system:

Your System	U.S. System	Differences

Action: Explain these differences to your parents. Be sure to show them the chart representing the United States educational system. Show them how many years of education is required. Many parents and students are not clear about how much schooling is required before you become a practicing physician.

Final note: The difference between the system that you are used to, and the system that the United States uses, can create very significant stress and conflict between you and your parents. Frequently, you will tell your parents, “You don’t know how it works here” or “You don’t understand. It’s different here.”

Instead, explain to your parents that there are differences in educational systems from country to country, and then lay out the educational path for U.S. medical school.

Very likely it will take longer to complete your education than you may be used to. It’s not unusual for the United States system to take two or three years longer to complete than systems from other parts of the world.

4: Action Steps While in High School

What should a promising student do in high school in order to better prepare for admission to medical school?

This is a great and important question. There are lots of stresses for high school students – social connection is everything! The typical high school student in the United States is pulled in many directions at once – academics, sports, and extra-curricular activities.

What are some essential steps that a high school student must do to improve your chance of getting accepted to medical school?

First, you already know that everyone is different. The suggestions below work for some people; they may not work for you.

Generally, a high school student who wishes to get ready for medical school should have these experiences and academic qualifications:

- High academic performance; academic excellence
- Excellent study habits
- Excellent time management skills
- Excellent note-taking skills
- An enthusiastic interest in the sciences
- An ability to connect with and have compassion for other people
- Good extra-curricular activities; specifically, extra-curricular activities that include an opportunity for service and leadership
- Health care system exposure: At this age, being exposed to the health care system (for example, volunteering in a hospital) can be useful, but it is not essential

Note: If you're seeking to accelerate your education and are applying to a combined Bachelor's + Medical School degree program, then health care system exposure is strongly encouraged.

Here is the list in checklist form for you to use:

- High academic performance; academic excellence
- Excellent study habits
- Excellent time management skills
- Excellent note-taking skills
- An enthusiastic interest in the sciences
- An ability to connect with and have compassion for other people
- Good extra-curricular activities; specifically, extra-curricular activities that include an opportunity for service and leadership

❑ Health care system exposure: At this age, being exposed to the health care system (for example, volunteering in a hospital) can be useful, but it is not essential.

Bonus! About Our Services for High School Juniors and Seniors

High school students who are seeking admittance to college and then to medical school face several unique challenges:

What college should I apply to that may help me get in to the best medical school?

What kinds of experiences should I have in high school to make me a better applicant to a combined Bacc/MD program?

What should I say in the special application process?

What should I say in the special interview process?

My Advising Program is a powerful supplement to help you become more qualified for combined degree programs. For more information, email Don Osborne:

dono@inquarta.com

5: College Admissions, Part One



The college admissions process is a rite of passage annually for millions of high school seniors. While this Study Guide is not about the college admissions process, there are several topics about which you should be aware:

- Competitive GPA for target colleges
- Understanding the SAT I, SAT II, SAT Subject Matter tests, Advanced Placement and ACT examinations
- Learning the steps to the college application – Standard tests, Common Application, Specific Application required by the university, Letters of Recommendation, Interview, Follow-Up

correspondence (letters of intent, letters of appeal), Early Decision and Early Action programs.

Learn more about these programs through your on campus College Admissions advisor.

6: There's No Such Thing as a "Pre-Med" Major

Once you have been accepted to college, an immediate challenge is deciding what is the best major. What major will give you the best chances of getting into medical school?

While many students call themselves "pre-med," no pre-med major exists in United States colleges as such. In other words, there's no school that confers a bachelor's degree in "pre-med." Some students and universities confuse this further by describing themselves as on the "pre-med track," which is not a major or emphasis, but instead describes a specific series of courses that the college recommends for its students who wish to attend medical school.

There is no such thing as a pre-med major. Instead, many students actually choose a physical science to major in – biology, chemistry, physics or mathematics. These majors align well with the requirements that medical schools have for any student to be eligible to apply to medical school.

