

# **Words from the Wise:**

*Top 10 tips for Yr. 1 success from  
Yr. 2 Peer Mentors*

2016 Enrichment Program  
*University of Minnesota*  
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**Andrew Pattock:**

- 1) The way I studied for anatomy was simultaneously go through lecture notes/parts list while highlighting in Netter, then Anki, and then watch lecture last.
- 2) The truth is you could always be doing something. Accept it and get used to it!
- 3) At some point you will get behind. Don't panic! It will be fine. Just don't let it become a habit.
- 4) Anki for Histology/Pathology is gold.
- 5) Preview slides to some extent before each lecture. I simply would read and highlight on each slide, and my comprehension was dramatically improved compared to going into lecture cold turkey.
- 6) OneNote and the search function is your best friend
- 7) KCoop outlines are a life saver for many classes. Check them out!
- 8) Google Calendar (and reminders) is a must
- 9) Find a handful of resources that work for you and stick with them. Don't bounce around or try them all.
- 10) Find your balance. Have a life outside of school! It looks different for everyone, but it is essential.

**Nick DesLauriers:**

1. It can be easy first semester to get caught up and lost in all the different resources and ways people study, trying to find the right regimen. Especially with anatomy. It's hard because it's good to explore and find what works best, but you don't want to fixate on this for too long and get behind. No right answer, but my 2 cents would be to trial out some options in the beginning week or two. Then stick with something for a while and don't be afraid of some discomfort/uncertainty with what you go with, i.e. don't worry if you feel 85% efficient vs 90% efficient with your method (whatever that means). I think you relatively quickly reach a point where it becomes more important to make sure you are diving in and giving time and effort to the material, whatever medium you are using. As you go, you will learn more about what works and make adjustments.
2. Even if you are a person who generally studies alone, consider studying with others every once in a while.
3. Do a lot of practice problems and tests. Narrow in on what you got wrong.
4. Stay consistent with your study schedule, allowing time to incorporate repetition with memorization-heavy content (especially with anatomy).
5. Try to identify activities that bring stress relief for you. Running/exercise always helps reset my mind, but whatever floats your boat.
6. Use the MS2s you meet as resources. But also take what we say with a grain of salt because quite a bit can be subjective.
7. Everyone in med school has different goals for passes vs honors, work/life balance, research involvement, volunteering, etc. I always liked hearing what people were up to and their interests, and this sometimes helped inform my goals, but you also just gotta do you.
8. This is far away but don't underestimate summer semester. You may hear from some that it's easy and be tempted to slack a bit, but don't do it! Stay consistent and finish strong.
9. Finding good study spots on campus can sometimes be hard. I liked Nils Hasselmo on weekends (quiet, good view), upper floors of biomed library during week.
10. Get to know your classmates and enjoy the experience with them.

**Lisa Obasi:**

1. Take time to sleep
2. Take study breaks
3. Keep up with your hobbies
4. Review your notes/keep up on the material
5. Take charge of your learning: Do what works for you and not what everyone else is doing.
6. Try and maintain your relationships that you had before medical school.

**Lucas Haase:**

- 1) sleep
- 2) enjoy the process/have fun
- 3) find what works for you
- 4) stay on top of it
- 5) get away from school as much as you need
- 6) visit the rec often
- 7) don't let others study techniques stress you out

- 8) take time to get to know other people in the class
- 9) eat well and don't skip meals
- 10) sleep

**Lisa Grundtner:**

1. Make a weekly schedule (ex: Monday = Histology, Tuesday = ...)
2. Reserve at least 1 day a week as a catch-up or free day
3. Find and follow the study method that works for you – don't worry about what others are doing!
4. Don't fall behind – get help right away if you feel like you're falling behind
5. Actually read the syllabus before the start of each course – it can help alleviate stress in terms of what to expect
6. Taking notes on each lecture is super helpful when it comes to studying for exams – there are just too many lectures to review slide-by-slide right before a comprehensive final exam
7. Most teachers post practice/past years' exams on Blackbag – these are super great to look at 1-2 days before your exam
8. Maintain a good balance – make it a point to do the friend and family things you would otherwise do if not in med school
9. Find a 2<sup>nd</sup> year student that you feel comfortable asking questions to, etc.
10. Don't think too far ahead...

