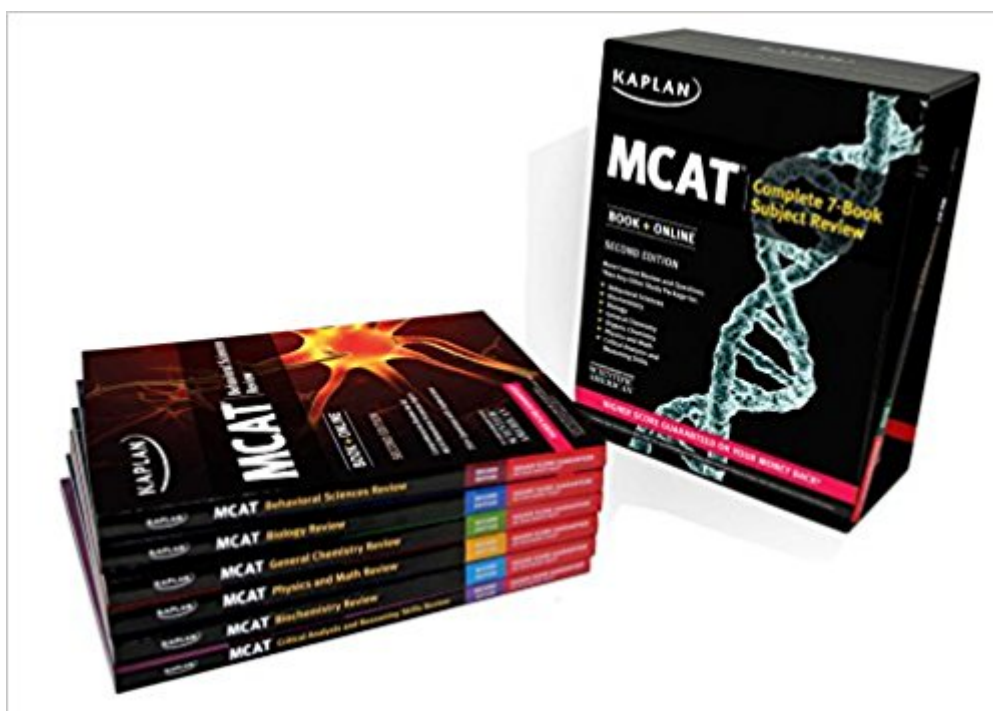


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Kaplan MCAT Complete 7-Book Subject Review: Book + Online (Kaplan Test Prep)



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I took the first administration of the new MCAT on April 17th, 2015. To prepare I read all 7 of the

Kaplan books, supplemented with Khan Academy, and I felt very prepared for the exam. Yes, there were some concepts in the Psychological, Social, and Biological Foundations of Behavior section that I felt Kaplan did not cover. However to be honest, these concepts were also not explicitly mentioned on the AAMC outline.

PROS:-They connect all the concepts and give tips, examples, mnemonics, and connections throughout all the books. There is quite a bit of reading to get through the books, but hey, the entire MCAT is testing your reading comprehension so you may as well get good at it. Connecting all these concepts really helped me see the bigger picture of what this test is about.

-Emphasis on key topics that were tested on and repetition of these concepts again and again and again.

-Simplified explanations (read below for Exam Kracker comparison): When you get a question wrong, it's nice to not only know the right answer but to also know why the answer you chose is wrong. Kaplan's explanations help you identify your weaker areas and it also teaches you how to strategize. For a majority of the questions encountered on the MCAT, you'll need to identify the "most correct" answer from other answers that are also correct. This is not only knowledge-driven but strategy-driven as well. If you don't understand why you're missing questions, then you won't be able to improve your score. Kaplan has the best and most simplified explanations and I think this was the biggest contributor in my practice test score improvements.

-Buying the books gives you access to an online portion of materials that includes 3 practice exams, and two "mini" passage tests per topic. These practice exams were EXTREMELY helpful. In my opinion, they were more accurate than the aamc practice exam to the real test.

