



Am I Cut Out for a Combined BS/MD Program?



An [Accepted.com](http://www.accepted.com) *Special Report*



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Introduction

Most students who apply to college don't have any idea what their long term goals are; they don't know what they want to be when they "grow up" and plan on using their undergraduate careers as a springboard for thinking about their futures. There are some students, however, who have a very clear picture of where they are going. Becoming a doctor, for a few, is a goal that's evolved and solidified for years, maybe even from their earliest memories. As high school students, these students likely focus on the sciences and work towards accumulating as much exposure to the medical field as possible. Many may refer to their desire to become a doctor as a calling.

It is for these students that highly competitive BS/MD programs were created. If you know (or are pretty sure, at least) that you want to enter the medical field, plus you are a motivated, hard-working, goal-oriented high school student who has earned high marks in your coursework and on relevant achievement tests (like the SAT, ACT, and SAT IIs), then a combined BS/MD program may be perfect for you.

This special report explores the pros and cons of such programs and provides tips to help you determine if a joint BS/MD program is right for you.

So You Think You'd Like to Become a Doctor

If so, you are like thousands of high school students as they [begin their college search](#)¹ each year. Medicine is one of the relatively few careers that high school students have direct exposure to. For some students, this exposure comes from a parent or sibling who practices medicine; but for almost all students applying to college, they themselves have been to the doctor.

If you are a student who has met with academic success, has an interest in science, and has a desire to help others, then medicine probably seems like a natural fit for you. As you talk about it with others, the path seems more and more appropriate. It's an easy answer to one of the tough questions that adults ask during this process: "What are you going to major in?" Your reply is simple and met with satisfaction: "I'm going to be pre-med."

At many colleges, however, pre-med is not a major. It is a series of courses that students must take in order to sit for the MCAT (Medical College Admissions Test) and apply to medical school. Many of these classes dovetail with university requirements for a biology-related major, but at this point, you need not major in science to be a successful applicant to medical school. (The American Association of Medical Colleges is planning to announce [changes to the MCAT](#)² in November 2011, which will affect students beginning in 2015 and may change the required coursework.)

If you are considering a pre-med path through college, your opportunities to explore start in high school. Spend time shadowing a physician. Gain bench research experience. Enroll in demanding science courses in your high school. Participate in health-related volunteer work. Each of these activities will further enhance your profile in the future and help you to understand and articulate your own desire to become a physician.

1 <http://www.accepted.com/college/admission-process.aspx>

2 https://www.aamc.org/initiatives/mr5/preliminary_recommendations/182498/preliminary_recommendations.html

Advantages and Disadvantages of Combined BS/MD Programs

If you are fully committed to the idea of pursuing a medical career, a combined program may seem like the best of both worlds. In one application process, you can assure yourself of your future medical career, eliminate uncertainty and stress during your undergraduate years, and, without completing a full medical school application process, potentially save yourself thousands of dollars in application costs.

With so many benefits, it is easy to see why the several dozen combined programs are so highly sought after. Admission to many of them is more competitive than even the most selective colleges, easily in the low single digits with extremely talented applicant pools. These programs also do not obligate you to attend medical school, but with such competitive applicant pools, it is easy to understand why universities do not want to waste resources on students who are not committed to a career in medicine.

If you have top notch high school credentials, including GPA, test scores, challenging curriculum, and a [demonstrated interest](#)³ (through volunteer service, research, and clinical shadowing), some of these programs might be a [good fit](#)⁴ for you.

However, for many other applicants, following the traditional route of pursuing a bachelor's degree and completing your pre-medical requirements before applying to medical school makes more sense than attending a combined BS/MD program. Consider the following:

The additional few years of undergraduate education and life perspective can truly help you to determine which educational environment is best for you. Is there an area of the country that you prefer? Are you interested in serving a specific population? Some medical schools emphasize family practice while others focus more on scientific research and academic career preparation.

If you choose to pursue a combined program, be certain that you are doing so in an environment that suits you for its undergraduate experience. There is a chance you will find that medicine is not your calling. In some cases, the undergraduate requirements to maintain your medical school space are extremely tough. You are most likely to thrive in an environment that makes you happy.

3 <http://www.accepted.com/college/essay-topics.aspx>

4 <http://www.accepted.com/college/how-to-choose.aspx>

Hints for Admission to Combined BS/MD Programs

If you are planning to apply to combined BS/MD programs, early planning is essential. These programs vary in their admission requirements and developing the extracurricular resume that will make you a competitive candidate will take advance planning.

- **Consider your math and science curriculum.** Outstanding grades are a must, as is a commitment to maintaining them in college. Your grades, however should come from many of the more challenging course offerings in your high school. Many BS/MD programs will look carefully at your entire curriculum, but also pay extra attention to your math and science preparation
- **Plan for Standardized Testing.** The test requirements for these programs also vary. Some will require SAT II exams, and might specify which ones. As you consider your long-range plans, it is best to take the SAT II exams while the material is fresh in your mind. Are you taking chemistry in school this year? If so, think about taking the chemistry SAT II next spring. For the most selective of the combined programs, successful applicants are presenting excellent test scores as well as grades. If you need time to [prepare for the SAT](#)⁵ or ACT, then allow for it and research your test prep options.
- **Focus on research or health related experiences.** Your exposure to the health care field is paramount in confirming your commitment to the field of medicine. Volunteer experience and physician shadowing are two ways that you can gain experience in a health care setting. Scientific research will give you the tools you need as a medical student to understand the changes in the field of medicine. While many science fair projects will guide you through the scientific method, a more complex, longer term project under the mentorship of a local college professor will offer more exposure to the type of scientific study you will undertake in medical school.

If you think these combined and/or accelerated programs interest you, [begin planning as early](#)⁶ as possible and keep an open mind regarding all of your undergraduate and graduate school options.

5 <http://www.accepted.com/college/sat-study.aspx>

6 <http://www.accepted.com/college/admission-process.aspx>

Epilogue

Thank you for downloading this exclusive Accepted.com special report. We hope you've learned important tips to help you decide if a combined BS/MD program is right for you.

Deciding that you will apply to a joint undergraduate-med school program is one thing; filling out the actual applications and [writing the essays](#)⁷ is quite another. If you don't feel confident about creating and polishing your BS/MD essays, then the talented and knowledgeable [admissions consulting](#)⁸ staff at Accepted.com would be happy to help you. Even if you think you can accomplish this lofty goal on your own, a second set of experienced, objective eyes can add valuable perspective when you've just spent too much time looking at and thinking about the words in your essays. Professional writers have editors for good reasons. Shouldn't you, like the thousands of clients who have worked with Accepted since 1994, have a pro on your side for something as important as your BS/MD application essays?

[Please click here for our catalogue of services.](#)⁹ We look forward to hearing from you!