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Kaplan MCAT Review Complete 5-Book Subject Review (Kaplan Test Prep)



Synopsis

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Customer Reviews

First of all, some of the practice exam sections are incredibly difficult in comparison to the actual MCAT. It is Kaplan's way of challenging you and helping you know more than you need to, but sometimes it is kind of stupid to make the practice exams so much harder. Some of them I could not even finish in the time they gave. If you want to do practice exams, buy Kaplan's separate exams (which I still think are harder) or buy them directly from AMCAS. I am going to break this down book-by-book: The Organic Chemistry book is the worst book, which I guess is the best one to be the worst due to such a little amount of O chem. It assumes that you know a lot and almost just lists reaction types in a paragraph or two. I found it the hardest to follow. OCHEM only occurs for about 10-12 questions, but it's still important to know a lot in case it arises. Study a lot of SN1 and SN2. A lot of questions dealing with organic chemistry are about knowing the nucleophile, electrophile, and what goes where. The biology book is great. Pure facts and just telling you what you need to know. Straight and to the point: just read, read, read. The MCAT biology portion is a lot different than just memorizing though (although probably 6-8 questions are purely out of memorization). You need to learn how to break down experiments with your biological background. There are a lot of genetics and problems dealing with the expression of certain "things" on the biology portion. i.e. This causes that, which causes that, which then causes what? Learn about the heart very well too. Muscles (sarcomeres), kidneys, digestive, and hormones are big topics as well. The physics book was my favorite one. I love how concise all the information is. No time wasting. This is where I saw the largest discrepancy between the practice exams and the actual MCAT. I would miss 15-18 on the Kaplan 52 question practice sections in the Physics book, while on actual practice MCATs released by AMCAS, I will only miss 4 to 5 physics questions out of 26-30. $\text{Wavelength} = c/f$, $F = Gm_1m_2/r^2$. Remember those two: especially the wavelength equation. I have no idea why they stress sound so much. Probably because of cardiology. General chem is also extremely solid. Extremely concise and tells you what to look out for all the time. I found the exams to be most like the actual MCAT. Learn about redox reactions: which is the reducing agent, oxidizing, etc. Learn the periodic table's characteristics. Be able to distinguish the differences between elemental groups. General chem should be almost everyone's easiest topic to learn. Verbal reasoning is all about practicing, so I cannot really comment too much on this book. Examkrackers 101 passages is what I recommend for that section. Also, buy the AMCAS reading sections and do them. I found that I needed to practice the least on this part. Being from an engineering background, logical thinking was very

easy. In general, this review set is great. They will tell you what is always on the MCAT, what equations to remember, and what general ideas to remember that are always tested. In the many practice MCATs that I've done, I ALWAYS think to myself "oh wow, I remember this from the Kaplan book and how they stressed this specifically" and almost instantly get the answer. It happens a lot. A lot of people actually do better when they get there. The extra stress when you're actually testing can help you. It makes you more aware and a more "fight or flight" (parasympathetic nervous system, don't forget ;)) type of attitude kicks in. If you're not doing well on the practice exams, don't worry, you can always go up. The MCAT can be hard if you don't prepare well. Bust your a**. Study 4 months before the exam. Read each book 3 times. Do multiple AMCAS practice tests starting 10-12 weeks before your test date. Do at least 7 or 8 practice tests. Sure, they add up monetarily, but better than repaying \$240 to take the MCAT again. Get a feel for the real deal. I always have extra time left for Physical and biological, but reading is very time stressed, practice practice practice. You will see your reward at the end. Don't view this as an obstacle to get into med school, view it as the beginning of med school. 4.5/5 stars.

I studied for two months (about 8 hours a day) and I bought the KAPLAN and EXAMKRACKERS sets. Breakdown by book: -Biology: EK is very weak in this section, and I mixed Kaplan and Princeton review for bio. -Physics: This is my weak point, so I found Kaplan to be better. I think EK Physics is weak. -Chemistry: Either. Both are good: EK or Kaplan. Organic Chemistry: Kaplan assumes you know a lot for this section, I think overall EK is better. Verbal: This is truly where EK shines although Kaplan is okay. What really helps with this section is the 101 EK Verbal Passages. I also was given a free Kaplan test course, and I used their tests. I didn't bother with the class: I just wanted the resources. I recommend reviewing material/memorizing formulas for the first month (taking full length practice tests on the weekends), and the second month take practice tests only. Kaplan has practice tests in the back of their books, so those helped. However, Kaplan tends to test harder material. I would definitely use the AAMC tests also. OVERALL: You need to review the material and learn to take the test. Use Kaplan for the main sciences (bio, physics, and chem), use 101 EK for Verbal, and use EK for Ochem. Take a ton of practice tests before, and GO OVER YOUR TESTS when done. Do this, and I think you can at least score a 30. DO NOT CRAM, give time to study for your MCAT.

As far as the material they cover here goes, it's pretty good. They cover just about everything you need to know for test day, but unfortunately they try to imply throughout the text that you need to

know more than you really do. For example, they tell you to memorize WAY too many equations for test day -- especially in the physical sciences portion, when in reality you only need to memorize a small portion of those equations if you want to know how to do every single problem on the MCAT. You can easily get a 15 on a section knowing much less than what they would have you believe you need to know. Another major problem with these books is the practice questions and tests they give. They are much more difficult and in depth than a real MCAT. The practice tests from the AAMC are exactly like the real thing. Practice with those 10 times more than you would with any Kaplan test. I understand that Kaplan's philosophy might be that they want to over-prepare you for the test by asking especially difficult questions so that the actual test seems easier, but this missed the mark entirely. Many of the questions try to be so in depth or tricky that they end up making you focus on the wrong principles. The real MCAT is much more straightforward and will not make you spend 3-4 minutes per question just working out arithmetic. There's being prepared, and then there's just plain wasting time on something you know you'll never be asked to do. Why does Kaplan focus on the latter? My best guess is that they want to scare you into buying all of their products and classes where you can work calorimetry equation problems till you start bleeding from the ears. If you want to work smarter -- not harder -- and you still want to get this collection, I would suggest taking AAMC practice tests and letting them tell you what types of questions you're missing. Then look up those topics in these books and review the material as needed. Don't worry too much about solving practice problems from these books, since they tend to destroy your confidence if anything. Go back and retake the practice tests (in random order, so that the material looks different each time you take that specific test) and keep going till you feel comfortable.

It is a good comprehensive review, not too wordy, fairly easy to understand. It has lots of practice test questions and teaches you how to work them.

Took the MCAT and was very pleased with how this set matched up with what I experienced on the test.

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