Medical School Prerequisites

Medical schools do not require applicants to complete a specific major in college. Instead, medical schools identify specific courses that you must complete to be eligible for application and admittance to medical school. Here is the summary:

- One year of biology, with lab
- One year of general chemistry (sometimes called inorganic chemistry), with lab
- One year of organic chemistry, with lab
- One year of physical sciences, with lab
- One year of mathematics – either one year of calculus, or one semester of calculus and one semester of statistics, depending on the medical school
- One year of English – either a year of English Composition, or a year of coursework in the Humanities, depending on the medical school

What is the best major?

Based on the prerequisites, most students choose to major in biology or chemistry, because the requirements to complete these majors (and graduate from college) are very similar to the medical school requirements. These majors often represent the fewest number of courses that the student must take to both complete the college degree and medical school admissions requirements.

However, a science major is not required. Many students elect a non-science major – English, Humanities, a Language, Music or Art – because of their interests. This represents a wonderful opportunity for you to explore your interests. However, it does mean that you will be responsible for both the college requirements and the medical school prerequisites. This generally means more classes for the student.

Which is best? The answer is, "it depends." If you struggle under a very heavy academic load, then it may be best to choose a science major so that you complete the degree and the premed requirements with the least amount of additional work.

However, if you have a passion for a particular subject and wish to pursue this passion, it may be wise to encourage this. Passion for a subject can be a powerful motivator, improving overall academic performance.

In sum, a student with the higher college GPA in the sciences is the student who is more likely to be accepted to medical school, regardless of what major is selected.

Use the table below to add your notes about the major you feel might work best for you:

Major	Comments and Notes
Biology	
Chemistry	
Physics	
Art	
English	
Music	
Social Sciences	
Psychology	
Engineering	
Other	

7: College Admissions, Part Two: Choosing the Right College for Medical School

Which college is the best for you to get into medical school? It is generally accepted among most advisors that no college is inherently better than another when it comes to obtaining an acceptance to medical school.

From my experience, this is not true. What you should look for is a college with a long-term track record of its students applying to and being accepted by medical schools.

“Will attending a certain college improve my chances of getting accepted to medical school?”

A university that is well known by a medical school can carry weight with the medical school, if you have done well at that university. However, the university’s reputation alone will not save a bad GPA or sub-standard extra-curricular activities.

Because a medical school has a track record of previous med students who have come from that university, the medical school may be more likely to accept a student from that university because it feels more confident about that student’s ability to succeed.

Your pre-med advisor may be able to give you insight to the school’s track record. However, since many advisors discourage marginal students from applying to medical school, be aware that the information provided to you may be skewed.

Exercise: Questions to Ask Your On-Campus Pre-Health Advisor

1. How many students do you have who consider themselves pre-meds?
2. How many students apply to med school each year from your university?
3. How many get accepted?
4. To what medical schools do they get accepted?
5. What will you as an advisor do for me to help with the admissions process?
6. Will you help identify specific experiences that are best for me?
7. Will you help identify specific courses or major that are best for me?
8. Will you help identify the best recommenders for me? Will you teach me how to create a strong relationship with the recommender?
9. Will you help me brainstorm the content of the medical school application and essay?
10. Will you identify specific medical schools that I should apply to?
11. Will you work with me to polish the application, including the experience description section?
12. Are you familiar with the disadvantaged student section of the application? Should I use this section? Why or why not?

13. What med schools accept students from this college? Why do you think these med schools like your students?
14. What will you do to help me with the secondary applications? Will you work with me on all of the essay content, providing suggestions for the best themes to bring out strengths?
15. Will you prepare me for the interview? What are the qualifications of the person doing practice interviews?
16. If I am put On Hold, what will you do to help?
17. If I am Rejected, what will you do to help?

8: From College to Medical School – Getting Ready

In addition to the prerequisites described above, a college student needs to have the following items completed prior to applying to medical school:

- At least 100 hours of patient contact (example: volunteering in a hospital)
- A science GPA of at least 3.5
- An MCAT score of 30 or higher (the MCAT is the Medical College Admission Test – the equivalent of the SAT for medical school. The MCAT is scored on a 3 to 45 scale.)
- A minimum of 4 letters of recommendation (letters of recommendation requirements vary among medical schools)
- A completed primary application to medical school, called the AMCAS

Medical schools also prefer the following experiences:

- Community service in a non-medical environment
- Leadership
- Some medical schools strongly favor physical science research
- Shadowing a physician

Note: The specific elements that should be included for a student vary widely with each individual candidate. Not all students should do all of the elements above. Obtain the advice of a qualified medical school admissions expert to write your specific strategy.

