

Info for High School Students interested in Physician Assistant (PA) School

How do I become a Physician Assistant (PA)?

- You would normally go to college and receive a bachelor's degree, usually for four years.
- Then, you would go to PA school for another 30 months.
- The key difference between PA school and medical school is the amount of coursework and the length of training. PA students are still trained to diagnose and treat disease, but they are not trained with the same breadth and depth as medical students. PAs do not have to complete residency and practice in a wide variety of medical specialties. One of the benefits of practicing as a PA instead of a physician, is it is much easier to transition to a new specialty.

What should I pick for a major when I go to college?

- You should major in a field you find interesting, whether it is science related or not!
- There are no specific majors which are required for PA school. However, there are specific classes you must take to go to PA school. These specific classes can be found on the websites for specific PA schools but are generally the same for PA schools and involve biology, chemistry, physics, writing, and social sciences.
- It's not recommended that you major in a specific health profession training program such as Physical Therapy or Nursing. These are professional programs that prepare you for a specific profession OTHER THAN being a PA.

Are there certain courses I should take in high school or college?

- PA schools do not require any high school courses, but they do require college courses in microbiology, chemistry, anatomy, physiology, math and English. You don't need to take extra high school courses in these areas unless you choose to.
- You SHOULD enter college with skills that will prepare you for these types of courses. You should have good analytical thinking and problem-solving skills for science and math, and good communication skills for English
- Each PA School has its own set of prerequisite coursework. **Prerequisites are specific classes you must have before you can be admitted to a professional school such as medical school. SCM prerequisites can be found at https://www.ou.edu/tulsa/community_medicine/scm-pa-program/admission/prerequisite_courses.**

What can I be doing NOW to prepare myself for PA school?

- Challenge yourself to take upper-level coursework and develop a strong work ethic and time management skills. It may also be helpful to shadow various healthcare fields and talk to professionals in these areas (medicine, physical therapy, occupational therapy, etc..) to see which area of healthcare may be right for you.

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