



Passing the GAMSAT Faster,  
Smarter, and Snarkier

# GAMSAT IN 2 MONTHS

*2015 Edition*

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WILLIAM CHEN

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# Disclaimer

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# Preface

This book is dedicated to my parents, for their continual love and support, in my pursuit of medicine and beyond.

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Thank you for getting your hot little mitts on this ebook! *GAMSAT in 2 Months* is a study guide detailing the story of how I passed the GAMSAT in 2 months, on my first go, which you can apply to accelerate your preparations, or to boost your confidence and motivation if you're feeling off your game.

I've got my Oscar speech and 11-minute list of people to thank, but I can see [Kanye strolling up](#), so Imma try and keep this manageable.

As is probably evident already, this ebook doesn't sound like them other GAMSAT resources out there: There is dry humour, sarcasm, and political incorrectness abound. It stops short of personal attacks, but nevertheless strives to titillate the moral sensibilities. If you are not amused by it all, I hope you are at least not bored.

The format of this ebook is also a little different to others study guides: You may find that it jumps back-and-forth between 2009 and present day. This is deliberate: Aside from triggering time paradoxes, which are inherently awesome, I wrote a study guide after the GAMSAT<sup>1</sup>, back in 2009.

Since it's likely most of you downloaded this ebook to learn how to pass the GAMSAT in 2 months, as I passed it back in 2009, what I wrote years ago would be most relevant, as I was in the most conditioned mind-frame back then.

Therefore, this ebook keeps most of the 2009 notes intact<sup>2</sup>, and adds present-day notes separately (after the 2009 notes) to further explore key concepts (e.g. effective habit-forming).

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<sup>1</sup> As a series comprised of 4 blog posts – hence why this ebook is divided into 4 parts.

<sup>2</sup> By removing enough political incorrectness to avoid 50% of hate-mail, amongst other things.

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Furthermore, in the spirit of Sir Terry Pratchett's [Discworld](#) novel series, the ebook is packed with footnotes, filled with tangential thoughts, wry comments, and useful tidbits (only occasionally). If the bottoms of some pages look bloated, please excuse all the excess – they're only here to serve.

What's also in abundance are geeky pop culture references, some referenced with links, others without. If a term or concept sounds unfamiliar to you, look it up: It might be purely academic, in which case you become more knowledgeable. It could also be a pop culture Easter Egg, in which case you become more cultured, which is arguably a more important outcome.

I hope the ebook gives you tips and strategies that you didn't already have, a few laughs, and most important of all, a newfound confidence to blow the GAMSAT out of the water!



William Chen  
MBBS, University of Queensland

If you have any questions or comments at any point in reading this ebook, please let me know. I'd love to hear from you, even if it's just to say hi!

You can reach me at the [FastGAMSAT blog](#), on the [Facebook page](#), or privately at [Will@FastGAMSAT.com](mailto:Will@FastGAMSAT.com).

## About The Author

I'm Will, a 28-year-old guy from Taiwan. My family moved to Brisbane when I started primary school. My English sucked for quite a while, and I had to take ESL classes up until Year 9.

I went to university at the University of Queensland, and did Psychology, because I thought it was going to be like pop psychology but *official* (it wasn't: it was statistics and research).

I then took the GAMSAT, went to med school, graduated, and am busy seeing where life leads next.



People have told me that I look young for my age: I tell them that it's because Asians are the Elf race of the real world, although the truth might be that I'm similar to Herbert West<sup>3</sup> or Dorian Gray.

People also can't usually tell where I'm from – I don't look Taiwanese. My pop-biology theory is that, because I mainly spoke English when growing up, that this would train different facial muscle groups than if I mainly spoke Mandarin, thus altering my face beyond racial recognition. I've also noted that since I don't look like I'm from anywhere specifically, I could plausibly pretend to be from any Asian country –making me convenient spy material<sup>4</sup>.

If you have any questions, feel free to ask!

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<sup>3</sup> I always thought that Rhianna should release a *Thriller*-like album named *Rhianimator*.

<sup>4</sup> But I suck at picking up languages, so there goes that possibility.



## So, Why the ebook?

I was not an A-grade student throughout high-school or university.

I'm not a scientific-minded student too: In high school, I got B's in Biology, and C's in Chemistry and Physics. I also didn't take a science major<sup>5</sup>.

