



AAMC

Tomorrow's Doctors, Tomorrow's Cures®

The AAMC Situational Judgment Test (SJT): Examinee Preparation Guide

Association of
American Medical Colleges

Contents

Overview	2
Format	3
Scoring.....	3
Competencies.....	4
Exam Instructions and Guidance	5
Preparing for the AAMC SJT Exam	6
Preparation Strategies.....	6
Practice Exam	6
Scoring Key Rationales	6

AAMC Situational Judgment Test: Examinee Preparation Guide

Overview

The AAMC Situational Judgment Test (AAMC SJT) is a standardized exam that presents a series of hypothetical scenarios students may encounter in medical school and asks examinees to evaluate the effectiveness of a series of behavioral responses to each scenario. The AAMC has collaborated with subject matter experts in the medical school community, including faculty, admissions officers, and student and diversity affairs officers to tailor the AAMC SJT exam for medical schools and ensure its validity and fairness for all applicants.

Just like students need to enter medical school with knowledge about basic science to be successful, students also need to enter with basic pre-professionalism knowledge. The AAMC SJT exam is an opportunity for you to showcase competencies that go beyond your academic readiness, such as service orientation, teamwork, resilience, and reliability. Your performance on the AAMC SJT exam will provide medical schools insight into your knowledge of effective and ineffective pre-professional behavior and potential to develop into a doctor who demonstrates compassion, empathy, and professionalism.

This document focuses on preparation advice and strategies for completing the AAMC SJT exam. Please refer to the [AAMC Situational Judgment Test: Essentials](#) for the official policies and procedures.

Format

The exam includes written scenario sets that present hypothetical dilemmas linked to eight pre-professional competencies. The scenarios are based on real-world situations you may experience in medical school. They are set in educational, healthcare, or other real-life settings.

Following each scenario are items (also referred to as “responses”) which reflect a range of possible actions you could take in response to the dilemma presented in the scenario.

Sample Scenario Set

You are pursuing a two-week volunteer opportunity at a well-regarded local clinic. When you receive your course schedule, you realize the volunteer opportunity would conflict with your weekly required lab. This is the only time that the lab is offered this semester, so you are not able to make up the lab. Participation in the lab will count toward your grade.

Please rate the effectiveness of each response to the situation.

1. Skip your lab for two weeks to attend the volunteer opportunity.
2. Ask your lab instructor to identify a solution that will allow you to attend both.
3. Stop pursuing the volunteer opportunity so that you can attend the required lab.
4. Tell your lab instructor in advance that you will miss two of your scheduled lab sessions.
5. Attend the lab and investigate if similar volunteer opportunities are available at another time.

You will be asked to rate the effectiveness of each response using a four-point scale:

Very Ineffective (1)	Ineffective (2)	Effective (3)	Very Effective (4)
The response will cause additional problems or make the situation worse.	The response will not improve the situation or may cause a problem.	The response could help but will not significantly improve the situation.	The response will significantly improve the situation.

There are 30 scenarios and 186 items on the test, and you will have 75 minutes to complete the test.

Note on scenarios in healthcare settings. While the AAMC SJT exam includes scenarios that are set in healthcare settings, you do not need medical knowledge, knowledge of hospital protocols, or healthcare experience to understand the scenario and accurately evaluate the effectiveness of a response. The AAMC SJT exam was designed for pre-health students to measure their pre-professionalism, not their healthcare knowledge. All test content is reviewed to ensure prior healthcare knowledge or experience is not needed to perform well on the exam.

Scoring

Your AAMC SJT exam score is based on the extent to which your effectiveness ratings of each response (item) align with medical educators’ ratings. Full credit is awarded for an item if your rating matches the medical educators’ rating. Partial credit is awarded if your rating is close to the medical educators’ rating.

Competencies

The AAMC SJT exam assesses examinees' understanding of effective pre-professional behavior across eight [core competencies for entering medical students](#). It is helpful to keep these competencies in mind as you read scenarios and evaluate the effectiveness of items.

Service Orientation: Demonstrates a desire to help others and sensitivity to others' needs and feelings; demonstrates a desire to alleviate others' distress; recognizes and acts on his/her responsibilities to society; locally, nationally, and globally.

Social Skills: Demonstrates an awareness of others' needs, goals, feelings, and the ways that social and behavioral cues affect peoples' interactions and behaviors; adjusts behaviors appropriately in response to these cues; treats others with respect.

Cultural Competence: Demonstrates knowledge of socio-cultural factors that affect interactions and behaviors; shows an appreciation and respect for multiple dimensions of diversity; recognizes and acts on the obligation to inform one's own judgment; engages diverse and competing perspectives as a resource for learning, citizenship, and work; recognizes and appropriately addresses bias in themselves and others; interacts effectively with people from diverse backgrounds.

