



# Success in Medical School: Insider Advice for the Preclinical Years

*Samir P. Desai, Rajani Katta*

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Medical school is intense, demanding, and stressful. How can you overcome the challenges and excel?

How can you make the most of your preclinical years to build a strong foundation for your career as a physician? What do you need to do as a preclinical student to maximize your chances of matching with the specialty and residency program of your choice?

Consider the following:

- "There are some career specialties, however, that due to their highly competitive nature may require early decisions to be made about how to proceed in your medical school choices," writes the Georgetown University School of Medicine.
- The University of California Davis School of Medicine writes that "preclinical academic performance is important, not just as 'grades and scores,' but because excellence in your clinical years will depend on how well you've learned the lessons and discipline of your preclinical years." (University of California Davis School of Medicine website)
- "The knowledge gained during preclinical years provides the essential foundation for clerkship success," writes Dr. Shahram Lotfipour, Associate Dean and Professor of Emergency Medicine at the University of California Irvine School of Medicine.
- "In schools with non-pass/fail grading systems, high grades may be an important factor in class ranking for nomination to the Alpha Omega Alpha (AOA) Honor Society and for the residency application," writes Dr. Ali Alikhan, a faculty member in the Mayo Clinic Department of Dermatology. "Additionally, because the vast majority of dermatology applicants are outstanding, there is no need to take students with low basic science grades." (Alikhan)
- "As some residency programs are becoming more competitive because of either the reduction in the number of positions or the increase in the number of applicants, the USMLE scores are being used in various ways in making decisions on whom to select for interviews," writes the University of Washington School of Medicine. (University of Washington School of Medicine website)
- A survey of over 130 general surgery residency program directors found that most program directors value research involvement. However, 29.9% of program directors rarely or never placed value on research that was not published as an abstract or paper. (Research performed by Stony Brook University Medical Center)
- "We have found that medical school community service participation is positively associated with better academic performance and can influence residency selection and participation in service following graduation," writes the Medical University of South Carolina. (Research performed by the Medical University of South Carolina)
- "When looking at involvement in extracurricular activities, all program directors ranked 'leadership roles' as highly important," writes Dr. Kimberly Anderson, Professor of Surgery at the University of Texas Houston Medical School. (American College of Surgeons website)

To succeed in medical school, you'll obviously have to work hard. However, that's nowhere near enough. As faculty advisors, we've found that misperceptions about the factors leading to success as a student and in the

residency match are shockingly common. Our detailed advice, based on evidence from research in the field and experiences with high-performing students, will provide you a strategy for success.

What study skills separate the top from the average students? What study skills can help boost performance on the USMLE exam? Are you at risk for a low USMLE score? How can you choose a research project and advisor that leads to publication? How can you participate in community service and make meaningful contributions? Why is leadership in medical school important?

Utilizing a strong combination of evidence-based advice and insider knowledge, this book will provide you the knowledge and guidance you need to achieve your goal: Success in Medical School.

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