**Part 1 of 5: Preparing in High School**

**1**

[**Get good grades**](http://www.wikihow.com/Get-Good-Grades)**.** In order to get into the best colleges and the best medical schools, you need excellent grades first and foremost. The better your grades, the more seriously you'll be taken as a candidate for the programs you wish to get into and the more opportunities you'll have along the way to make connections and network.

**2**

**Take the complete science curriculum (and math) at your school.** Those who do best in pre-med programs and in medical school have been dealing with math and science from an early age. Take all the courses your high school offers in math and science so when serious classes roll around in college, you're prepared.

**3**

[**Volunteer**](http://www.wikihow.com/Volunteer)**.** Many people desire to become a doctor because it seems like a great way to help people. Not only will volunteering give you a chance to help people, but it will also look good on your CV, if you do decide to pursue medicine. Consider volunteering at a hospital, free clinic, doctor's office, or as an EMT. Medical work experience can be tough to find; write to your family doctor, and use family connections to find shadowing opportunities.

* If you're 16 or older you can look at shadowing doctors abroad with schemes like Gap Medics. Also, be open to volunteer work that is not directly medical related, such as working in a soup kitchen or Habitat for Humanity.
* This can show you what departments appeal to you, in addition to looking good on a college application.

**4**

**Start thinking about what kind of doctor you want to be.** You'll be applying to colleges soon, so it's good to know what kind of doctor you think you want to be. Different colleges have different programs, and while your interests may change, you'll still wind up at a good school, if you know what you're looking for.

**5**

**Take the ACT,**[**SAT**](http://www.wikihow.com/Do-Well-on-the-SATs)**, or both, and nail it.** A good score on the ACT or the SAT, in combination with excellent grades and volunteer experience will be hard for a good four year college to turn down. Submit your scores to a number of schools to up your chances of getting accepted.

* If you're not happy with your score, opt to not send it, and simply retake the test. Now that you're familiar with the structure, you'll likely do a bit better.

**Part 2 of 5: Going to College**

**1**

[**Choose the college**](http://www.wikihow.com/Choose-a-College)**that most speaks to you.** To find the right college for you, consider academic reputation, size, distance from home, location, cost, and, of course, their academic program.

* Don’t worry about medical school yet. While some schools do have a medical school that's affiliated with their undergrad program, it is not necessary to go to one of these schools.

**2**

**Choose your major.** Doctors come from all walks of life, though most are biology majors. That being said, any math or science major would provide you with a useful curriculum.

* More and more medical schools are looking to include some liberal arts majors and those with majors off the beaten track to have a wider variety of perspectives at their school. Even if you're an English major, you could still become a doctor!

**3**

**Spread out the courses that med school requires.** Choose an institution with a strong pre-med program, or even one that is affiliated with a particular medical school. (Some institutions offer a program which allows you to complete your undergraduate degree and medical degree at the same time.) In order to qualify for admission to medical school, you will need to take the following prerequisite courses taken in your bachelor's degree program (best spread out), along with other subjects which will be outlined in the particular medical school's admissions requirements. This will keep you fresh on preparing for the MCAT:

* 1 year of Inorganic Chemistry with lab
* 1 year of Organic Chemistry with lab
* 1 year of English
* Many schools require 1 year of calculus or college level math
* Some medical schools prefer a course in Biochemistry

**4**

**Take classes in all sorts of different subjects.** Simply put, being a doctor isn’t for everyone. Taking a wide variety of classes may show you something you enjoy even more. Don't fry yourself with only math and science courses – your coursework will suffer, if you take on too much.

**5**

[**Manage your time wisely**](http://www.wikihow.com/Manage-Your-Time)**.** College taken seriously is hard. It's a time of transition, making friends, and setting up yourself for success for the rest of your life. To ensure that your future is as bright as possible, you'll need to manage your time wisely. Make a schedule for yourself for studying, and stick to it.

**6**

[**Be an ideal student**](http://www.wikihow.com/Be-an-Excellent-Student)**.** In order to get into medical school, you'll not only need excellent grades, but you'll also need to demonstrate that you are a responsible, well-rounded person. Through your community service record, show that you enjoy helping people.

* Get to know your teachers and supervisors and earn their respect – their recommendation letters will be essential for your getting interview invitations from medical schools.

**Part 3 of 5: Going to Medical School**

**1**

**Take the MCAT during your sophomore or junior year of college.** Take the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT), or if you live in the UK, take the UK Clinical Aptitude Test (UKCAT) and the BioMedical Admissions Test (BMAT). Strive to get above a 10 in each of the first three sections in order to get a competitive MCAT score. Take a practice test to find out where your baseline is and to know how much progress you need to make.

* The MCAT has 4 sections - Biological Sciences (Biology and Organic Chemistry - 77 questions), Physical Sciences (Physics and Inorganic Chemistry - 77 questions), Verbal Reasoning (65 questions), and Essay Writing (2 essays).
* Consider taking a review course such as those offered by Kaplan, if review courses are helpful to you. You will be tested in the following areas, the first three of which are graded on a scale of 1-15.

