

Overview of Preparing for a Career as a Physician Assistant

First Step: Exploring a Career as a Physician Assistant

- What experiences have you had that make you interested in being a physician assistant?
- What are your goals and expectations for a major?
- What skills do you associate with a good physician assistant? What activities/experiences would help you develop these skills?
- What can you do to learn more about careers as a physician assistant?

Second Step: Getting Involved

- What are your goals and expectations for volunteer experiences? What have you learned or could you learn about yourself and other people by serving others?
- Consider the populations you have served or worked with in any capacity. Do you have breadth and depth of experience with different groups of people?
- What are your research interests? What do you want to learn through research?
- How will you gain patient contact hours?
- Keep track of your experiences through college (volunteering, research, paid employment, shadowing, hobbies, student organizations, study abroad). Regularly reflect on and write about the competencies (skills and personal attributes) you develop and the ways you learn and grow in the course of each experience.

Third Step: Preparing Your Application

- Do you hope to apply after your junior or senior year, or will you be a stronger applicant after taking a gap year?
- Develop meaningful relationships with faculty and supervisors by talking with them about their work and career paths, your coursework, and interest in being a physician assistant.
- Talk with an advisor at CPHA about steps of the application process the summer before you apply.

Fourth Step: Taking a Gap Year

- What would your goals and expectations be for a gap year?
- What area of your application might you strengthen during a gap year? How could you do this?

Planning Table

Fall	Spring	Summer

Pre-Physician Assistant Planning Guide

Keep in mind that course preparation varies from school to school. This is a summary of the most common requirements. The shaded courses are recommended but not required for most schools.

Course	Options at UW – Madison
General Chemistry	Two options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chemistry 103 (lecture + lab) and Chemistry 104 (lecture + lab) • Chemistry 109 (lecture + lab)
Organic Chemistry*	Two options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chemistry 341 (lecture) and Chemistry 342 (lab) • Chemistry 343 (lecture), Chemistry 344 (lab), and Chemistry 345 (lecture)
Biochemistry	Two options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biochemistry 501 (lecture) • Biochemistry 507 (lecture)
Introductory Biology	Three options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zoology 101 (lecture) + Zoology 102 (lab) and an additional bioscience course (such as Genetics, Microbiology, Cell Biology, Kinesiology, or Immunology) • Biology 151 (lecture + lab) and Biology 152 (lecture + lab) • Biocore
Microbiology	Two options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microbiology 101 (lecture) and Microbiology 102 (lab) • Microbiology 303 (lecture) and Microbiology 304 (lab)
Anatomy	Anatomy 337 (lecture) Anatomy 338 (lab; required by some programs)
Physiology	Two options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physiology 335 • Physiology 435
Introductory Statistics	Four options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistics 371 • Biostatistics 541 • Statistics 301 • Statistics course in your major, such as Psychology 210
Psychology	Potential requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductory Psychology (Psychology 202) • Abnormal Psychology (Psychology 405)
Human Development	Potential requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Development (may take HDFS 362 or Psychology 460 or Educational Psychology 320) • Adult Development (may take HDFS 363 or Psychology 464)
Sociology	Options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sociology 120, 125, 134, 138, 140, or 170 • Gender and Women's Studies 103
English, Literature, or Communications	6 credits: many options; look for literature and composition courses
Medical Terminology	Can be taken off campus

* The two-semester Organic Chemistry sequence is not required by all PA programs, but it is required for some majors at UW – Madison. Some schools also require Genetics 160/466 and/or Nutri Sci 132/332.

Resources

Tutoring resources available on UW campus

- Greater University Tutoring Services (GUTS) <http://guts.wisc.edu>
- Peer Learning Association (PLA) <https://win.wisc.edu/organization/pla>
- Chemistry Learning Center (CLC) <https://www.chem.wisc.edu/areas/clc>
- Physics Learning Center (PLC) <https://www.physics.wisc.edu/plc>
- Math Lab <https://www.math.wisc.edu/undergraduate/mathlab>

- Statistics Lab https://www.stat.wisc.edu/courses/Tutorial_Schedule
- Writing Center <http://www.writing.wisc.edu>

Professional organizations

- American Academy for Physician Assistants <https://www.aapa.org>
- Physician Assistant Education Association <http://www.paeonline.org>