

PRE-PHARMACY

TIMELINE IF TAKING PCAT IN JULY:

December: Purchase the Kaplan 2016-2017 book and begin review. If you can get through the entire book at least once during winter break, you'll be in good shape. Do NOT just read the book, make sure you take notes. I filled 3-4 notebooks with notes from the book and it was super helpful to look over what you wrote instead of re-reading what the book has to offer. It also helps you to retain the information if you write it.

→ Do not freak out about how much material the entire Kaplan book covers, especially for biology. Just skim over it and if there are any topics that you are particularly uncomfortable with, make a note of it and move on. There are some obscure topics that never made it on the PCAT.

→ If you decide to take a practice test from Kaplan, do not panic over how hard it is. The PCAT will not be as hard. The Kaplan people make things much harder to prepare you.

January – May: Keep reviewing the Kaplan book. You should also purchase the Dr. Collins exam packet during this time and begin looking at the material portion of the packets. The part of the packet with all the questions per section should be saved for when you start getting super close to the PCAT. You will also be able to make an account through PharmCAS and Pearson. You'll be able to sign up for your PCAT during this time.

→ Don't worry about getting a spot for the PCAT. There is not as much competition for a spot for the PCAT as there is with the MCAT. When you go on the Pearson website (it is a bit confusing), you'll be able to see when the sign ups start for the PCAT date that you want.

MAJOR TIP: All the PCAT times given are Eastern, so they are 3 hours ahead. Be sure you remember this when signing up for things. I was really panicked when I found out that sign ups had already began because I thought I wouldn't get a spot. So when they say midnight, it's actually 9:00PM that you should start signing up.

→ Make sure you have an idea of what schools you want to go to before signing up for the PCAT, because when you sign up and pay for this expensive exam, you'll be able to

send your scores to that school for no extra fee. Make sure you select **PharmCAS code 104**, as most of the schools that you'll end up applying to will be under this generalized code. I didn't know this and only selected 3 schools, when code 104 would have covered almost all the pharmacy schools.

→ In terms of what time of day you should take the PCAT, that is up to your own preferences. They offer it at two times: 8:00AM and 12:00PM. I took it in the morning, and was happy I signed up for it at that time. I had the rest of the day to relax (or panic).

→ Make sure you put your name exactly how it appears on your ID. I had some trouble with my middle name, so be careful.

June-July: This is the time when you should have reviewed all the material and are now doing a ton of practice problems. I wish I had done more practice during this time. This is what really prepares you, as you find out what you need to study more or less of. You should have purchased the exams given by the PCAT company (Pearson). These were excellent, and I strongly suggest you purchase them. The essay practice given by this company was also pretty good. Definitely finish up all of the Dr. Collin's practice questions, and the 2 exams given by Kaplan and then the 3 (I think it's 3...) exams from Pearson.

→ Do not forget to bring at least 3-4 types of ID on test day. The PCAT company is good about telling you what needs to be done and brought, so don't worry too much about this.

After PCAT: Begin working on your application through PharmCAS! It takes quite a while to get all the information (transcripts, etc...) rounded up and sent/entered into this application. You should definitely work on your personal statement during this time as well. Specific information regarding how long your personal statement should be will be on PharmCAS. You should submit your application by September and you'll be hearing back from schools pretty soon after that, mostly about supplemental applications and/or interviews. It is an exciting and scary time!

GENERAL QUESTIONS:

What is the structure of the PCAT? As of July 2016, there is an essay and 4 sections (biology, chemistry, reading, math). All of it is done on a computer. You start off with an

essay that you get 30 minutes to respond to. For the biology and chemistry sections, you have approximately 45 minutes to answer 20-24 multiple choice questions. Approximately half of the questions are passage-based, which I found to be difficult. The reading section is obviously entirely passage-based, and there were 6 passages and you had 50 minutes to answer 8 multiple choice questions per passage. The math section was the most difficult for me, mostly because it is the last section (you are drained at this point) and because it's math. You have 48 questions and 45 minutes to answer them. And then you are done and you get your preliminary score (score minus the essay) as soon as you are done.