**2**

**Know which kind of med school you want to attend.** There are many kinds you can choose between:

* Allopathic medical schools are the traditional medical schools that confer an M.D. degree to graduates. This is likely the type of school you think of when you think of a "medical school." There are 141 allopathic medical schools in the United States, as well as dozens in Caribbean countries which cater to American students.
* Osteopathic schools offer you a D.O. degree. They are very similar to allopathic schools except that they have additional courses in Osteopathic Manipulative Treatment (OMT). D.O. doctors can be general practitioners or surgeons and can prescribe medications as M.D.s do.
* Pharmaceutical schools offer you a Doctor of Pharmacy (Pharm D.) degree. These types of doctors don't treat the patients but dispense prescription medications and advise patients on their proper use and potential risks.
* Naturopathic Medical schools offer you an N.D. degree. These type of doctors suggest foods and herbs rather than artificial drugs. These type of doctors are part-doctor and part-herbalist. There are not many of these schools and doctors.
* Homeopathic medical schools offer you an H.D. degree. These type of doctors treat the diseases and conditions with tiny doses of drugs derived from herbal extracts.

**3**

**Apply to medical schools in your junior year of college.** In your junior year, send in applications, to the schools to which you'd like to apply, with your letters of recommendation, but only request transcripts be sent after the application should have arrived, or else the school will have no file setup and no reason to keep you transcripts. Apply to some you don't think you can make it into, some schools you think you have a shot at, and some schools you feel present safe odds to admit you. It's going to take quite a while to do all the forms and request the transcripts be sent, so start early!

* The average med student applies to 13 schools. Generally, transcript and test fees go down with each school you apply to to be less of a financial burden.

**4**

**Ace the interview.** While there is a well-defined path to becoming a Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO) or Doctor of Medicine (MD), success depends more upon an undying commitment to your goals and interests, than on presenting the usual scores and forms exactly as every other applicant does. When you interview for a spot in a medical school, the admissions committee wants to see that you have been and are committed to achieving your goals – no matter what they are. [[1]](http://www.wikihow.com/Become-a-Doctor#_note-1)

* The interview will be everything from asking you about your volunteer experiences to your opinions of healthcare reform. Regardless of how it you feel that is goes, be sure to give a thank you when all is said and done to show that you take this very seriously.

**5**

**Go in expecting to work very, very hard.** Medical school is no joke. It's hours of studying and work that piles up and and seems to never end. Your social life outside of school will suffer, and you won't sleep nearly as much as you want to. It's a very demanding commitment.

* That being said, 95% of the students entering medical schools do end up earning their M.D. degree.[[2]](http://www.wikihow.com/Become-a-Doctor#_note-2) The application process is stringent enough that only the best of the best are accepted. If you're accepted, it's likely you can do it.

**6**

**Know what to expect in medical school.** Once you've applied and been accepted to medical school, here's what you can expect overall:

**7**

**First two years - take classroom based classes.** For these two years, you will be learning the fundamentals of the medical sciences through the study of the core subjects: anatomy, physiology, histology, biochemistry, pathology, pharmacology, and microbiology. You'll also be learning to take medical histories and how to perform a physical exam, in addition to learning the principles behind diagnosing diseases.

* United Stated Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE), Step 1 and/or the Comprehensive Osteopathic Medical Licensing Examination (COMLEX) Level 1 - tests your knowledge of all topics studied in years 1 and 2; in most schools, you must pass this in order to progress to the third year.
* Third year - receive training consisting of 1 to 2 months of each of major specialities (internal medicine, general surgery, pediatrics, OB/GYN, surgery, psychiatry); work with patients under the supervision of experienced physicians in hospitals snd clinics, learning acute, chronic, preventive, and rehabilitative care, as well as being taught social skills that give the doctor a beside manner.
* Determine the speciality you want to pursue.
* Fourth year - Take electives based on preferred speciality; apply to and interview for the residency programs; pass the USMLE step 2 or ComLEX Level 2, which includes a Clinical Knowledge portion (CK), tests topics covered in year 3 and a Clinical Skills portion (CS), tests your ability to take a history and examine a patient.

**8**

**Take your first test.** At the end of the 2nd year all medical students take the first part of the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE-1), administered by the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME). The purpose of this test is to determine your medical competency and to see whether you should forward your education and are suitable for licensure.

* United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE), Step 1 and/or the Comprehensive Osteopathic Medical Licensing Examination (COMLEX) Level 1 tests your knowledge of all topics studied in years 1 and 2; in most schools, you must pass this in order to progress into the third year.

**9**

**In your 3rd and 4th years, start rotations.** For your third year, there will be 1-2 months of each of the major medical specialties (internal medicine, general surgery, pediatrics, OB/GYN, surgery, psychiatry), known as rotations. You'll work with patients under the supervision of experienced physicians in hospitals and clinics, learning acute, chronic, preventive, and rehabilitative care, as well as the social skills that give a doctor good bedside manner.