I also didn't have long to prepare for the GAMSAT: 59 days, to be exact. And I had not given medicine any serious thought beforehand.

Despite all of the above handicaps, I chose to take the GAMSAT, with the goal of passing the first-time round.

And I did just that.

During my prep, I remember feeling lost and uncertain: The odds were against me, and I didn't know whether I could do it or not.

And I know that many of you are feeling the same stress: You don't know if you have enough time, or if you're studying correctly, or if you're going to pass<sup>6</sup>.

I think too many people go through these same freak-outs and break-downs, so I wanted to address it – hence the ebook in front of you.

By sharing with you my story and study strategies, I want to show you that, as long as you study smart and persevere, the GAMSAT is within your grasp, no matter how much time you started with, or what academic background you came from.

So, what are you waiting for?

Read on!

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<sup>5</sup> Despite the name of [Bachelor of Psychological Science](#), and the fact you can take it as a science major... nobody thinks Psychology when they think "Science".

<sup>6</sup> Or pass out.

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# [PART 1]

## [It was the year 2009...]

### 0. Starting Beyond the Finish Line

Today, I received the first-round offer from my first choice university – great success. Unfortunately, due to sleep deprivation, I was unable to be fully overwhelmed by the nature and extent of my own achievement<sup>7</sup>.

However, objectively speaking, it was quite the accomplishment, especially concerning my circumstances:

Being from an Asian family, Law and Medicine are like the Holy Grail of professions, and will earn you decades (depending on how long you live) of bragging rights if you're the parent/uncle/cousin-thrice-removed of said professional. Therefore, GAMSAT, the gateway test into Medicine, had the sort of End-Game Big Boss difficulty assumed unto it, with my dad warning me that I will require *at least* half a year of study<sup>8</sup> if I am to stand a chance. Not really understanding GAMSAT and its requirements, I mindlessly heeded such conservatism.

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<sup>7</sup> In fact, I dare say that my sister and ~~some~~ most people I phoned up seemed more ecstatic than I was.

<sup>8</sup> As if such optimistic approximations weren't enough, GAMSAT forums are never lacking in repeat test-takers – some of whom are so pumped with energy and low in self-confidence, that they would start studying for next year's test just a few days after taking this year's. Now this is Sparta.

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Between the last test of my Psychology honours degree (13<sup>th</sup> November, 2008) and a certain day in January 2009 (the 20<sup>th</sup>, to be exact), was more than two months of sucking at job-seeking, in which I became increasingly disillusioned by the current job market, and by my current choice of career paths<sup>9</sup>. During this period, I did not really view taking on the GAMSAT as any sort of option, as the next test was at March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2009 – which did not seem like enough preparation time at all.

Or so it seemed.

On the night of January 20, by some uncanny amount of serendipity, I had a discussion with a med school graduate, and became sufficiently convinced that maybe – just maybe – **just** over 2 months of study would be enough for GAMSAT. So I returned home – watched *Eternal Sunshine of a Spotless Mind* with my family – and the next day, went straight to study.

I will now arbitrarily<sup>10</sup> skip to the results I received for GAMSAT:

- Section 1: 65
- Section 2: 75
- Section 3: 60
- Overall: 65

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<sup>9</sup> A career in Psychology entailed either research and academic professorship, or professions in the clinical or organisational directions. Having entered into my degree out of an interest for pop-psychology, I graduated realising that I wanted none of the paths offered by “real-life” psychology (which all demanded post-grad study, for which I was neither competitive nor committed enough to pursue).

So, what awaited me were low-level admin jobs (which I presumed I would prefer, but ironically was not qualified for), and even shitter jobs (yep I know – job snob) which I would need to fool myself into wanting, due to the increasing desperation from prolonged unemployment and worsening economics.

<sup>10</sup> Of course not: It's all about the theatrics – just like Pulp Fiction.