**Chloe Hedberg:**

1. Do NOT always let medical school take priority over other aspects of your life. You are still a friend/daughter/son/brother/sister etc. Making sure you maintain connections to those outside of medical school is so important to find balance and keep things in perspective.
2. Stay on top of the material (that does not mean working ahead!) but stay on pace and prepare yourself to do well on the exams by looking at material multiple times throughout the semester and avoid cramming
3. Find the study strategy that works best for you. It may be reading the text, re-writing your notes, using anki etc. but do not try to do what another person is doing just because you think they are right
4. Use the K Coop outlines as a reference/comparison for your own notes from lecture. Those are the high yield topics and knowing that material will be beneficial, but don't use them exclusively or you will likely miss little details and figures from lecture.
5. Use the white board notes in anatomy, a lot of the important information is summarized by the TAs in those drawings
6. Don't attend lecture if you really aren't getting anything out of it. I personally like to download it and watch it on my own time so I can truly absorb the information and make the best outlines for my studying
7. Take breaks. If something isn't clicking, walk away from it and do something mindless for a short break and come back to it. Scheduling time to not think is the reason I was able to stay sane.
8. Stay organized and ask questions when things don't make sense. There are many people here to help you.
9. SLEEP, EAT and WORK OUT you will be so much happier and more focused
10. ENJOY THIS! You are a select group of capable and intelligent all-stars! There are thousands of people who applied and are not sitting where you are today. You will become a doctor after this is all through so work hard, keep that in mind and have fun!

**Jessica Diaz:**

1. Schedule everything. Open times are in danger of being stolen from you with non-important tasks. This is especially important if you become a pajama person. Being 20 lectures behind does not feel good.
2. Don't get pressured into being a pajama person. 2x speed is only "more efficient" if you can get everything you need on the first pass without pauses. I spent approximately 1 hour per lecture to get through material and notes regardless of the speed at which I watched, and regardless of the manner in which I watched the lectures. If you are an experiential learner, be of the minority of class goers, it will decrease your review/memorization study time. If you are not, or need to have the lecturer pause-able, save the drive time and stream at your own pace.
3. ANKI is a great resource if you are a flashcard person. If you never have been a flashcard person in the past, don't try to be a square peg in a round hole. It is a waste of time.
4. Anatomy is the most over resourced class you will face first semester. Let the lecture note packet, available from the bookstore, guide your studying for the written exam and find a memorization tactic that works for

you to memorize the parts from the parts list for the lab portion. DO NOT review all of the available resources; it is a waste of time.

5. Use a second year to develop a personalized study plan that best fits your style.
6. First year is mostly memorization. How did you memorize for OChem or Bio? Adapt that technique for a significantly larger volume of data and detail.
7. Utilize technology to increase the efficiency of your existing study techniques. Don't try to do whatever everyone else is doing. You already know what works for you, but med school is more info in less time, so keep your style, but increase your efficiency.
8. KCOOP resources are fantastic, but putting things in your own words and/or developing your own resources are valuable memorization tools.
9. Set daily and weekly goals and reward yourself for achieving them. Having something to look forward to makes first semester feel shorter, and keeps you caught up.
10. When you need a break, take one. "Powering through" is an inefficient use of time. 20 minutes of mindfulness or a nap can significantly increase study efficiency.

**Marianne Scheitel:**

- 1.) Repetition through material is really important. Find a way to incorporate that into studying whether it is through Anki or reading through outlines a number of times.
- 2.) Take advantage of the recorded lectures by listening back to spots that might have been confusing the first time.
- 3.) Schedule breaks!
- 4.) Set a reasonable time that you will let yourself studying to each night and stick to it. Sleep is important.
- 5.) Orally studying by quizing each other is a good break after having your head in the books for a number of hours.
- 6.) Be aware of the resources you have available to you and don't be afraid to ask for help from Dr. Slattery, the peer mentors, or your classmates.
- 7.) Use the blocked out time in labs wisely. Try to learn the material really well and ask questions.
- 8.) Minneapolis is a fun city to be in. Make sure to take time to explore places like Stone Arch Bridge, the local breweries, and the lakes.
- 9.) The very beginning of the year is stressful but you and your classmates will all calm down.
- 10.) Try to keep in mind that what you are learning will be important for your patients someday. It's not only for a grade.

**Donna Coetzee:**

1. Take study breaks, even (especially) during the busiest weeks.
2. Don't worry about how your classmates are studying - everyone does it differently.
3. Ask for help if you need it. Both classmates and professors are usually very willing to help.
4. Multitask - if you can combine some of the things you'd do anyway it saves time. Like workout with friends to get social time and a workout in. Or study with people, read or watch lecture for class at the gym, whatever you find that works.
5. Explore Minneapolis - it's a fun city and it is worth taking the time away from always studying.
6. Don't fall behind - it's less work to study if you keep up so it saves time in the long run.
7. Fall semester is long. Use the beginning to find ways to relax to help you get through the last few weeks when everyone starts burning out.
8. Plan a study schedule so that you don't spend study time figuring out what to work on.
9. Prioritize. Sometimes not everything is going to get done. This was a hard lesson to learn, but if you always start with the most important thing the stuff that doesn't get done is usually not critical.
10. Don't start studying until classes start. The mental rest will probably be more helpful than any of the material.

