

UNOFFICIAL | GUIDE TO THE OAT

Who this guide is for: Pre-optometry or pre-dentistry students who want all the juicy details of the OAT. I had no filter writing this guide, so here's my OAT scores, how I studied, and details on the actual test day.

Last updated: 7/30/18

Why: I would've wanted the same OAT guide before I registered and studied for the OAT. I think I am a reasonable person to write this guide because my score isn't too high ("lol this guy's advice won't apply to me") or too low either ("lol this guy's advice can't be legit")

TIME SPENT
STUDYING FOR THE OAT

~353 hrs

OF TIMES
I RESCHEDULED OAT

2

\$ SPENT
ON STUDY MATERIALS

\$134

TOTAL \$ SPENT
ON THE OAT

\$704

How I did on the OAT:

| Section | Standard Score | Percentile | |
|------------------------|----------------|------------|---|
| Biology | 330 | 70 | Better than expected. |
| General Chemistry | 360 | 85 | Better than expected. |
| Organic Chemistry | 310 | 58 | Score was what I expected. Although I watched all of Chad's Ochem videos and done the practice problems, I didn't any spend any time at all studying/memorizing all the reactions. I just had the basics down like nomenclature, isomers, and Newman projections. I just had enough knowledge to reasonably guess answers from "predict the product" problems. |
| Reading Comprehension | 340 | 63 | Score was what I expected. |
| Physics | 360 | 95 | Way better than expected. I spent more time studying for physics since it seems most applicable for optometry school. |
| Quantitative Reasoning | 400 | 99 | Way better than expected. I spent a lot of time on Khan Academy on the year leading up to the OATs (procrastination??). You can either start with " Math by subject ," or " Math by grade ". I believe doing exercises in the 3rd grade to 8th grade sections really helped me in the OAT. I focused on speed, accuracy, and using mental math when answering "easy" questions on Khan Academy. You can take a look at my profile to get a better idea of what I studied on Khan Academy. Note that math and logic are inherently in the general chemistry and physics sections, so the math skills you gain are helpful for essentially half the OAT. Having an intuitive sense of numbers will help save time and give you a better chance at guessing the right answers, since most of the OAT (in my experience) are giving a bunch of reasonable guesses. |
| Total Science | 340 | 80 | |
| Academic Average | 350 | 88 | I went in the test expecting a score of 300-320 (50~60 percentile). I've taken 4 practice tests before the OAT and gotten a range of 280-340. From most of what I read online, pre-opt/dent students also typically scored lower in their practice tests than in their actual test. |

How I actually studied for the OAT:

- I began studying for the OATs about 1 year before the my test. 90% of what helped me on the test came from the last 2.7 months of studying.
 - 1 year before OAT** – uh-oh, I have to start studying. Bought Kaplan and Princeton Review books from EBay for \$25. Over 9 months, I somehow spent ~118 hours notating the Kaplan book, but I don't think retained any information.
 - 70 days before OAT** – registered for OAT; began panic mode. Subscribed to Chad's videos, and spent the next 65 days watching physics, chemistry, ochem, and biology videos and taking the associated quizzes.
 - It took me 65 days, spending ~215 hours to finish the videos and taking all the quizzes; 215/65 ≈ 3.3 hours/day.
 - If you want to finish Chad's videos in 30 days, expect to spend 215/30 ≈ 7.2 hours/day.
 - I skipped the quantitative reasoning videos/quizzes because I was running out of time to study.
 - 10 days before OAT** – continued to review my notes from Chad's videos/quizzes. Took ADA practice test, then the practice test included in my Kaplan book, then two practice tests included with my Princeton Review book (it linked me to two PDF tests online)
 - 2 days before OAT** – created a final review sheet as a desperate attempt to memorize information right before the test.
 - Day of OAT** – scroll down to "Step 3: Taking the OATs" for details.

How I *should've* studied for the OAT:

- The 118 hours I spent mindlessly notating the Kaplan book was the obvious time waster here. This would be my ideal 3 month plan if I could go back in time:
 - Day 1** – Take a practice test to get a feel for the test Qs/format.
 - I would take the [ADA practice test](#). Since this one has no answer explanations, it wouldn't feel like a 'waste' using this test before you even study for the OAT. You can also take it again a few months later since you'll probably forget everything on this test.
 - Day 2-60** – Chad's videos/quizzes for 1-2 months.
 - 2 months of Chad's videos would take me about 3.6 hours/day.
 - Day 60-90** – Continue to review notes from Chad's videos/quizzes. Take 7-10 practice tests during this time (though finding that many practice tests would be difficult, spending \$ on it would be worth it)
 - Simulate the real OAT test day as much as possible:
 - Wake up at the same times
 - Eat the same breakfast/lunch
 - Have the same items as you would on test day. My ziplock bag contained my phone, wallet, passport, earplugs, and my last minute review sheet.
 - Open up the [Prometric Online Tutorial](#)
 - Take the practice test with the same earplugs you would use
 - Take the scheduled break after reading comprehension, eat the same snack.

