



PA-CAT Study Guide

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How do I prepare for the PA-CAT exam?

The goal of this study guide is to assist you with implementing regular study practice in the months leading up to your PA-CAT exam. Preparing for an exam can be stressful, but a little preparation can go a long way; you are more likely to do well when you have had ample time to practice and study the material. Being prepared and organized will help you reduce stress and test day anxiety.

What is covered on the exam?

The PA-CAT is a standardized assessment of 240 multiple-choice questions with an allotted time frame of 4.5 hours. This includes exam time, tutorials, and post-exam survey. The test is delivered electronically at Prometric testing centers across the US. The questions are designed to measure your knowledge and application in key prerequisite science subjects typically required for PA School.

Covered Subjects:

Anatomy
Physiology
General Biology
Biochemistry
General and Organic
Chemistry
Microbiology
Behavioral Sciences
Genetics
Statistics

Here are sample topics from Biochemistry*:

Introduction to Biochemistry concepts
Integration of Metabolism
Proteins
Specialized Metabolism of Tissues
Cell Membranes and Cell Communication
Enzymes
Specific Functions of Proteins
Lipids
Nucleic Acids
Vitamins
Carbohydrates

**Note: Topics vary by exam form and are subject to change.*

What is your baseline?

Before you begin to study, it is important to understand your strengths and weaknesses.

- Review your syllabi from previous classes and any exams or quizzes you have taken. If you don't have any syllabi, search online to see what is publicly available.
- Take inventory of areas where you did not perform well, areas you are not sure you still remember, and areas you have a solid grasp on.
- We also highly recommend talking to your professors and TAs. They can help with your strengths and weaknesses analysis and point out other areas that may not be on your radar.

Don't cram - Plan

Now that you understand where your baseline is, fill in the remaining areas that you need to focus on and create a study outline. Then look over your schedule, take inventory of your responsibilities and what you need to accomplish for the PA-CAT, and start planning your study sessions.

Don't overschedule. Manage your time wisely and pace yourself. Studying for your PA-CAT exam is not a sprint; it's a marathon. By giving yourself ample time, you can break up your study goals into smaller, more manageable chunks to make the process less daunting.

- Schedule study sessions based on your study outline and commit to them. Ask a friend to hold you accountable, if necessary.
- Assign specific goals for each study session based on your strengths and weaknesses.
- Study in a quiet space and stay clear of distractions (TV, loud music)
- Leave your phone in a different room or turn it off. Log out of social media.
- During each study session, tackle the harder concepts that require your full attention and focus first. Finish up with easier, more fun subjects.
- Be sure that you are studying for *understanding* and not just recognition. Below is a breakdown of what you will be asked to do with the information you are studying (subject to change with each version of the exam).

Knowledge	12%
Comprehension	25%
Application	54%
Analysis	9%

Yes, you will need to know the concepts and memorize appropriate terminology, but ensure that you are not just memorizing abstract concepts. Instead, take time to understand the content and how it can be applied.

Below are some study strategies that will help determine if you understand the material or if you're only testing your memory:

- Understand the broader concept before you memorize terminology.
- Visualize the concepts you are studying and their application.
- Rewrite the concepts in different words.
- Discuss a concept with another person and explain it to them. This can be done as part of a study group or with a person who does not have a background in that field. As you talk your way through it, you'll quickly find areas that require more attention.
- Be sure to take regular, short study breaks. Studying in bursts with 5- to 10-minute breaks is more effective than studying nonstop. Breathe, move and stretch, have a nutritious snack, drink some water, then return and refocus.
- Sneak in study time whenever you can.

Practice Test Taking

The PA-CAT is a computer-based multiple-choice exam. It is important to put time aside to practice test taking on a computer. We recommend that you take advantage of Exam Master's free resources for your test prep:

- Review the Sample Questions in our [Resources](#) section to get an understanding of the type of questions you will be asked on the PA-CAT exam.
- Take the Practice Exam to mimic the same conditions as the PA-CAT exam.

How to stay motivated

Motivation is not constant. It needs to be nurtured as you prepare for your exam. Anticipate peaks and valleys in your progress, and put tools in place to overcome the low points. Below are some suggestions:

- Make a list of the reasons you want become a physician assistant and what it would mean to you to get into the PA Program of your choice. When you experience a motivational low in your PA-CAT preparation, revisit what you wrote down to remind yourself of your goals.
- Find a study buddy or group you can trust to hold you accountable. Working with a peer or in a study group can keep you engaged, and it allows you to test your knowledge through conversation and interaction.
- Visualize yourself taking the PA-CAT exam successfully. You can mentally rehearse the task at hand, making it easier to find motivation to study.
- Focus on the subject you are working on and not the other areas you still need to tackle. Break it up into smaller chunks. Once you have completed one of those chunks, celebrate and reward yourself before moving on to the next.
- Remind yourself that this is a process that has an end date, especially if you are feeling overwhelmed or unmotivated. You started studying early and put a plan in place to get you there. There is a level of urgency, and it is important to acknowledge that, but there is also a light at the end of that tunnel.

Good luck from the Exam Master Team with your studies and on your PA-CAT exam!

For more information on the PA-CAT, visit our [Resources](#) page.