

# ACCEPTED



**A Guide For Getting into Medical School By  
Someone Who Did It**

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## Foreword

It is a dream for many that a career in Medicine will be the culmination of a college career. Such a worthy goal is appropriate for those with dreams, but attaining that goal is a challenge for many in this era of application to medical schools around the country. High GPA requirements, MCAT scores that are difficult to attain, and the need for community service and shadowing activities mean that the average college applicant to medical school has to be someone bordering on an I.Q. genius level while dedicating what seems every working moment to getting into that career pathway.

Well, don't worry, at least, not excessively. In the pages that follow, my friend Kyle Langston lays out a path of approaching medical school applications that, if followed, will bring you, the medical school candidate, so much closer to achieving this worthy goal. Kyle takes you - one step at a time - through what often seems to be an arduous process, breaking it down into steps which, if carefully and prospectively followed by the committed medical school candidate, will hopefully lead to a path of acceptance to medical school, and to working to better the human condition.

This, then, is an important work of fact and not fiction: These are the steps that candidates must follow to gain that high privilege: To learn the applied science of Medicine for the purpose of easing the burdens of others.

I hope you enjoy these pages as much as I have had the pleasure of offering gentle edits here and there, in our sincere hope that you may find your path.

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## **Preface**

My name is Kyle Langston, and I graduated from Baylor in May of 2020. While there were many things I enjoyed doing over these past 4 years, nothing compared to the joy I got out of mentoring pre-med students. As I began my last semester at Baylor, the growing realization that I would no longer be around to mentor these students began to set in. I was disappointed to say the least, so when somebody proposed the idea of writing an advice guide, I jumped at the opportunity.

Included in this “survival guide” is every piece of advice I feel confident enough to write on. I don’t expect anybody to exhaustively study all of these, but I hope that each of them will help at least one student on their journey to becoming a physician. I tried to put all of the table of contents in chronological pre-medical order (MCAT advice before interview advice, etc.).

Throughout these pages there will be four pieces titled “A Schedule for your Freshman/Sophomore/Junior/Senior Year”. Following each of these are pieces specifically for that year (MCAT advice follows “A Schedule for Your Senior Year”). You will also notice that almost half of these writings are placed before “A Schedule for Your Freshman Year”. This is because these are pieces of advice I wish I had known going into college, but are applicable to any student of any year.

I also hope that the advice included here will not be used as any sort of an absolute. I will be including my personal opinions on these matters, and I hope that each of you read them as just that, an opinion. The most important piece of advice I give to undergraduates, something that I’ll say so many times throughout these pages it may drive some readers away, is that the formula for each student getting into medical school is unique. Medical schools really are not searching for

cookie-cutter applicants. As such, some of this advice will resonate more with some than others, and that's ok, that's how it should work!

I have always recommended that students evaluate the source of their advice before taking it as fact. It would be foolish to take study strategy advice from a student with a 2.0 GPA. It would similarly be ill-advised to take advice on pre-medical matters in general from somebody who did not get into medical school themselves. It is for this reason that I will speak a bit on the results of my application process. I interviewed with and was accepted to every Texas medical school (save TCOM and Texas Tech, because I did not finish my applications). I decided to attend UT Southwestern Medical School in the fall of 2020.

For those reading this for advice I ask only one thing: That if you have used any of the advice here to become a more successful pre-med, you in turn take on the responsibility of helping to mentor the students that come after you. I hope you will find that there is no greater feeling than that of mentorship. While it is not always easy, I feel that it is the most rewarding role on the planet.

I hope this serves as a way for me to continue to mentor members of the pre-med community for years to come. If there is anything you are struggling with that is not brought up in the pages that follow, please feel free to send me an email at [Acceptedpremedguide@outlook.com](mailto:Acceptedpremedguide@outlook.com) (even if you're reading this ten or more years down the road).

## Acknowledgements

It would be impossible to write about my successes and failures without first and foremost thanking the one person that got me through it all. I could not have managed the stresses of undergrad if it weren't for the faith I have placed in Jesus. I also want to thank my parents for their never-ending support.

I can confidently say I would not be in the position I am now if it wasn't for the tremendous mentors I had throughout my time at Baylor. I firmly believe that nobody can handle the journey to medical school without someone to help light the way. First and foremost I would like to thank Dr. Marty Harvill. Dr. Harvill has been a strong mentor figure to me from the first week I stepped on campus to the day I graduated and beyond.

I would also like to thank Dr. Raymond Fowler for reviewing the guide and providing insight into the pieces from a medical school admissions committee member. His advice was invaluable in discerning that this guide would be helpful to all students wanting to get into medical school.

I would be remiss to write an acknowledgements section for this without recognizing those responsible for my being here to write it in the first place. My junior year of college I fell in love with a group of students. They helped me recognize my passion for mentorship (even when they made it difficult). Thank you to Meredith Ehlmann, Gabriel Andino, Megan Hudson, Garrett Croley, Annie Arvidson, Dylan Riley, Ally Wimberly, and Andy Le. You all have had a greater impact on me than you could ever imagine.

## **The Most Important Pre-med Advice**

You might think it would be difficult to peg one piece of advice as the most important. This survival guide is well over 100 pages total, so how can I pick just one of those pages to be the most important? The decision was actually easy. This is the piece of advice I have given to almost every pre-med student because it is perhaps the only piece of advice I can give that is wholly and completely applicable to every student. This is not a piece of advice that is strictly academic, extracurricular, or application-based. Rather it transcends all of these and is instead a piece of advice on how to be a pre-med.