Comparison to Exam Krackers books: I took the old MCAT about a year prior to taking the new test and studied from Exam Krackers, using a bit of Princeton Review on the side. My biggest issue with EK books were that they did not connect the concepts in a manner that helped me understand or remember the material better. Most of my time studying was spent trying to decipher the explanations given for the practice passages. And when I say decipher, I mean that the explanations are so vague I would end up spending countless hours trying to learn the concepts at a "deeper conceptual level", when really my issue was that frankly I just sucked at eliminating wrong answers and making educated guesses. These are skills that improved tremendously when I used the Kaplan books for the new MCAT. I was able to borrow the new Exam Kracker books from a friend two weeks prior to taking the new MCAT as last minute practice after utilizing all of the Kaplan and Khan materials. I only did the passages in the Bio I (Biochem) and Psych books. Comparatively, the passages provided in the Bio I EK book were no better than those provided from Kaplan, and once again the explanations were vague. For the last four passages in the EK Psych book, I felt the answers were extremely subjective and absolutely ridiculous. As well,

the EK Psych book is less than half the size of the Kaplan equivalent (much less material and explanation). And of course the stupid mascot of EK- "salty the condescending kracker" is on every other page making pointless, condescending comments. Bottom line: Kaplan books rocked. I felt well prepared (in combination with Khan Academy) and I had access to 3 practice exams at less cost than other prep companies. Also, please note that the most critical review (thus far) of these books is an MCAT instructor paid to teach from Exam Krackers materials. I am a student. I have studied from both Exam Krackers and Kaplan and have taken both the old and new MCATs. Please ask if you have any questions about the prep material.

100% Recommend this set if you intend on spending the time to study properly. Unlike Princeton Review, you're getting a much more concise product that focuses on what you need to know. Little side panels with MCAT Expertise, Mnemonics, and Real Life ties in are great in case you're having a tough time understanding the section in question. They also do a really good job of tying things together; they make it a point to tell you "well, your studies of Biochem are not isolated. You'll see mention of this concept in Organic Chemistry chapter 8 because it is very important across the board." Stuff like that. There are also some interesting ways that they introduce a chapter and relate it to you- I've even cracked up a few times at their scienc-y jokes. I just spent the past 8 months with these books. I read them all the way through (except Verbal), highlighting/underlining things I found important. Then I went through them all the way again, taking scrupulous notes on all the important stuff that I had highlighted, or that the MCAT Expertise portions had brought up. Then I went through each practice passage at the end of the chapters, and I made sure I knew why every answer was what it was. The questions at the end of each chapter cover at least a portion of each topic from the preceding chapter, so if you're clueless, you can go back and study up, and then realize what they're asking about. The practice problems were pretty easy, they just made sure you were aware of what to know. The practice tests that come with the package, on the other hand, were usually very difficult. With them, it wasn't enough to just know the material- you had to be able to catch the curve balls they would throw. Lots of tricks. But, there are only so many tricks to know and when you spend enough time figuring out how to solve them when they appear, you get a very good grasp on the basic material. Then I moved on to the AAMC practice questions. There weren't very many tricks here. They were much easier to answer because I had developed a strong understanding of topics in anticipation of harder questions. I took the test last weekend, and I was freaking out about Phys/Chem. But the questions throughout the test seemed to be all focused on the basic knowledge. I didn't see many curve balls, and I felt really good. It seemed like Kaplan

gave me tough questions where you had to understand A to get to B. The real test only asked about A. It was a great feeling, and I thank Kaplan for their diligence and thoroughness. I'd rather have spent extra time learning all the details they suggest just to be more familiar. I mean, shouldn't that be the attitude of an aspiring physician anyway? One note I would make on Psych/Social- you're going to have to learn most/all of the definitions in this book. As opposed to the other sections, this is more definition regurgitation than problem solving. They definitely cover what you need, but you'll have to do more than just understand the practice questions.

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