In order to assess applicants' knowledge of effective behaviors related to Cultural Competence, some scenarios include more sensitive content. While it may be a challenging topic, Cultural Competence is an important part of the foundation upon which medical schools will train their students for physician practice. The AAMC intends to measure this competency in a fair and appropriate manner. All test content is reviewed to ensure it does not contain a situation, action, or language that might be offensive or distracting to some examinees.

Teamwork: Works collaboratively with others to achieve shared goals; shares information and knowledge with others and provides feedback; puts team goals ahead of individual goals.

Ethical Responsibility to Self and Others: Behaves in an honest and ethical manner; cultivates personal and academic integrity; adheres to ethical principles and follows rules and procedures; resists peer pressure to engage in unethical behavior and encourages others to behave in honest and ethical ways; develops and demonstrates ethical and moral reasoning.

Reliability and Dependability: Consistently fulfills obligations in a timely and satisfactory manner; takes responsibility for personal actions and performance.

Resilience and Adaptability: Demonstrates tolerance of stressful or changing environments or situations and adapts effectively to them; is persistent, even under difficult situations; recovers from setbacks.

Capacity for Improvement: Sets goals for continuous improvement and for learning new concepts and skills; engages in reflective practice for improvement; solicits and responds appropriately to feedback.



Exam Instructions and Guidance

Read each scenario and response carefully before rating the effectiveness of the response.

As you evaluate the responses, please follow the instructions and guidance below:

- Each scenario describes a situation that students may encounter during medical school. You should assume the role of a medical student in each scenario.
- Consider each response as an **immediate next step** in the scenario, unless otherwise noted.
- Everything you need to know to evaluate each response is included in the scenario and the response itself. Do not assume anything beyond what is written in the scenario or response.
- Evaluate and rate each response independently. Do not compare the responses to each other or rank order the responses.
- Within a scenario set, each effectiveness rating can be used more than once or not at all. Not all scenario sets will include responses that reflect each effectiveness rating.
- As in real life, there may be multiple ways to respond to a situation. The response you think may be most or least effective may not be present. Each scenario set includes a sample of possible responses to the situation.
- Some scenarios are more complex and include multiple and/or competing dilemmas. Consider the entire context of the scenario when evaluating each response. You may see similar types of responses across scenarios. Remember that a behavior that appears in two different scenarios may have different consequences based on the context in which it occurs.

Preparing for the AAMC SJT Exam

Preparation Strategies

We recommend you prepare for the AAMC SJT exam using the free practice exam the AAMC has developed in collaboration with subject matter experts in the medical school community.

When preparing for the exam, there are several steps you can take.

- Review the eight pre-professional competencies and definitions measured by the AAMC SJT exam, as each scenario you encounter will address one or more of these competencies. These competencies are included in this guide as well as on the Anatomy of an Applicant webpage.
- Complete the practice exam to familiarize yourself with the test format and the types of scenarios you'll see on the actual exam
- Compare your effectiveness ratings to medical educators' effectiveness ratings in the scoring key to better understand your performance
- Review the scoring key rationales to better understand how medical schools evaluate the effectiveness of different responses to the scenarios

In addition to preparing for the test itself, make sure you review the [AAMC SJT: Essentials](#), which is the official policies and procedures guide for the AAMC SJT exam. We also recommend watching the tutorial for the online testing system to better understand its features and functions. And, of course, come to the test rested and focused so that you can put your best foot forward.

Practice Exam

The AAMC developed the practice exam in collaboration with subject matter experts in the medical school community, including medical school staff in admissions, student affairs, diversity affairs, and faculty. Subject matter experts reviewed all test content and created the scoring key to help ensure a valid, fair test for all applicants that is scored in accordance with medical school expectations and standards.

The practice exam has the same look, feel, and length as the actual AAMC SJT exam. The purpose of the practice exam is to help you become more familiar with the test format (i.e., scenarios, responses, and rating scale) and types of scenarios used to measure the eight core competencies. If you plan to use the practice exam to practice timing, we recommend allotting 75 minutes to complete the exam, the time allotted for the actual AAMC SJT exam¹.

The practice exam booklet also includes a scoring key for the practice exam. We recommend comparing your effectiveness rating for each item to the scoring key to better understand your performance on the practice exam.

Scoring Key Rationales

The AAMC has provided a rationale to explain the scoring key for each item on the practice exam. The practice exam includes a variety of types of scenarios and addresses the eight core competencies measured on the actual exam. The purpose of the rationales is to help familiarize you with the process for evaluating the effectiveness of responses, including how to apply the effectiveness rating scale. We recommend that you review the rationales after you have completed the practice exam. Compare your effectiveness rating for each item with the scoring key and review the corresponding rationale to get a better sense of the reasoning applied by our medical school experts.

¹ If you were approved to take the test with accommodations, we recommend practicing with the amount of time indicated in your approval letter.