*Top 10 tips for Yr. 1 success from  
Yr. 2 Peer Mentors (2015)*

**Evan Eide:**

1. Enjoy it!
2. Find a healthy balance between studying and your other commitments/activities
3. Get to know your classmates! This will also help keep you informed.
4. Take time to decide how you will study best / organize information
5. Know your resources - become familiar with classmates and the medical school
6. Seek help if you're feeling overwhelmed (people want to see you succeed)
7. Try not to fall behind on material. One lecture behind can easily become five, then ten. You can catch up, but it'll be easier on yourself if you never let it happen in the first place!
8. Keep things in perspective - don't forget what you are working toward
9. Take care of yourself (practice what you will preach) - eat right, sleep enough, exercise, etc.
10. Reflect - take time for your own thoughts

**Katie Ferguson:**

1. Maintain relationships and activities outside of medical school. These will help you remember that you are defined by more than your score on an SMP exam and have people to remind you of this. If you are new to Minneapolis, find a community outside of medical school that you identify with...whether it be a yoga class, volunteering at a local non profit or a religious community, it was important for me to talk to people who know little to nothing about medical school and maintain perspective.
2. Remember to take time for yourself. Your free time will be limited and it is tempting to spend all of it with friends and family, but remember to take alone time and do things you enjoyed before medical school. It will help you endure long hours of studying and feel energized.
3. Don't forget how hard you worked to get here and how lucky you are to be here. When the last thing in the world I want to do is study, these two things help me focus and feel gracious.
4. When you feel overwhelmed and like you will never make it through your to do list, just get started. Do something and it will help you feel better about attacking the rest.
5. Be forgiving of yourself. You will most likely make mistakes, struggle or feel inefficient at some point in the next year. Acknowledge that you are doing something very challenging and then keep moving.
6. Keep up. You will hear this over and over, but keeping ahead of the material is critical.
7. Triage the material. Remember that you are tested on a very small portion of the material. If you are struggling to understand something small or feel overwhelmed by memorizing a detail, assess whether it is worth your time in the large scheme of all the information you need to tackle.
8. Ask for help early. There are so many resources for you to access and they are much easier and more effective if you use them when you first start to struggle or identify an issue.
9. Enjoy and get to know your classmates. This is an extraordinary group of people you are going on this journey with.
10. Think critically and don't be afraid to approach your professors and medical school leadership with ideas for improvement. Almost everyone is willing and excited to hear your ideas.

**Anisa Suleiman:**

1. **Say no to anything that is not important to you.**  
This is not the time to be nice and "responsible". Give yourself the permission to focus on what's important. Getting the unessential responsibilities off your schedule will not only create some extra time and space, it will also lighten the burden you're feeling to keep up with it.
2. **Ask for help**  
There's nothing wrong with asking for help, and you'll quickly learn that most people around you actually love to be asked! It makes them feel useful and important. Sometimes, especially in medical school, it's even their job! Study tips, tutoring, feedback, motivation, supporting your self-confidence, cooking, shopping and regular every-day tasks. Using your resources is not a weakness!
3. **Take breaks and take not-breaks**  
You can't stay focused all the time. No matter how efficient you work, you'll always get distracted, let your mind wander or end up spending time reading e-mail or Facebook instead. A better way to spend this time is to get up from your chair, walk outside and take a 5-minute break. The change of place, the change of physical posture and the movement will make it easier to start again when your break is over. You'll also give your brain a chance to relax and process information, which is essential for your well-being. Better yet, do tomatoes!
4. **Make a plan. Stick to the plan. Trust the plan**  
Once you figure out what works for you, make a plan of how you are going to manage everything before your deadline. You may have to schedule a lot of tasks on certain days, and it may seem like too much to do, but at least you'll know that everything will get done. Make sure you stick to the plan, every single day. Don't fall for the temptation to start on

tomorrow's tasks today, trust that the plan will take you there, and enjoy some free time on the days when you finish your tasks early. Just make sure to keep your plan realistic and schedule in as much free time as possible.

**5. Make room for rest**

This one's important. Make sure that whenever you plan to rest – really rest. That means that you will have to make a conscious effort to push all work-related thoughts and worries away. It's also important that you rest your mind as well as your body. 5 minutes of stillness is better than 30 minutes in front of the TV!

**6. Have a gratitude list**

Being mindful of things that make you happy and you're grateful for can make a world of difference. It doesn't even have to be a physical list but just keep track of things that you enjoy. Then you will find that instead of focusing on your med school routines and studying, when you think of your week you'll remember how nice the weather was on Wednesday and the way the sun hit that tree on your walk to class on Thursday morning.