Bonus! Special Programs: The Bacc / MD program

Many universities have joined together with their medical schools to offer a unique option: The combined Bachelors Degree plus Medical Degree Admissions Program (Bacc/MD).

The Bacc/MD program offers several advantages:

- One application for both college and medical school

- The MCAT requirement is waived

- The student in some cases may be able to skip a year of college (the fourth year of college is replaced by the first year of medical school, thus saving a year of education)

- Admission to medical school is guaranteed, if the student maintains a specific gpa (usually 3.5 or above).

Applying to the Bacc/MD program adds additional layers of work and stress onto the high school applicant. In addition to completing the regular college application, the Bacc/MD applicant must also complete the special Medical School application, which includes an additional personal statement, letters of recommendation and interview. My Bacc/MD advising service is specifically designed to support high school students who wish to apply to these types of programs.

(Note: I do not offer college-only admissions advising. I supplement your existing college admissions counselor with the special Bacc/MD program. My training in medical school admissions is ideally suited for this purpose. For more information, contact Don Osborne: dono@INQUARTA.com)

About My Services

- Starts with an assessment of you as an applicant to the combined program.
- Assist in selection of Bacc/MD programs that are a good fit for you.
- Assist with the unique MD application elements – personal statement, resume, interview preparation, and other elements as required by individual medical schools.

9: The Medical School Application Process – How It Works

Generally, in the third year of college, the pre-med student begins the application process to medical school. This application process is very substantially more complex and more difficult than the application to college.

The college application asks for a single essay, a resume, three letters of recommendation from teachers and others.

In contrast, the medical school application process is far more substantial:

1. The Primary Application asks for resume, personal statement, supplemental essay for disadvantaged applicants, supplemental essay for students wanting to conduct research, medical schools the applicant is applying to.
2. The Secondary Application asks for between four and six letters of recommendation, supplemental experience descriptions and up to 10 pages of additional essay content per application. Note the typical medical school applicant will write nearly 100 pages of application essays in this phase.
3. The Interview process – Only a small fraction of applicants will be invited to be interviewed by medical schools. Roughly 70,000 people will begin the admissions process; fewer than 500 students per medical school will be interviewed for the roughly 100 slots.
4. Waitlist, Hold for Interview – Depending on the qualifications of the applicant, a student may be placed on Waitlist or Hold for Interview (these are the same thing). This means either 1) the student is under-qualified, or 2) the student is fairly-well qualified, but there are too many applicants of equal or greater caliber.
5. Rejection – The majority of all applicants to medical school are rejected each year. Unfortunately, a rejection can be emotionally devastating for the applicant. You want to be prepared for rejection, as even a well-qualified candidate will receive rejections from some medical schools.
6. Acceptance – Acceptance to medical school may come as early as October 15, or as late as the week before medical school starts (August 15)! That's a very wide range and causes the applicant severe anxiety. Students need to prepare themselves for the long-term, multi-month nature of the medical school admissions process.

Reapplication

Based on the number of available slots for new med students, the majority of all pre-meds will be rejected. More than 20 percent of all applicants have applied more than once. Don't be dismayed; there may be trivial elements of the application that were missing, in error, or omitted that cause a rejection.

A percentage of my clients come to me after they have already applied to medical school once. My reapplicant program can help any student become more qualified for the second application cycle.

Bonus! Post Bacc / Special Masters Programs

For college students whose academic record is not strong enough to be a competitive applicant straight out of college, many universities offer either a Post Baccalaureate (after bachelor's degree) or Special Masters program.

These programs are designed to improve the student's chances of getting into medical school, generally through additional coursework in the sciences.

10. The Life of a Med Student – Medical School, Residency, Fellowship, Board Certifications

Once you have been accepted to medical school, now what?

The life of a med student is extremely busy. Med students report that the coursework is not more difficult than college; there is just much more of it.