<b>Graduate Australian Medical School Admissions Test</b>			
<b>STATEMENT OF RESULTS</b>			
Candidate name:	William CHEN		
Candidate number:	<div style="background-color: #800080; width: 50px; height: 20px;"></div>	Test date:	21/03/2009
Date of birth:	10/3/1987	Sex:	M
<b>GAMSAT RESULTS</b>			
Section I Reasoning in Humanities & Social Sciences:	65	<b>GAMSAT Overall Score:</b>	65
Section II Written Communication:	75		
Section III Reasoning in Biological & Physical Sciences	60	Verification code:	0531

I distinctly remember that I was more ecstatic finding out my GAMSAT score, than graduating from Psychology.

To give you some point of comparison – and establish some credit for my following studying strategies, see here for 2009's [entry cut-offs of various universities](#), and [percentile rank curve](#).

My 2-month GAMSAT studying tips are soon to come; but first, it would be useful to understand my background, and evaluate for yourself how realistic<sup>11</sup> my strategies are to you:

- In terms of English abilities, I do proof-reading for university students, and am very much a grammar-nazi; so language is no barrier for me at all.
- For humanities orientation, my degree was psychology, which is extremely relevant; and I also enjoy reading and philosophising about pop-psychology, self-development, and social interactions. Therefore, analysing discourse and reading between the lines are second nature to me<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Remember kids, sciences (even the hard types) can be learnt relatively fast (I got proficient enough in 2 months); whereas English skills and humanities understanding takes years to master (and for GAMSAT's sake, mastery = proficiency for English and humanities) – and note that my strategy is tailored towards those proficient in English and humanities.

If you're not humanities-oriented, and/or your English needs serious improvement, please don't try taking a short-cut with my strategy – it won't work, and you'll just be wasting time and money.

<sup>12</sup> In fact, my preparation for Section 1 was minimal – I only did Section 1 questions during mock-exams, and simply continued to read and hallucinate about humanities stuff as I usually do.

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- ~~Being an Asian~~ Coming from an introverted and academic-oriented background, I had not much difficulty with going into social lock-down and engaging in continuous study. Also, I was living with my parents, and was not working, so I was able to avoid most of the practical living issues such as cooking, renting, and working, and could simply concentrate on studying.
- I was able to rely on sustainable motivation to carry me through regimental and continuous studying, as well as the urge to cop out on several occasions. This robust motivation was a synergy of both purpose<sup>13</sup> and the rebounding energy from the frustrations of job-seeking<sup>14</sup>.

The strategies are coming – in Part 2 and Part 3.

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<sup>13</sup> Asian families have a tendency to sprinkle – or simply push – the idea of “maybe a career as a lawyer/doctor suits you” upon the kids; and due to adolescent passive-aggressiveness, I resisted such aspirations: I thought that these two professions were “cop-outs” for those with greater potential – kinda like “I’m not creative enough to pursue and excel at a unique career choice – so I went with the generic choice and became a doctor/lawyer. Now give me money”.

Chatting to the med graduate helped dispel me of such stereotypes of the medical doctor: You can pursue/pioneer any branch of medicine that your mind/heart can entertain, and you don’t have to wither away treating the same types of symptoms for the rest of your life; you’ll still need to constantly learn and keep abreast of recent technology and breakthroughs; and that you don’t have to remain small-time if you don’t want to. Simply put: I shouldn’t underestimate Medicine.

Thus, being able to see myself enjoying a career as a doctor, and seeing the GAMSAT as the inevitable but possible-to-surmount barrier, I developed something I don’t believe I have ever really felt before: A clear and burning feeling of purpose and direction. When you experience goal-orientation of this magnitude (i.e. you WANT the result, you know what you need to do, and the challenge is great enough and uncertain enough to demand your very best), you can have your sustainable motivation and eat it too – it’s not called “sustainable” for nothing.

<sup>14</sup> In fact, my dad revealed that he had pushed me hard to job-seek (or else I’d just bum around, as I was still living at home), to feed my frustration from failed applications and the need to force myself to apply for and “want” (if you don’t, it’ll show up during the interview) undesirable jobs: He knew that the frustration would eventuate in change (and he had faith it’d be positive change – that I wouldn’t settle for simply giving up and becoming proficient in delinquency).

## [Present Day – Some Call it Judgement Day]

### Ground Rules

Right, so there are a few things to get clear about the FastGAMSAT method, to avoid the teary late-night phone calls, empty icecream buckets, torn-up scrap-books, and strongly-worded fan-mails.