QUESTION: As a pre-pharmacy student, what did you do to build up your CV?

ANSWER: The very first thing I did was get involved in shadowing, because it is very important to first understand what it is that a pharmacist does. That being said, there are different specific jobs that a pharmacist can be involved in, such as: retail pharmacist, hospital pharmacist, compounding pharmacist, etc... I ended up shadowing and eventually working for a privately-owned retail pharmacist. Ultimately, it is a bit difficult to just shadow a pharmacist as there is nothing you can actually do. I was offered employment at the pharmacy as a pharmacy technician-in training and I was able to get a ton of hands-on experience with medication and patient interaction. After building a relationship with the pharmacist and pharmacy technicians, I would advise you to ask for your letter of recommendation with enough time for the pharmacist to actually write the letter. If you know you are applying to pharmacy school in August, give the pharmacist a heads up about it in May (at least 3-4 months prior). That was just one thing I did for my CV. Another couple of things on my CV that are not necessarily pharmacy-specific are: undergraduate research assistant, undergraduate teaching assistant, humanitarian coordinator of APHP, current president of APHP, etc... Regardless of what I did, it is incredibly important to obtain some type of leadership experience and research experience. The earlier you can get exposed to both types of experiences, the better it will be for you.

QUESTION: What classes were/are the most beneficial for pre-pharmacy?

ANSWER: I am currently working on a psychology and neuroscience minor, and I found that psychopharmacology (PSY 422) was an excellent class to take as a pre-pharmacy student. I learned a whole lot about specific medications and I found myself recognizing them at the pharmacy that I worked at. Another awesome class was immunology (BIOL

453), where I learned the processes behind infections and inflammation, and also allergies. You can relate what you learned in immunology to the medications that you'll start recognizing when you volunteer/work at a pharmacy. Another class is biochemistry II (CHEM 475), where I was able to understand the mechanism for statins and a wealth of other medications. Also, you'll be able to do more than recognize medications with these classes, you'll be able to understand what that specific medication does enzymatically to counteract the patient's symptoms.

What classes should I have taken before the PCAT? CHEM 121, CHEM 122, CHEM 241, CHEM 242, CHEM 474, BIO 196, BIO 197, BIO 223, BIO 351 (microbiology), BIO 304 (genetics), BIO 445 (cell physiology), BIO 453 (immunology), MATH 126, MATH 127, MATH 181, ENG 101/102

→ It seems like a lot of classes, but you should be taking them anyways for either your major or as prerequisites for pharmacy school.

QUESTION: What interview tips can you give?

ANSWER: I think the most important tip I can give to you is to be confident. Obviously not over-confident or rude, but just have the confidence to answer all the questions without getting thrown off by how important this whole process might seem. You've gotten this far, and you'll continue to go far. Don't let your nerves or panic screw up your answers, you are obviously qualified, they just want to see that you are.

→ How long were my interviews? Approximately 15-30 minutes

→ How many people interviewed me? It depends on your school, but I had 2 people interview me for the most part: one faculty member and one student (usually in their second year of pharmacy school).

→ What did they ask me? You better have an answer for **WHY** you want to be a pharmacist and why you didn't choose to become a doctor. They asked me in multiple ways why I wanted to do this, and you need a sturdy answer not only to support yourself in the interview, but also in the written assessments you'll be doing either before or after the interview. These aren't too challenging, but you definitely need something irrefutable.

- What are some of your biggest strengths and biggest weaknesses?
- What would say is something wrong with pharmacy as a profession today?
- What was your favorite class? Why?

- What was your least favorite class? Why?
- What is something creative that you've done or implemented?
- What would you do if a team member was slacking off?
- What would you do if a team member was cheating off you?