- Bonus resource:** Register for the [Free OAT Practice Test from Kaplan](#).

| | | | | |
|---|--|-------------|----------------------|---------------|
| Chad's videos | ~215 hours | 87% | \$109 for 2.2 months | 10/10 |
| Kaplan OAT 5th ed. + Princeton Review: Cracking the OAT | ~118 hours (notating book) ~12 hours (3 practice tests) | 3% 4% | \$25 on eBay | 1/10 10/10 |
| ADA practice test | ~3 hours | 3% | Free | 10/10 |
| Creating a final review sheet | ~5 hours | 3% | Free | 8/10 |
| Totals: | ~353 hours | 100% | \$134 | - |

- Chad's videos** – gets a 10/10 rating because Chad's lectures on chem, ochem, physics were perfectly geared towards the OAT/DAT questions.
 - How I used Chad's videos: I first printed out the "Outlines" which are provided on the website once you subscribe to the OAT section. For example, the outline for the entire physics section is 13 pages front and back. I watch the lectures and go through the outline, [notating on the outline paper](#) during the lecture. I frequently reviewed these notes, mostly before bed so I can bore myself to sleep.
 - I immediately did the associated quiz after going through each lecture. For example, the first physics video "Units" has a 7 question quiz. I did each question on a whiteboard to simulate taking the OATs. **For questions that I think would be helpful to review later, I wrote them in a [standard 70-page notebook](#).** Some sections would be "easy", so I would only spend time writing one representative question and its answer for that one section. Again, I frequently reviewed these questions, mostly before bed so I can bore myself to sleep.
 - Tip: I wrote the questions in black ink, then worked out the answers in pencil. It helped to make the question more visible than the answer, this way I easily read the question and quizzed myself without accidentally looking at the answer. Also, you can now use blue/red ink so make further annotations when you are reviewing.
- Kaplan OAT 5th ed. + Princeton Review: Cracking the OAT + ADA practice test** – I gave the books a 1/10 rating because I personally can't learn science material with just the book. The hardest part was not having associated quizzes with each section, so once I read through a section, I totally forgot it later. **What I *should've* done was watch Chad's videos first, then use this books as a *supplement*.** Regardless, I gave the books' practice tests a 9/10 rating since practice tests are always helpful to get realistic OAT practice. Their answer explanations were pretty good too, which is the most important part of the practice tests since you should review why you got each answer right/wrong.
 - The ADA practice test for the OAT used to be on the official ADA site for free, but I can't find it online anymore.
 - The ADA practice test for the DAT is [here](#) (does NOT have physics; includes perceptual ability test unique to DAT).
- Creating a final review sheet** – I mean, I guess it *felt* helpful that I had a sheet to bring with me on test day for last minute studying. I wrote out important material that I had trouble forgetting, and reviewed it constantly the days leading up the test.
 - Somewhat related: I found it most helpful to practice writing all the physics equations as I could remember on my whiteboard at home. Once I sat the down for the actual test, I would immediately write it all down on one of my whiteboards before I forgot.

Stuff that indirectly helped me on the OAT

| OAT supplement | Estimated Time | Notes |
|--|------------------|--|
| Science classes from undergrad (55.5 semester units) | 2000+ hrs | The material on the OAT is pretty much what you learn in pre-requisite classes for optometry school. Learning organic chemistry before definitely helps when you're reviewing it again with Chad's videos, for example. |
| Science classes from post-bac (23 semester units) | 1136 hrs | With a lot of C minuses from undergrad, I decided to retake a lot of my pre-requisite classes at CCs. FYI, for each class, I spent about 100 hours in class/lab and 100 hours studying to get an A. I retook these classes within 1.5 years of taking the OATs, so it really helped me with studying for the OAT. |
| OAT question of the days | ~5 hrs | 1) Kaplan OAT QOTD 2) DAT QOTD 3) DAT QOTD I kept these links on my bookmark bar and did some questions every now and then. This was before I started using Chad's videos, so they were pretty difficult (actually, they're still difficult). I can't really tell if they helped at all honestly. |
| Reading books | ~20 hrs | Doesn't hurt to read books. I read novels and treated them like passages on the OAT for practice. |
| Total: | ~3161 hrs | I mean, you gotta take those prereq courses anyways. |
| Grand total: | ~3514 hrs | Yeah, it's a lot, but what can ya do. |

General OAT tips

- As my friend J.B. stressed to me, "**plan to take the OATs only once**".
 - Solid advice, since it's a \$450 test.
 - It also removes the mindset of "yeah, I'll just study harder for the next OATs" so you can focus on just this first time.
- Of course, this doesn't mean you should take the OATs last minute. Just in case you need to retake it, you should account for the minimum 3 months that's required to take it again.

