

The Physician Assistant
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The following document is designed to try to do three things. First, I hope it answers some of your questions about the process of getting into a Physician Assistant Program. It will deal more generally with the PA profession as a whole, not any one specific program (except a bit later with respect to pre-requisite courses). Secondly, I hope it serves as a continuing reference for you as you go through the process of getting into a Physician Assistant program. And third, I hope it causes you to really think about what you are wanting to do, and as a result I hope it generates as many questions as it answers. As much as I would like to, I can't write a document that answers all questions as they relate to your particular life. Therefore, I have tried to write this in a way that makes you think about this as it relates to your own life, and what your life goals might be.

The pathway to acceptance to PA school involves a number of steps. These steps are not necessarily meant to be done sequentially. Some of them could or should be done concurrently with each other. Others must be done in the proper order. It will be important for you to be familiar with the requirements, both academic and non-academic in order to complete them all in a timely and successful fashion.

To be successful at getting into any PA program you need to accomplish each of the following:

- you need to complete the required pre-requisite science courses within the time limits set down by the particular school or schools you are interested in.
- you need to complete the required non-science pre-requisite courses within the time limits, if any, set down by the particular school or schools you are interested in.
- you need to have completed a bachelor's degree or at least 120 credit hours of course work. This will depend on the schools you apply to (most schools require a bachelor's degree).
- you need to show the admissions committee's that you know what you're getting into by being able to put on your application evidence of working in the medical profession, specifically with a PA either as a paid professional or as a volunteer. Depending on the school, you may have to be able to document a minimum number of hours (Red Rocks Community College for example requires 2,000 documentable hours). Regardless of whether a school has a minimum number of volunteer/work experience hours as part of their requirements, the general rule is the more hours the better.
- once you have completed or are finishing up your pre-requisites, you will have to take the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) for most schools. This exam is discussed later in this document.
- depending on the school which you apply to, you will either need to complete an application specific to the school, or you will need to apply through the Central Application Service for Physician Assistants or CASPA. Not all schools are yet participating in the CASPA service. You will need to find out specifically whether or not the schools you want to apply to use this application service. If you need to apply through CASPA, this is a web-based application and you will be given the web address.
- you will need to submit 3-5 letters of evaluation. Three of these should be from faculty members, and two from professional sources. At least one of the professional letters should be from a PA. Get to know your professors. It is difficult for a faculty member to write a letter when you haven't had any interaction with you.
- once you have done all the above, if a school still considers you a viable candidate, you will be asked to come for an interview.
- once you have been accepted, you need to figure out where you are going to live, move, and get your financing in place.

There are some things to keep in mind as you go through this process. These may seem simple or common-sense, but in my experience they are things that many individuals have forgotten or not