

A FREE GUIDE FROM JACK HASELTINE

The MCAT Question Review Playbook

Doing more questions is not what moves your score. How you review the ones you miss is. Here is the exact system I used to reach a 518.

This is the review method I used and the one I teach every MCAT student I coach.



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THE PART ALMOST EVERYONE RUSHES

Your score is built in the review, not in the question.

Most people study by doing a block, checking the score, feeling good or bad about it, and moving on. That is where scores plateau. The question you just did is only worth something if you sit with why you missed it.

Three things are true about review, and once you believe them your studying changes.

1**The review is where the score is made.**

Not the question itself. Doing a question and scrolling past it is a wasted rep. The learning happens when you figure out exactly why your answer was wrong and why the right one was right. Skip that and you paid for a question you did not use.

2**Reps plus real review is the whole engine.**

Content review gets facts into your head. Practice teaches you to use them the way the test demands. But volume with no review does little for you. In my experience, almost nobody climbs past the low 500s by doing more questions without reviewing them closely.

3**Honesty is the part that makes it work.**

The whole method falls apart the moment you lie about why you got something wrong. "Careless" is not a reason. If you did not actually know the content, admit it and go relearn it. Arrogance and wishful thinking are two of the most expensive habits on this test.

THE CORE LOOP, PART ONE

Start by naming the miss. There are four kinds.

■ Name the primary miss first: content, reasoning, timing, or unsure.

Before you do anything else, decide which kind of miss it was. A content gap, a reasoning miss where you knew the material and still picked wrong, a timing or process slip, or a question you got right but were not sure on. The type you pick decides the fix, and each one needs a different one. If two apply, log both and fix the one that drove your answer. The next two pages walk through all four.

■ Content gap: relearn the topic.

Read the explanation closely and relearn the exact topic. If it will not click, watch a Khan Academy or YouTube video on it. Be honest here. If it is a nephron question and you do not actually remember the nephron, admit it and go relearn it for 15 to 30 minutes, then do a few matched questions to confirm it stuck. Writing it out by hand is how I made it stick, so that is where I would start.

■ Reasoning miss: study the whole answer set.

You knew the content and still missed it. Read why your answer is wrong, why the correct one is right, and why each of the other choices is wrong. Over time this trains your brain on how the MCAT flows and how it builds its traps. You are not just fixing one question, you are learning the test's habits.

THE CORE LOOP, PART TWO

The bar is defending all four choices, not getting it right.

■ Timing or process miss: fix the process, not the content.

You knew it but skimmed, misread the question, or ran past a double negative because the clock was loud. That is a process problem, and more content review will not touch it. On questions you rushed or flagged, reread the final sentence of the question and confirm your answer actually addresses what was asked.

■ Right but unsure: treat it as not yet mastered.

The scoring counts it correct, but you know you were guessing. Flag it and review it exactly like a miss. A lucky guess you never go back to understand is a hole waiting for test day.

■ The mastery test, and graphs.

If you cannot explain why each of the three wrong choices is wrong and why the right one is right, you have not mastered that question yet, so do not move on. This matters most on figure questions: if three answers contradict the figure or are not supported by it, you should be able to point to the exact spot each one fails. If you cannot, you do not own the graph yet.

■ Write the real reason, then a takeaway.

One honest sentence on why you missed it, and not the word "careless." Did you misread the question, trust outside knowledge over the passage, or genuinely not know the concept? Then boil it into one line you could use to teach it to another student. If you can teach it, you own it.

TURN MISSES INTO PATTERNS

The error log is how review becomes a study plan.

Keep a simple sheet, one row per missed or uncertain question. It takes the review you just did and turns it into patterns you can act on. Copy this layout into your own spreadsheet.

Source	Which test and section, and the question number.
Type	Passage or discrete.
Topic	The specific content category. For example, amino acids, electrochem, or working memory.
Miss type	Content, reasoning, timing or process, or right but unsure.
Why I missed it	One honest sentence. Not the word careless. The real reason.
The correction	The concept, passage evidence, or reasoning step I should have used, in my own words.
Takeaway	One line you could use to teach it to someone else.

The power is in the patterns. After a few full-lengths, filter the log. If your misses cluster in one topic, that is a content target; go relearn it. If they cluster on "tricked by a choice" or "rushed," that is a reasoning or timing problem that more content review will not fix. **The log tells you what to do next, instead of guessing.**

EVERY MISS, DECODED

Name the miss, and the fix names itself.

Name the primary miss. If two apply, log both and fix the one that drove your answer.

Content gap

- LOOKS LIKE** You read the explanation and think "I never actually learned this," or you learned it and it is gone.
- THE FIX** Relearn the exact topic for 15 to 30 minutes: read the explanation closely, take notes, watch a video if needed, then do a few matched questions.
- THE TRAP** Reading the explanation, nodding, and calling that studying. Recognition is not knowledge.

Reasoning miss (you knew the content)

- LOOKS LIKE** You had everything you needed and still picked wrong, or fell for a trap answer that "looked right."
- THE FIX** Trace exactly where your thinking broke. Study why every choice is right or wrong so you learn the pattern the test keeps reusing.
- THE TRAP** Blaming the content and re-reading a textbook you already knew, when the real gap was how you reasoned.

Timing or process miss

- LOOKS LIKE** You knew it but skimmed, misread the question, or ran past a double negative because the clock was loud.
- THE FIX** A process problem, not a knowledge one. On rushed or flagged questions, reread the final sentence and confirm your answer addresses what was actually asked.
- THE TRAP** Filing it under "careless" and moving on, so the exact same miss shows up on your next full-length.

Right but unsure

- LOOKS LIKE** The scoring counts it correct, but you were not sure and you know it.
- THE FIX** Treat it as not yet mastered. Flag it and defend all four choices before you let it go.
- THE TRAP** Letting a green checkmark hide a hole you will pay for on test day.

THE REVIEW CHECKLIST

Run every miss through this before you finish reviewing it.

Do your review after the block or full-length, never mid-question against the clock. Then take each question you missed or were unsure on and run it through this before you close it out.

- ☐ Did I name the **miss type**: content, reasoning, timing, or unsure?
- ☐ Can I say **why each of the three wrong choices is wrong**, out loud?
- ☐ Can I say **why the right answer is right**, in my own words?
- ☐ Did I write the **real reason** I missed it, not "careless"?
- ☐ If it was a content gap, did I **relearn the topic** before moving on?
- ☐ Did I **flag every question I was unsure on** and review it too?
- ☐ On a figure question, can I **point to where each wrong choice breaks**?
- ☐ Did this question make it into my **error log**?
- ☐ After this full-length, did I **filter the log for patterns**?
- ☐ Could I **teach this question** to another student in one line?

The review is the habit. The plan is the **rest**.

This is one of the most important habits on the MCAT, and now it is yours. But a habit needs a plan built around it: what to study when, how to sequence UWorld and full-lengths, section-by-section strategy, and where to put the content cutoff so you actually get a real practice phase. That is what I put in **the Blueprint**. It is everything I did to hit a 518, laid out week by week, with the review method above at the center of it.

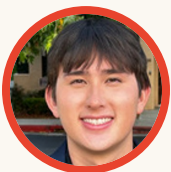
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I went from a 500 diagnostic to a 518 by getting more honest and systematic about review, and I have spent **two years** teaching that same habit to premeds. The method above is the real thing. The Blueprint is how you build a whole prep around it.



Questions first? Email me or visit jackhaseltine.com.

Jack Haseltine • MCAT 518, 95th percentile • premed coach

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