One of the most common questions students come to me with is “should I join/drop this organization/activity”. My response is always a simple “I don’t know”. I can give specific advice on how much it will help your application, but (surprisingly) that's not the only thing to consider. Here I will discuss the three things that you should look at when deciding whether or not to make a long-term time commitment:

1. How much will it help your application?
2. How much time will it take up?
3. How much will you enjoy it?

It is important to note that these three things are not in any particular order. In a perfect world you would find something that greatly helps your application, takes up very little time, and you have a lot of fun doing. If you find anything like this, please call me and let me know because I want in. Looking at all three questions is important because far too often students are only worried about question number one. They exclusively ask themselves what they should do as a pre-med rather than what they want to do.

The problem with this is three-fold. For starters many students end up burning themselves out because they do very few things on a consistent basis that they enjoy. Secondly, they become the infamous “cookie-cutter pre-med”, looking the exact same as almost everybody else applying and having nothing that makes them stand out to Admissions Committee members.

Finally, as I will mention throughout the advice in this guide, they will fail miserably in their interviews because they won’t have anything on their application that they are passionate about. It is impossible to be overly successful in something that you don’t find genuine joy in. Even if you do manage to do it for an extended period of time and put it on your application, your face will not light up with excitement when your interviewer asks about it. It is impossible to fake true passion, so stick to including things on your application that you will have fun talking about.

It is true that you need shadowing, volunteering, and leadership. There is no way around this fact. The beautiful thing is that there is so much variation in how you can get these hours. Your volunteering can be, in part, at an animal shelter if you love dogs, or through a church if you’re passionate about your faith. Don’t do the same things as other pre-meds simply for the sake of doing what you’re supposed to do.

For example, I decided to pick up a minor in philosophy. I knew that it would help my application less than a minor in another life science, but it wasn’t more of a time commitment than picking any other minor, and it was something I thought I would find much joy in. Similarly, my philosophy classes got me very interested in political philosophy, so I got a job working as a writer for a political outlet. Again, it would show some responsibility on my application but wouldn’t be as beneficial as other things I could do with my time. I decided to try it out and realized that it wasn’t a terribly large time commitment and I thoroughly enjoyed it.

I was surprised to find that these two things were among the most talked about during my interviews. The interviewers saw that I had done my shadowing, volunteering, etc., and we talked about that of course. But, they were curious about the two things mentioned above because they made me different from the other 20 interviewees they had that weekend. All of this should be a relief. It means you shouldn't do all the things everybody tells you to do. It means you don't have to be miserable for the next four years. Instead, go out and find something you are passionate about. If you are in an organization and don't feel excited about it, then quit. If you can't find any organizations that fit what you're passionate about, then create a new one. You will be amazed with the dedication you show towards creating/improving organizations if it is something you are passionate about. Cover all the basics for a medical school applicant but do it the **(insert your name here)** way. You become what you truly are, and will be.

## **Making Your Journal**

This may be the most important piece of practical information you will find in this survival guide. The moment you step foot on campus, you will begin building your resume for medical school. You may volunteer to help other students move in the first full day you're on campus. You may land a shadowing gig back home on an off weekend in the fall. You might have a job in the spring of your freshman year. It is great that you are getting things kicked off so early in your pre-med career, but there is one little problem. When it comes time to fill out your medical school applications, you will be asked to input information like "What dates did you volunteer?", "How did your experience with that physician impact you?", and "How many hours per week did you work that semester?".

These answers need to be accurate, which is why keeping a journal is so important. Here I will outline what all should be included in this journal. It is important to note that the journal is only helpful if you take the time to record every piece of information relevant to your future resume, and you record this info as close to the day of the activity as possible. You will need to have tabs in the journal to separate shadowing from volunteering and other activities.

**Shadowing Experiences:** These ought to be some of the most important experiences of your pre-med journey. When I shadowed, I would actually keep my journal with me and write down notes about things I thought were interesting or knew I would want to remember in the future. I began each of these pages with a note including the date, the physician I was shadowing, the location where I was shadowing, and the number of hours I shadowed. I would then go throughout the day making notes and, when the day was over, I would write down any special experiences that changed me as a person or future physician. Be as specific as possible here,

because if you aren't, you will have difficulty trying to figure out what you were thinking when it is a year or more in the future.

**Volunteering:** Much like shadowing, this should include the date, the organization, what you did, and anything special that happened that you may want to talk about in an essay or interview. You will most likely have at least one volunteering gig that will take place on a weekly basis for the same number of hours for a semester or more. In this case I usually make one page dedicated to that activity and just write the dates I did down the page so that I can add up all the hours when it is time to submit applications.

**Work:** I would recommend against making a note every time you finish a shift at work, but you will be asked on medical school applications how many hours a week you worked each semester. For this reason I would recommend keeping a work tab in your journal, where you can write where you worked each semester and for how many hours a week you worked on average

**Research:** Much like work, you don't need to make a journal entry every time you work on your research project. You will be asked to talk about each of your projects and give an estimated time spent on the project or in the lab. It is for this reason that I would have a research tab in your journal and would make a note for every project you worked on that includes the name of the project, the dates you worked on the project (even if it spans multiple semesters), the number of hours per week you worked on averaged between those dates, a brief description of the project, any symposiums where you presented the project, and any journals in which the project was published.