FAQs

Question: "When should I take the OATs?"

Answer: Two main pieces of advice:

- Advice #1: Take the OATs as early as possible.**
 - In the most ideal case, you will take the OATs more than 3 months before OptomCAS opens in June. So if you took the OATs in March and did terribly, you can still retake it 3 months later in June.
 - Since most optometry schools using rolling admissions, you should get in your applications sent to schools ASAP. You don't want to be worrying about studying for the OATs *and* working on your OptomCAS application.
- Advice #2: Take the OATs when you are ready.**
 - I totally ignored advice #1 and took the OATs at the last possible date. I originally scheduled my OATs on the 11/31/17, but rescheduled to 12/27/17, then rescheduled *again* to 1/31/18.
 - While seats were being filled up in optometry schools, I sacrificed applying earlier for a better score on the OATs. I didn't feel ready to

Step 1: Registering for the OAT

- Register for *eligibility* to take the OAT on the [ADA website](#).
 - Cost: \$450
 - I paid on 8/5/2017, then got an email on 8/7/2017 saying that I could schedule a test between 8/7/2017 and 2/7/2018 (6 months)

FAQs

Question: "Should I send in my scores to all schools?"

Answer: Yes, I believe in 99% of cases, you should indicate that every school can "receive your official score reports". It doesn't cost extra money now. If you decide to send it later on, it will cost \$65 for each school!

Question: "Why *wouldn't* I want to send my scores to all schools?"

Answer: ADA representative over the phone: "(laughs) I guess there really is no reason!". But I think there's this scenario: you aren't confident in taking the OAT this time, so you decide to *not* to send your scores to [whatever schools]. If you bomb the test, your [whatever schools] won't see your bad score. If you do good, then you pay \$65 to release your score to each school. – For more info, look at page 11 under "Score Reports" in the [2018 OAT Guide](#)

Step 2: Scheduling your OAT

- Receive an email from the ADA saying your application to take the OAT is valid. Follow the instructions in the email to schedule a testing date at a Prometric testing center.
 - On 9/4/2017, I scheduled my exam date to be on 11/27/2017.
 - On 11/15/2017, I rescheduled my exam date to be on 1/22/2018.
 - On 1/8/2017, I rescheduled my exam date to be on 1/31/2018.
 - On each occasion, there were a good choice of available dates and times on both weekdays and weekends for my particular testing center.
- Tip: If you live in the Bay Area, the Prometric testing center I used was in [801 Traeger Ave in San Bruno, CA](#).
 - Definitely would recommend. Quiet environment, helpful staff, a nice quiet break area outside for your 30 minute break in the middle of the test.

FAQs

Question: "Which Prometric testing center should I use?"

Answer: If you have the luxury of having multiple Prometric testing centers around your home, check the testing centers' Yelp reviews and judge which one works best for you. I had two testing centers approximately the same distance from me. One of these testing centers was located downtown (lots of complaints about construction noises during the test), and the other was located in a quiet area (with mostly good reviews), so it was an obvious choice.

Question: "Does rescheduling the OAT cost money?"

Answer: Yes, and I done it entirely online. I paid \$60 each time to reschedule it, and I was [more than 6 business days](#) before the actual test date when I rescheduled. *And yes, it was worth it.*