#### ***FACT #1: The FastGAMSAT method will not suit everyone***

That's because the FastGAMSAT method is built for speed, and to be able to take someone who wasn't thinking about taking the GAMSAT at all<sup>15</sup>, to the standard where they stand a chance on the day, in 2 months or so, requires more than a few stars to align:

- You've got to WANT IT
  - [I don't always](#) do CAPS-LOCKS, but when I do, it's to denote passion.
  - Other than my opinion that everyone should follow their passion<sup>16</sup>, FastGAMSAT won't work if you're not passionate about medicine.
  - With FastGAMSAT, we are talking study timeframes (a few months, maybe less) which most people dismiss as unreasonable, meaning that:
    - You may have to constantly wrestle with the doubt of "do I actually have enough time to study?",
    - Most people may treat you as if you don't got much of a chance, which is a well-known [self-fulfilling prophecy phenomenon](#).
    - You don't have the luxury of "off-days"<sup>17</sup>, and
    - The time-drain of procrastination will hit your study-schedule harder than GAMSAT-takers rolling in spare time.

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<sup>15</sup> Or indeed, thinking about anything at all.

<sup>16</sup> Because the world needs more people with superpowers.

<sup>17</sup> With one exception, which I'll talk about in Part 4.



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- That means, if you have even a doubt whether a medical career is for you, I suggest you go on an *Eat Pray Love*-style adventure of serious soul-searching<sup>18</sup> first.
  - Or else, the time-pressure and self-doubt might get to you, causing you to snap, and dance around with flowers in your hair. In the streets. For money. And your parents will wonder what went wrong, and blame themselves.
- If you're pure-bred Asian, or just academic royalty, and went to cram school for 10+ years, and took weekly piano and violin lessons, and got A's in school and 7's in uni, and you're ambivalent about medicine, and are just following the yellow brick road painfully and lovingly laid out by your Munchkin parents:
  - I'm guessing your parents are making you read this ebook, and you're only even thinking about taking the GAMSAT with "less than adequate preparation", because you're 2 years away from graduating from uni, and this is your trial-run.
    - Or, nobody's making you read this ebook, and you're already fully prepared, but don't feel quite right if you're not stressing out and doubting yourself: So you've worked yourself up into quite a state, and you're reading this ebook for "a soothing response" or "additional preparation".
  - I have no doubt you can get into medicine – even without FastGAMSAT. I think you can steamroll over the time-pressure and self-doubt with your maxed-out subject expertise<sup>19</sup> and cut-throat academic discipline.
  - In your case, the passion might be optional: Just remember to make decisions that you can live with.
  - Meanwhile, there's no harm in treating FastGAMSAT as leisurely non-fiction, such as toilet-reading<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> At least I'm guessing that's what that movie's about.

<sup>19</sup> For *some people*, there is simply no value in preparing for the GAMSAT: In such cases, prep is only conducted for the sake of OCD or The Lulz.

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- If you're not cut from the cloth of academic excellence, and you don't have a lot of time, then you need to find that passion for medicine, AKA the [perpetual motion engine](#) for your [Little Tank Engine That Could](#).
- As the [formulae](#) in Part 2 points out, motivation is the most important determinant of how much study you get done in the long-term.
  - And as efficient as GAMSAT prep can be, you still need to read several textbooks, do multiple practice exams, deal with multiple freak-outs... it is not a short-term arrangement, physically or psychologically. Long-term dedication is crucial.
- Native-level English skills
  - Half of the entire GAMSAT exam<sup>21</sup> is about the detailed grasp of the English language.
  - English, like any language, requires immersion and constant application to master.
  - Some signs your English level is adequate:
    - You can comfortably read and understand everyday English, without having to stop and translate it into your mother language in your head.
    - You have a solid grasp of grammar and spelling, to the point where typos and poor wording jump out at you when reading, and make your eyes water.
    - You can think perfectly in English.
  - If English was your first language, and you are at an academic level where you can consider taking the GAMSAT (i.e. Bachelor degree-level), you probably pass English adequacy.
  - If you didn't grow up in an English-speaking environment, then you have to ask yourself some hard questions (check above signs).

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<sup>20</sup> And no, I won't take offence. I read stuff in there all the time. Actually I may or may not be editing this sentence on the throne.

