

Advanced Placement (AP) Credit & the Pre-Med Student

*Adapted from University of Pennsylvania & Georgetown University

How Medical Schools View AP Credits

Some medical schools do accept Advanced Placement credit to satisfy pre-med admissions requirements, many do not. Nor are the individual schools entirely clear or consistent on this matter. Even if a certain medical or health professional school does accept AP credit, you will be a much stronger candidate for admission if you take your science courses in college. For most medical schools, Advanced Placement (AP) credit cannot be used to fulfill the pre-medical requirements. If you have AP credit in courses required for medical school (Biology, Chemistry, English, Mathematics, and Physics) you need to take additional courses in those areas to complete the medical school admission requirements.

A good rule of thumb is: If you can present an official transcript from a four-year U.S. college with a grade for these subjects, you are safe; if not, you may have difficulties. Each subject has its own peculiarities and we will consider each separately.

To find out about requirements for all of the medical schools in the United States, check the Association of American Medical Colleges' [Medical School Admission Requirements](#) and the [Osteopathic Medical College Information Book](#). Both are updated annually. They include general information about preparing for medical school as well as information about the specific requirements of each U.S. medical school.

Some U.S. medical schools are flexible about AP credit for Mathematics and Physics. Nonetheless, if you have AP credit in the sciences, you ideally should take an additional course for each semester of AP credit you have earned in that area. The goal is to help you move beyond the introductory course and to make sure that you do formal coursework in each science as an undergraduate. If you have AP credit, you should not repeat information that you already know or retake the introductory courses, unless you are sure that your AP score placed you too high. Instead, use the AP credit as an opportunity to gain more depth in that area of study. Supplement your introductory knowledge with more advanced courses.

Note that Harvard will accept one semester of AP credit in Physics and Chemistry for those applying to their New Pathway Program. Johns Hopkins will also accept one semester of AP credit in Physics and Chemistry. By and large, though, it is best to follow the safest path, and take the additional courses. After all, some medical schools require some additional science courses for all candidates. For example, the University of California schools and the University of Texas schools require all applicants to complete four semesters of Biology.

Also, note that through the AP program you can earn credit for the lecture components of science courses but not for the laboratory components, required by all but one of the 125 M.D. programs in the United States.

Biology

The vast majority, if not all medical schools require one year of biology with labs taken in college. Students who receive a 4 or better on their AP Biology exam will receive college credit for BIO200 (and counts as a sequence in NATURAL SCIENCES AND MATHEMATICS) which equals 6 credits. In order to receive 8 credits (to count for BIO121 and 123/124), students must contact their high school to get documentation that the AP Biology course included a lab. Students should be in touch with their recorder to assist them with this process. Should you choose to keep your full AP Biology credit, you must take 8 credits worth of BIOLOGY (2 of those credits must account for labs). However, we encourage students to take BIO121 and BIO123/124 to aid in building their science foundation, preparing for material on the MCAT/DAT, and adding to a strong GPA. For non-science majors, we strongly recommend you forfeit the credit and take the lecture and lab. **PLEASE BE ADVISED THAT SOME MEDICAL SCHOOLS REQUIRE THREE OR EVEN FOUR SEMESTERS OF BIOLOGY.**

Chemistry

Students who receive a 3 or better on their AP Chemistry exam will receive college credit for CHEM103 (in NATURAL SCIENCES AND MATHEMATICS) which equals 3 credits. Students must take the general chemistry sequence, CHE106/107 and CHE116/117 to achieve their required 8 credits in inorganic chemistry. After successfully completing the general chemistry sequence, students can advance to the organic chemistry sequence the following year, CHE275/276 and CHE325/326 to achieve their required 8 credits in organic chemistry.

Physics

Student who receive a 3 or better on their AP Physics B exam will receive college credit for PHY101 and PHY102 (in NATURAL SCIENCES AND MATHEMATICS) which equals 8 credits. We encourage students to take the Physics sequence at Syracuse University, and not rely on AP credit alone, since an entire section the MCAT is dedicated to Physical Sciences and students are 3-4 years removed from the material. Even if you can meet this high standard, you will be a much stronger candidate for medical school if you take physics at SU. Most medical schools prefer that you take physics in college, and some have been known not to accept AP credit. Physics majors do not need to worry about using AP credit since they will take advanced courses in their degree. The safest thing for non-physics majors to do is to forfeit their AP credit and take General Physics I and II. Students have the option of taking PHY101/102 (life sciences) or PHY211/212 (calculus based) sequences for 8 credits. Alternatively, you could opt to enroll in higher level courses. Using your AP credit to skip over General Physics and go into a more advanced course is not advisable for non-science majors.

Mathematics

It is the case that 60 percent of the medical schools in the country have no formal mathematics requirement. Roughly 20 percent of the schools require one semester of mathematics in college, and the remaining 20 percent require two semesters of mathematics in college. A few medical schools require statistics, in addition to calculus. Our advice is to take at least one semester of math at SU, and having two terms of math on your transcript may make you a more competitive candidate. Self-assessment of your math skills is important. If you are a pre-med with AP credit in Mathematics you should take an additional Math course for the semester of AP credit you have earned. Medical schools allow you to take one calculus course and one statistics course (some even plan to make statistics a requirement). Statistics provides a good foundation for medical study and practice, which requires the interpretation of research reports and data.

English

If you are a pre-med with AP credit in English, you should select additional courses to strengthen your skills in analyzing literature and in writing. We recommend completing the requirement through taking a Writing course together with a course in English or Comparative Literature.