* In your fourth year, you'll take electives based on your preferred specialty; apply to and interview at residency programs; pass the USMLE Step 2 or COMLEX Level 2, which includes a Clinical Knowledge portion (CK, tests topics covered in year 3) and a Clinical Skills portion (CS, tests your ability to take a history and examine a patient).
  + Medical school will take a bit longer, if you want to do a PhD in some related field as well as the M.D.

**Part 4 of 5: Becoming a Licensed Doctor**

**1**

**Take the 2nd and 3rd part of your boards.** Towards the end of your med school career and then at the beginning of your first paying gig, you'll take the 2nd and 3rd part of the test you took at the end of your 2nd year. This is to gauge the knowledge you've learned in the last two years and to make sure you've kept up and are on track.

* Part 2 is taken in the 4th year of medical school and tests whether you can apply your medical knowledge in providing patient care under supervision.
* Part 3 is taken in the first year of residency (internship) and tests your ability to apply your medical knowledge in providing unsupervised medical care.

**2**

**Decide on your specialty.** Different specialties require different amounts of time doing a residency and getting the necessary experience and accreditation. Here is the length of time you'll be spending in residency according to your specialty, as a paid specialist receiving on the job training at a teaching hospital *after* medical school:

* Anesthesiology - 4 years
* Dermatology - 4 years
* Emergency Medicine - 3-4 years
* General Surgery - 5 years
* Internal Medicine - 3 years
* Neurology - 4 years
* Obstetrics and Gynecology - 4 years
* Pathology - 4 years
* Pediatrics - 3 years
* Psychiatry - 4 years
* Radiology - 4-5 years

**3**

**Go for interviews at hospitals where you want a residency.** When you've graduated medical school, the next step is finding a residency position. Contact the teaching hospitals you're interested in and that have available residency positions. Interviewing with each will set you up in the National Resident Matching Program.

**4**

**Get “matched” to a residency program.** The NRMP runs the matching program sort of like sororities and fraternities. They'll match up hospitals with the students they want and the students with the hospitals they want whenever possible by conferring with both parties. Nearly every applicant gets matched.

* This is a commitment from which is not easy to withdraw. If you don't like the location for residency where you've been placed, you may just have to grin and bear it.

**5**

**Expect to spend at least three years doing your residency where for the first year you are an called an intern.** Residency training takes place in a hospital setting in which you earn a salary (on average, $48,000/year) while you are trained in your specialty. It begins in the first week of July after you graduate from medical school (in May). You are responsible for patients and are supervised by senior residents as well as attending physicians. Residency training can vary in length from 3 years (e.g. family medicine, internal medicine, pediatrics, anesthesiology, critical care medicine, infectious diseases, psychiatry, preventative medicine, urology, and neurology) to 7 or more (e.g. general surgery).

* Some specialties (e.g. ophthalmology, dermatology) require one year of general medicine or general surgery directly after medical school (a "prelim" year) before you begin residency training in your specific field. This may occur at a different hospital from where you do the rest of your training.
* At some point during your residency you must pass the USMLE Step 3 or COMLEX Level 3 in order to be state-certified for practice of medicine. USMLE Step 3 and COMLEX Level 3 cover clinical thinking and clinical management.

**6**

**Consider fellowship training.** Sub-specialty training (called fellowships) takes additional years to complete. Fellowship training refers to optional training beyond residency to become even more specialized within a field. For example, one may complete a residency in general internal medicine, and then pursue a fellowship in cardiology or gastroenterology. Fellowships typically range in length from 1 to 3 years.

**7**

**Get board certified.** Once you're doing with your residency, you have the option to take your final boards, where you will be a licensed doctor all on your own. With this test under your belt, you are free to practice medicine. Congratulations!

* Obtain specialty certification, too. Medical doctors have the option to earn certification in the specialty of their interest from an accredited organization. Earning certification will demonstrate a candidate's knowledge and skills in a specific medical specialty, such as immunology, dermatology, neurological surgery or ophthalmology.

**Part 5 of 5: Being Right for the Job**

**1**

**Be aware of the time and money commitment.** Simply put, becoming a doctor is a ‘’lot’’ of work. It’s a decade of your life, after college, spent studying, not making money, and putting fun on the backburner. It’s hundreds of thousands of dollars spent that may or may not be easy to pay off. It’s hours of lost sleep you’ll never be able to make up and nights of wanting to find some relief; you’re so stressed. It’s work, and lots of it.

* Realize that the road to becoming a physician is long, hard, and full of many obstacles. You'll work long hours, [deal with difficult people](http://www.wikihow.com/Deal-With-Impossible-People), and your life during this process will practically revolve around your work. People's lives will depend on your commitment to the job and your ability to stay calm and make decisions under pressure.