🌌 Timeline Tips: Year-by-Year Guide to Staying on Track

Freshman Year: Explore + Establish

Goal: Get your bearings, build a strong academic foundation, and start testing the waters.

Academics:

- Take core science/math prereqs: Gen Chem I, Orgo I, Bio I, Calculus/Stats
- Get used to a college-level workload
- I personally went to my department's academic center to make a 4-year
 plan with an upperclassman student representative
- Don't sign up for 8 a.m. Organic Chemistry, unless you hate yourself or are an unnatural morning person

Activities:

- Join pre-health organizations
 - These clubs can provide valuable insights into the pre-health process and help you build connections with like-minded peers.
 - That said, they aren't essential for everyone. Some students may find them overwhelming or anxiety-inducing, so prioritize your well-being and engage at your own pace
- Begin volunteering (e.g., hospitals, clinics, or service-learning organizations)
 - It's often best to ease into college life before taking on additional commitments. Consider spending your first semester researching opportunities and getting acclimated, then start volunteering in your second semester when you feel more settled
 - Freshman year is like the appetizer sampler try a bit of everything before you commit \(\begin{align*} \equiv \left\)



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- Find a mentor (advisor, older student, cool TA who isn't dead inside)
- Start a journal for shadowing/volunteering experiences



Goal: Deepen your interest in medicine and build your resume.

Academics:

- Orgo II, Gen Chem II, Physics, Psychology/Sociology
- Start planning for upper-level bio courses

Activities:

- Shadow a physician + Start a clinical job (no Grey's Anatomy or the PITT does not count—10/10 shows btw)
 - Different ways to find clinical experiences are in my newsletter: itsbaezuh.substack.com;)
- Get involved in one or two meaningful extracurriculars
 - I loved tutoring at elementary schools, which made me consider working with the pediatric patient population in the future
- Apply for summer research/clinical internships
 - There are many summer research programs geared towards pre-med students, but you can also do more focused research with a professor
 - And you need to stop comparing how much you get paid with the frankly unnecessary amount of money tech interns get, and no, I am not still bitter about this...

🤯 Tips:

- Start thinking about the MCAT prep timeline (next year you will thank you)
- Get to know at least 2-3 professors well (future letter writers!)

🤵 Junior Year: Execute + Excel

Goal: This is your most important prep year — time to get serious about the MCAT and application.

Academics:

- Finish all core preregs ideally before the MCAT
 - If you are NOT planning to take any gap years, I'd recommend taking the MCAT the summer between sophomore and junior year OR the winter/spring of Junior year
 - Medical School Applications open in May, so having your desired MCAT score by then will set you up for success
- Take upper-division science classes to prove you've got the chops
- Junior year is when your planner cries itself to sleep

Activities:

- Study for and take the MCAT
- Start writing personal statement and compiling activities for **AMCAS/AACOMAS**
 - Some universities have a pre-health committee process to apply to medical or PA school, so do your research on what your school offers
- Secure letters of recommendation (please ask at least 2 months ahead of time—please 😭)

🧠 Tips:

- Consider taking a light spring/summer course load if you're taking the MCAT during that time
- Create a realistic study schedule (and stick to it 80% of the time...that's a win)

🦥 Senior Year (or Gap Year): Apply + Adapt

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Goal: Apply, interview, and plan your future. Or take a gap year and breathe a little.

Academics:

- Finish any outstanding courses
- Consider fun electives or burnout-prevention classes (e.g., art, ethics, sleep)

Activities:

- Submit your AMCAS/AACOMAS early (May/June)
- Prep for interviews (MMI practice, mock interviews)
- Continue volunteering/research (med schools don't want to see you drop everything right after applying)

🧠 Tips:

- Gap year? Use it wisely: research, postbac or master's program, work as a scribe/MA, travel with purpose
- Someone once told me that applying to med school is like dating lots of rejections before you find 'the one'
 - Yeah, it didn't make me feel better either...

Takeaway

- Remember that everyone's path looks different, and detours are okay
- You've got this! And if not, at least you'll have enough stories to write a killer personal statement 😉

Thank you for Reading!



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