<sup>21</sup> Section 1 and 2 are worth 25% each, adding up to 50% of marks.

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- Comfortable grasp of the humanities
  - Obviously, there's a humanities section in the GAMSAT (Section 1).
  - However, Section 2 is also humanities: Wonder why humanities students have to write tons of essays?
    - Exactly, essay-writing is Applied Humanities: It's also about themes and symbols and subtext – except rather than decoding the author's messages, you *\*are\** the author instilling the messages into your work.
  - Humanities isn't technically as hard as English to reach a proficient level, but it is harder than the sciences. So if you have to prepare for humanities as well as the sciences (or just humanities and not the sciences), you'll likely need more than 2 months.
  - You don't actually have to be a humanities major to be humanities-minded. Below are ways of telling:
    - A good test is humour: Can you easily understand and make jokes? Can you appreciate or use different types of humour?
      - Examples of humour types:
        - Dark humour
        - Dead-pan
        - Sarcasm
        - Physically-expressive
        - Off-colour humour
        - Foil/straight man duo routines
      - Humour is all about subtext (the underlying message), which is what you need to train for in Section 1, Young Grasshopper.
    - When faced with jargon (like the word "jargon" might be for you), you're able to guess what the meaning might be, by considering the word in the context of the sentence or paragraph.
    - You actually enjoy classic works of literature when you read them.

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- E.g. You can grasp the beauty of the language in poetry, the way different themes and storylines weave together relevantly and entertainingly in epics....
- Able to get into study lock-down
  - The GAMSAT is definitely pass-able in a short amount of time – if you have the means to compact your studies.
  - The following things are advantageous:
    - You live at home.
    - You're not working at all.
    - You work, but not for that many hours, and you don't get so stressed or tired that you're useless when you get home.
    - Your social circle isn't high maintenance.
      - You don't have friends who have to catch up every few days, otherwise:
        - Someone gets pissy, and
        - Maybe you're sleeping with their ex to get back for them sleeping with your date, and
        - There will be blood, and
        - Suddenly it's BFF against BFF, and
        - What? A coup out from left field? And
        - Every other such Gossip Girl drama.
  - You need the You Time to study without physical and emotional interruptions.

If you don't have any of the above qualities or circumstances, FastGAMSAT will still help you immensely in your studies – just know that you'll need extra time to build up your foundations more solidly.

***FACT #2: Not everything will work for everyone, so test things out early***

The pieces of advice I dish out in this ebook – from 2009 or 2015 – are what worked for me. They may or may not work for you:

- You might need 5 coffees a day to function properly.
- You have to read the something 3 times before understanding or remembering it.
- You snack when you're really serious about studying.
- You cry every 2-3 days to release tension.

And that's fine – everyone's different. My point is that you should test out all my advice: If it improves your performance, great, make a habit of it. If it doesn't, just do whatever works best for you.

And test early, and plan early: You shouldn't be worrying about what to eat for breakfast, and what to pack for lunch, what pen to use for the essays, days before the GAMSAT. Figure out your best choices ahead of time, then base your GAMSAT preparation routine around them. On GAMSAT day, you shouldn't have to stress out, or use any brain-power to make any new decisions about your routine – all that energy should be for the exam itself.

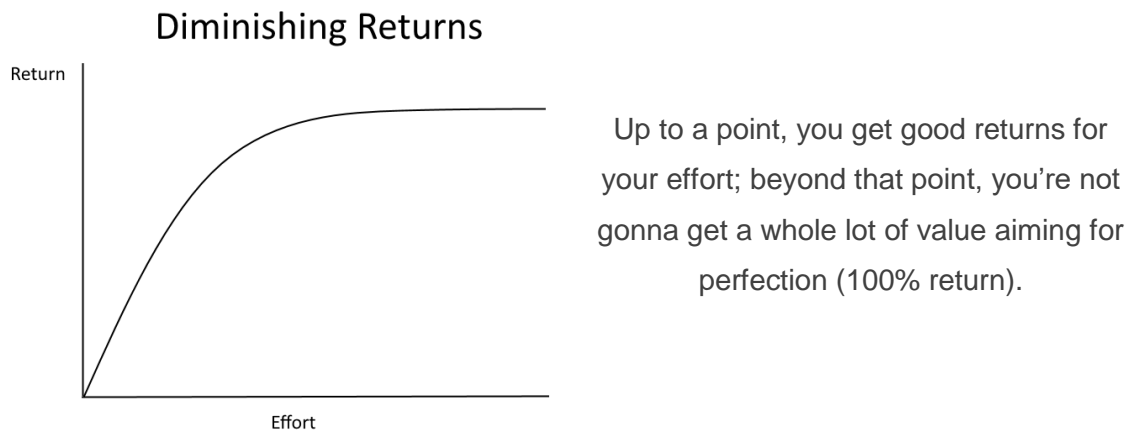
So, remember:

- Test out advice early,
- Plan your routine early, and
- Form habits early<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> Oh, and show up early to the exam. Hopefully that's self-explanatory: If not, I'll bang it home in [Part 4](#) anyway.

**FACT #3: The FastGAMSAT method is not about perfectionism**



There are GAMSAT resources out there that want to supercharge your GAMSAT score and put you way ahead of the competition and whatever.

FastGAMSAT isn't about that.

FastGAMSAT assumes that you don't have that much time to prepare for the GAMSAT – at alone aim to squeeze your ass into the top 1%, and that you're cool with “just getting in” to med school.

Because, just like the high school [OP score](#), no one talks about it after they get into whatever uni degree they wanted to get into – because it doesn't matter once you get in.

If, after you get into med, you do meet pricks who want to compare shoe sizes, take off your shoe and hit them with it.

Of course, we should all aim to perform at our very best. That said, there is a huge difference in study strategy between aiming for a perfect mark, and aiming for good enough. That is why FastGAMSAT will advise you to skip traditional preparation for an entire subject – advice which would have high-achievers frothing at the mouth.

And let's be clear here: Aiming for good enough doesn't mean you can take GAMSAT study casually. It is still serious business – in fact it's more serious for you, since you don't have as much time as other test-takers.



***FACT #4: You don't have to be a top student to use the FastGAMSAT method***

Ok sure, to actually get into medicine, you'll need an overall GPA that can pass the cut-offs, which may involve being or pretending to be an above-average student.

However, if you've made it to the GAMSAT stage with an adequate GPA, and you're freaking out because there's not time enough and I'm not student enough, then you should start off by calming-the-hell-down.

I was never a top student in school or in uni; and FastGAMSAT isn't written for top students (I wouldn't know how to anyway).

FastGAMSAT is written for those of you who stumbled through the academic system, who seldom had cause to work hard, but can put in the hard yards when you can see the purpose.

As you go through the ebook, you'll see the same theme over and over –

Persistence: It's the one thing that can take you from wherever you are right now, to wherever you want to be – including screaming and hurdling into medicine. And persistence comes from purpose and passion<sup>23</sup> – so as I mentioned in [Fact #1](#), find your passion for medicine first.

You don't have to be a top student to find your persistence, but once you find it, it can make you a top student for the purposes of the GAMSAT (and with luck, for medicine as well). And FastGAMSAT is here to guide you once you find your passion and persistence.

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So, now that we've had [the DTR talk](#) about FastGAMSAT, let's dig into the good stuff, starting with what skills you need to pass the GAMSAT even with just 2 months.

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<sup>23</sup> I use the terms purpose and passion quite interchangeably. But for the purposes of this point, I think passion is more suitable, as I feel that it embodies more of a primal, emotional drive, which I think is where persistence comes from. This is because I think I gain more drive from emotion than logic – and thus, I mostly use the term passion throughout the ebook.

In contrast, purpose feels more like a drive that comes from logic. If you're more of a logical person, and can't really understand what I'm on about with the term passion, find your reason/s for wanting to do medicine, and let your sense of purpose drive you.

## INSERT COIN TO CONTINUE

Thank you for reading the Study Guide Sampler!

You've had a taste of the writing style and the goods, and I hope you like what you, um, taste. Ewww.

To continue reading, [click here to grab the full ebook!](#)

P.S. It's been real.

P. P. S. This is not the end<sup>24</sup>.

P. P. P. S. Peace out or tap out.



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<sup>24</sup> I'm not just saying that [to make you feel better](#): This is literally not the end of the study guide. It is within your power to read it (just like it is within you power to pass the GAMSAT) – [get the full guide here](#).