**7. Pick me-time and keep it sacred**

Pick a realistic time (lunch, your commute, break between classes, etc...). I can't stress enough the importance of having time dedicated to checking in with yourself, relaxing, being offline, and not thinking about medical school...it's hard but you can do it and you'll be grateful for the effort later! Do it even if it doesn't feel like it's working.

**8. Have an emotional emergency plan**

Ideally, you should have this written down before you enter a really busy period. If everything goes wrong, and you're maxed out, panicky or just plain exhausted – who do you call? what do you do? where do you go? Planning this in advance is self-care on a high level. It's very difficult to disrupt the cycle of freak-out when it's already started so have a plan ahead of time!

**9. Feel your feelings.**

Don't fake productivity, put-togetherness, insecurity, confidence, stress, or anything else. In the long run it'll only hurt you and those around you. If you're tired and sad, cry it all out. If you're stressed, don't try to put on a mask and hide it. Get it all out, all the frustration, the overwhelm, the anger and the fear. You'll feel much better after.

**10. Honor your limits**

Pushing past them just wastes time. You're not being productive, and you're not having fun or relaxing. Either be productive or refill your well. It's easy to feel like you're never quite done. Set some clear limits for yourself and honor them. Say to yourself, "when the time is up, I'm DONE".

**Hope Ukatu:**

1. **"Dig your well before you're thirsty."** Use your resources—more importantly, know what they are and where to find them before you actually need them! That way, when something does come up you won't be starting from scratch to figure out where to get the help you need.
2. **Keep up!** The first semester is a lot of material to digest, even in the impossible scenario that you do everything perfectly. Don't make it harder by leaving large volumes for later (cramming doesn't work in med school, btw). Give yourself the best chance of absorbing all that knowledge by grabbing it as it comes.
3. **If you find yourself behind on coursework, just do something. (Anything!)** The type of overwhelmed that comes from being several lectures behind in combination with the awareness that more are piling up can lead to avoidance via procrastination, or a deer-in-headlights feeling of being frozen in the onslaught. If this happens to you, remember that doing something is always better than doing nothing. Start with one manageable task or one lecture. It may feel like it's not enough compared to all that you have to do. Start there anyway. Allow the momentum of getting one small thing done help you begin to move forward again.
4. **Remember that you're not alone.** Everybody WILL feel overwhelmed at some point. Med school is hard! Luckily, you'll be surrounded by various individuals in support roles for every step of the way. Be sure to stay connected and reach out to friends, classmates, peer mentors, or people from the 6<sup>th</sup> floor Mayo if you're feeling overly stressed or need a push in the right direction.
5. **Have a non-med school-related outlet.** Talking to a friend, roommate, significant other, or anyone you feel close to who isn't in medical school is a great way to stay in touch with the world outside of PWB. Other good "outlets" include any hobby that you enjoy outside of school (bonus points if it can be used as a study break).
6. **Guard your time.** There will be a seemingly infinite number of people and things competing for your time and attention. Remind yourself regularly that there are only 24 hours in a day, and allocate them to things that you deem a valuable use of your time.
7. **Find something that constantly reminds you why you're doing this.** The first semester will be full of highs that fill you with satisfaction and purpose, and lows that make you seriously wonder what you've gotten yourself into. Whatever your motivation is/was for wanting to become a doctor, reflect on that during the low points to remind yourself why it's worth it.
8. **Be adaptable.** Every class will require slightly different things as far as note-taking and studying. Don't be alarmed or disappointed if the very first method you try ends up not being ideal, or leaves you scratching your head when you attempt that first round of practice questions. It's OK to experiment as needed in the beginning; however, it is possible to spend too

much time doing this. Keep the “experimenting” phase as short as possible by switching tools or strategies when one isn’t working. Don’t continue trying to use a hammer on a job that requires a wrench!

9. **Remember how capable you are.** You were hand-selected because you possess both a) qualities that will make you a good physician and b) the grit to get you through the process of becoming one. You are meant to be here, and you CAN do this.
10. **Take care of yourself (and each other).** The importance of self-care cannot be overemphasized. Check in with yourself periodically: *Am I growing as a person and a professional student? Am I still finding satisfaction in what I’m doing? Am I eating/sleeping well?* Often times, just a little bit of reflection can lead you to make a change that drastically increases your effectiveness and/or well-being. Along the same vein, be intentional about checking in with your colleagues. The person to your left may be on the verge of a nervous breakdown and just needs to hear that you’re there for him or her; the person to your right might have a brilliantly concise explanation for a concept that you’ve been struggling with and would have spent an hour looking up tonight. Imagine in both cases how simply asking opens up opportunities to help or be helped!