

# GAMSAT PREPARATION STRATEGY

Copyright © 2011 Dal Goodman

All rights reserved. This document may only be used by persons preparing for the Graduate Australian Medical Schools Admission Test (GAMSAT). Apart from such personal use, no part of this document may be used or reproduced in any form or by any method, or stored in any electronic storage system, without prior permission of the author. Copying any part of this document for any purpose other than your own personal preparation for GAMSAT is a violation of Australian Copyright Law.

With any exam, written or practical, the key is to get as much practice as possible under exam conditions. This does several things: it gets you used to that style of exam; it builds your confidence; it builds your speed; and it repeatedly exposes you to the same types of problems.

This is how driving and flying schools work - by putting you through repeated practice tests they get you ready and confident for the real thing.

Where do you get enough multiple choice practice material that is similar enough to GAMSAT to be worth using? At OZIMED we have developed ten full-length tests for you to practice with. Each test has the same number of questions, the same balance of topics, and the same time limits as the real GAMSAT. We also have one full-length test available for separate purchase so that you can see the quality of our work and begin your preparation early.

## STRATEGY

The ten tests we have developed, plus the one practice test available from ACER ([www.acer.edu.au](http://www.acer.edu.au)), give you 11 full-length PRINTED practice tests. We strongly recommend that you plan to do ALL 11 tests. Before doing anything else, do the practice and sample tests (not the full-length test) from ACER under realistic test conditions to see what areas you really need to concentrate on.

Next, plan backwards. You should plan to do two full practice tests in the week before GAMSAT. In the preceding four weeks do one full test per week. In the months before that, do one test per month. In every case you should set aside a FULL day to do a test under test conditions. DON'T try to do everything in one hit. After all, you wouldn't run a marathon on your first attempt.

## Suggested timetable

This is only a suggested timetable. You should modify it to fit your time available, your study practices, and your other commitments.

Test Number	Date
OZIMED Practice Test 1	As soon as possible
OZIMED Practice Test 2	3 months before GAMSAT
OZIMED Practice Test 3	2 months before GAMSAT
OZIMED Practice Test 4	5 weeks before GAMSAT
OZIMED Practice Test 5	4 weeks before GAMSAT
ACER Full-length Practice Test	3 weeks before GAMSAT
OZIMED Practice Test 6	2 weeks before GAMSAT
OZIMED Practice Test 7	1 week before GAMSAT
OZIMED Practice Test 8	4 days before GAMSAT
OZIMED Practice Test 9	3 days before GAMSAT
OZIMED Practice Test 10	2 days before GAMSAT
Rest!	1 day before GAMSAT

You must use strict time limits for each section, take the scheduled breaks, and don't mark anything until you have completely finished all sections. Ensure you do the essays (hand-written), and use the answer sheets for the multiple choice sections. All this will make it as realistic as possible.

Remember, even filling in the answer sheet takes time and must be accurate. If you make a mistake in filling in the answer sheets, you can be sure you won't make the same mistake in the real exam!

When you have finished each test, mark it really thoroughly. Identify where you made mistakes - these are the areas to concentrate on in your study during the time before your next test. If you happen to guess an answer, be honest with yourself and make sure you include this in your revision. Note: the practice tests include answer keys, but not detailed explanations. It is much better for you to work out what you need to learn, rather than have us try to teach you.

You should get a good first-year textbook in each area. I have put suggested books on my website, most of these are available locally (in Australia). In general, any textbook used as a university set-text in first year Chemistry, Organic Chemistry, Biology, Physics or Molecular Biology will do. Most of these have exciting titles like: "Chemistry".

## Essay Writing

It's absolutely essential to hand-write (not type) at least one essay a week. This will build practice in structuring your essay and also in handwriting. Make sure you use a strict half-hour time limit. The structure which I used in the exam is:

Title - I prefer to leave space and put the title in last, to make sure that it accurately reflects the essay.

Write down the quote. First paragraph - explain what the author means by the statement/quote?

Second paragraph - give an example or situation where the statement is false or wrong.

Third paragraph - give an example or situation where the statement is true.

Fourth paragraph - resolve the apparent conflict between paragraphs two and three. In 30 minutes you will be pushing to write more than four paragraphs, so this works out well. By having a standard, consistent structure you won't be in the exam scratching your head and thinking, "where do I start?"

Remember that the essays are more about your ability to communicate clearly than about your own views or experience. Also, they are not about medicine or science - this is the humanities and social sciences area, so keep a strong social focus and avoid giving your own opinions. I prefer to use phrases like: "many people believe" or "research shows" rather than "I think".

## Multiple-choice

With the multiple-choice sections you have two ways to approach the test. Read the passage first, or read the questions first. With so many practice tests you will have a chance to try out both strategies and see which works best for you.

I prefer to read the questions first, and then skim through the passage looking for easy answers, then read the passage in more depth to answer the harder questions. The right way is the way that works best for you.

Many of the basic science questions, e.g. electrical circuits or energy problems, only have a limited number of ways of being phrased. By doing repeated practice you will see just about every variation on these themes, so they become quite easy. When you can skim through the easy questions, you have more time to spend on the harder ones.

Don't leave any questions unanswered. There are no penalties for incorrect answers. If you are running out of time, fill in answers for all the remaining questions on the answer sheet. Then go back and worked through the problems properly and change the answers that need to be changed. This can mean a few extra points if you guess right, and nothing lost if you are wrong.

## Summary

The main message in all of this is that it is like preparing for a driving test. Go out and practice parallel parking, hill starts, etc. until you they become second nature. Practicing multiple-choice exams and essay writing until they become second nature means that in GAMSAT you will be able to zip through the easy stuff and concentrate on the problems which require more thought. By regularly doing practice tests you not only improve your speed, but you also find the holes in your knowledge.

I am a qualified flying instructor (although I haven't done any instruction for a few years now). Before allowing any student to be examined we would always run through several practice tests first -- written and practical -- so that they had the maximum chance of success on the real written exam and flight test. After each practice we would review the student's strong points and weak points and schedule further practice to improve weak areas.

Based on comments from people who have sat it twice, GAMSAT is getting harder. My strategy can't guarantee you a pass, but it can give you that extra edge. Remember, there is no pre-set cut-off mark, it all depends on how candidates go overall, so every little bit counts. I went into GAMSAT feeling relaxed and in control. I worked quickly and accurately through everything. I came out of the exam feeling "oh well, I gave it my best shot", but I even surprised myself with how well I did.

It's also important not to burn yourself out. Start slowly, then gradually reduce the interval between tests as suggested.

## **INTERVIEW PREPARATION**

The full package of practice exams also includes notes to help you prepare for your interview. These are based on my experience with the University of Queensland, but should help prepare for any of the Universities. These notes will be emailed to you on request.

This method of using multiple full-length practice exams is based on experience and has really worked for those who are prepared to put in the time and effort. **GOOD LUCK!**