

# 4 tips to hit the ground running as a 1st-year medical student

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In a few weeks, medical school will begin the orientation process. First will come the logistical information. Then you'll start your formal training.

It's a lot to handle. But it can be manageable, according to Nicolas Leighton, a third-year medical student. Leighton—president of the AMA medical student chapter at George Washington (GW) University School of Medicine and Health Sciences—who offered these tips to incoming first-year medical students.

## Don't compare

Your peers are among the best and brightest in the nation. Some will thrive from day one and it will be evident. Keeping up with those pacemakers is a trap Leighton wishes he had not fallen into.

"The biggest pitfall that I ran into was comparing myself to others," he said. "I came to realize that we all were accepted into medical school, we all are going to be physicians and we all have our different strengths. You may try to measure yourself based on the performance of others. I had to continually remind myself we are all capable of becoming great doctors some day and to focus on myself."

Find out the 15 skills medical schools expect from students on day one.

## Learn your strengths and play to them

Knowing what you do well will give you confidence inside and outside of the classroom or clinic. For Leighton he grew professionally through his involvement with the AMA. He said that leadership experience was vital to his success.

“Focus on the work you are doing and what you bring to the table,” Leighton said. “There are some great test takers, there are some people with great interpersonal skills, some people are incredible in leadership opportunities. Finding your lane and excelling in that lane is the most important thing you can do in medical school.”

Discover the meaning behind your white coat.

## Slow and steady

The volume of information covered in medical school—even the pre-clinical portions—is not something you can learn in a matter of days or even weeks. Leighton found that if he studied during the day and watched videos on the topics he covered during the evenings, he was able to retain information effectively.

“Medical school is not something you can cram for,” he said. “The amount of content is immense. You just have to focus on something specific each day. Over time, by doing that, you can master complex concepts that are force-fed to you in med school.”

## Rely on your past

Leighton had previous work experience before entering medical school. His time spent networking in professional settings and working with others in team settings allowed him to feel comfortable making connections with patients.

“I was able to translate my professional experience before med school into communicating with patients,” He said. “Communication skills and interpersonal skills are more important for patient care than for your exams.”

For new medical students beginning their training during the COVID-19 pandemic, the AMA has curated a selection of resources to help manage the shifting timelines, cancellations and adjustments to testing, rotations and other events at this time.