Med students re-learn the sciences, this time with one specific creature in mind – the human being. Gone are all the generalities of cell structure (animal versus plant), skeletal structure (a human being's skeletal system is not like a bird's), warm- versus cold-blooded creatures, and on and on.

Instead, in only two years medical schools teach an incredible amount of necessary, detailed information about the workings of the human body – from anatomy to physiology to endocrine system to nerve system, and everything in between.

While med students are learning this, they are also being exposed to the basics of clinical work – how to interview a patient, how to take a patient history, how to interact with a patient in a calm, supportive and professional manner.

At the end of year two, med students sit for the “medical boards,” which are the initial exams to become a licensed medical doctor. This examination is called the United States Medical Licensing Exam, or USMLE. Med students take the first exam – called USMLE Step 1 – in the second year, and then take two more tests – Step 2 and Step 3 – in subsequent years.

Years three and four are far more practical. In these years, the med student acts as the assistant to medical residents. They are assigned a significant amount of “scut,” the most basic tasks that need to be completed. Examples of scut include: delivering blood samples to the lab for analysis, fetching x-rays from radiology, waiting for a phone call, picking up medicine from the pharmacy ... and much more. While these tasks may seem meaningless, any one of them completed improperly can kill the patient.

In the fourth year of medical school, med students apply for “the Match,” an application system that matches med students with teaching hospitals looking for new medical residents to train and employ.

This is another stressful time for med students, because it is possible not to match and in effect fall behind in their training. This is also the first time that a medical school chooses a particular area of medicine to focus on. This is where the med student begins to narrow down your focus and decides “what kind of medicine do I want to practice?”

Medical residents earn between \$35,000 and \$55,000 a year while they are being trained. Once medical residency is completed, a medical doctor can practice medicine, be hired by a hospital or medical practice, and can pursue additional training – the medical fellowship and Board certification. Sometimes this is called a “super specialization,” and it is at this time when a new doctor becomes a highly-trained specialist within a field of medicine.

11: What's Next

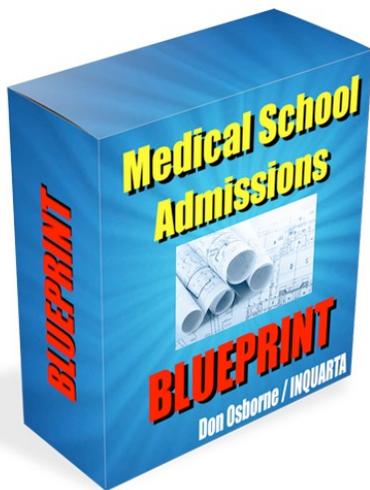
Most college students obtain their information from other college students, and, less often, from on campus advisors. This is a very risky approach to learning the correct and best way to apply to medical school.

Most pre med advisors are extremely overloaded; students often must wait days or weeks to schedule a meeting. The meetings are usually 15 minutes or less. The on

campus advisor has no knowledge or understanding of your specific circumstance; as a result, the on campus advisor often provides the same advice to everyone.

No two students are alike; everyone has specific strengths and gaps in their application. Only a qualified expert can identify what aspects of your application will have the most significant impact, and what parts of your application needs improvement.

Your next step is to learn everything you can about the medical school admissions process, and begin preparing for the multi-year process ahead of you. However, learning all of the practical information you need is quite difficult. Most students struggle to get even the most basic information about medical school admissions. That's why I created my online course called The Medical School Admissions Blueprint.



The Medical School Admissions Blueprint is a 12-part online course that covers every step you need to take to get into medical school in detail. Blueprint tells you what you need to do, how to do it, and most importantly, *when* to take each step so that your chances of getting accepted to medical school are the highest they can be.

I usually charge \$47 for Blueprint, but because you have taken the time to read this Guide and follow the information in it, and you have shown your interest in significantly helping you become a doctor, I would like to reward you for your commitment.

I highly recommend you invest in your education now.

[LEARN MORE ABOUT THE MEDICAL SCHOOL ADMISSIONS BLUEPRINT COURSE HERE.](#)

Thank you for reading *How to Become a Doctor*. I hope it helps and send me your questions at dono@inquarta.com.

-- DonO