Step 3: Taking the OATs

- **6:00AM:** I ate the same hashbrowns and eggs I've been eating for the past week. Drank around 3 cups of water within an hour.
- **8:00AM:** I ate two handfuls of almonds on the ride over to the test center. I got my dad to drive me for added assurance and so I don't have to look for parking.
- **8:20AM – 9:00AM:** Last minute review of notes and using the restroom in the building of the Prometric test center.
- **9:00AM – 9:15AM:** Lined up and sign in using your "two forms of government-issued photo ID"; I brought my driver's license and passport. Received a locker key and I put in my ziplock bag, which contained: phone, wallet, lunch (even more almonds). I was now carrying only my locker key and my earplugs.
- **9:15AM – 9:30AM:** Waited to get called in to get pat-downed, metal-detected, scan fingerprints, get my earplugs inspected.
- **Important tip:** they should give you two "low-odor fine tip dry erase markers" and two dry erase boards. **Try both of the dry erase markers on the eraser board first to see if there's any ink and if the marker tip is reasonable.** I received 1 marker with a fine tip which I used for the entire test, and 1 worn out marker with a wider tip that I didn't use at all. You want to write as fast as possible, so writing small with a fine tip marker will save you time over writing huge with a wide tip marker. Plus, you can write more without spending time erasing the board.
- I received [two of these dry erase boards and two dry erase markers](#).
 - This picture is pretty similar to what I received on the test, except they only had black dry erase markers.
 - I would recommend buying a similar dry erase board and marker to use with studying for the OAT.
- **9:30AM – 2:30PM:** Sat down at my exam booth and started the test. Scroll down for a detailed breakdown of entire OAT.
 - [This picture](#) is pretty similar to what my testing booth looked like.
 - My monitor was 17", 1280x720 (which is totally fine for the OAT)
 - My test center provided noise cancelling earmuffs but I used earplugs instead, as many other of my friends have done/suggested.
 - Chair was pretty good, I hung my jacket on it.
 - I was sitting in the middle of the room, so there was a person taking a test in front of my booth (unlike the front wall in the picture)
 - **Tip:** I pushed up the keyboard for room for my dry erase board. I don't remember using the keyboard for anything other than the numpad for the on-screen calculator.

FAQs

Question: "What should I wear to the test?"

Answer: Check the Yelp reviews for your test center to see if the exam room's temperature is reasonable. If you really want to play it safe, I would recommend comfortable sweatpants, T-shirt, long sleeve, and a jacket. You can always take off your jacket and/or long sleeve and leave it hanging on your chair or on your desk for the entire test.

- I wore sweatpants with a T-shirt with jacket, but took off my jacket about 30 minutes in because my exam room was at a perfect temp (~68°F).
- Note: I used either my jacket's sleeve or the side of hand to erase my whiteboard because it saved a couple seconds from reaching for the eraser (and it's just as good).

Question: "Should I bring earplugs? What kind?"

Answer: You'll be sitting in your exam booth with other people taking tests next to you, in front of you, and behind you. Keep in mind people are doing all kinds of tests, some that require them to type a lot (not the case with OAT, I only used the numpad). Earplugs definitely helped me drown out most of the keyboard/mouse clicking noise from other people.

- I tried about 5 different types of earplugs and I found [Blue-Track](#) to be the clear winner. It blocks out the most noise with the most comfortability. It's not made to be earplugs, I just randomly tried it, and it happened to be the best. I cut each strip to 4 pieces and roll up each piece into a ball that can mold to my ear. My exam proctor examined it and let me use it. Bring an different pair of earplugs to the test just in case.
- I would recommend doing practice tests with your choice of earplugs to see if you can handle it being in your ears for the entire test.

Question: "Should I call and ask my test center anything?"

Answer: You could ask the following questions:

- How's the temperature inside the exam room?
- How many dry erase markers and dry erase boards will you provide for the OAT? What color dry erase markers can you provide? (*I think I asked for one black marker and one different colored one, but only black is allowed for OAT*)
- Does your test center's keyboards have numpads? Will it work with the calculator on the OAT? (*They said they didn't know, but it ended up working for my test.*)
- Is there water in the lobby area? (*If you're a minimalist, you don't have to carry your own water.*)

OAT test breakdown

| OAT Schedule | Minutes | Tips |
|--|---------|--|
| Tutorial (optional) | 15 | <p>This will be the same tutorial as the Prometric Online Tutorial on their website. The differences between the above online tutorial and the my actual test were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I was able to cross out answer choices by right-clicking (?) the answer choice. I was able to highlight the text in the reading comprehension section by simply highlighting the text. <p>You should be able to finish this tutorial in about 5 minutes. With the remaining 10 minutes, use this time to prep your whiteboard with notes (see below).</p> |
| Bio (40Q) Chem (30Q) Ochem (30Q) | 90 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I spent 75 minutes answering the 100 questions (45 sec/question) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I left about 10 questions "marked" and 10 questions blank. With 15 minutes left, I clicked on "Review Incomplete" and answered the questions I left blank in about 10 minutes. With 5 minutes left, I clicked on "Review Marked" and reviewed my marked questions; I changed about 2-3 answers. |
| Reading Comp (40Q) | 50 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I divided the 3 reading passages to about 17 minutes each, here's what I did for each passage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I spent 2 minutes quickly scanning the reading passage and the corresponding ~13 questions I spent 2 minutes actually reading the entire passage. I had 13 minutes left to answer ~13 questions. With 15 minutes left, I clicked on "Review Incomplete" and answered the questions I left blank in about 10 minutes. With 5 minutes left, I clicked on "Review Marked" and reviewed my marked questions; I changed about 2-3 answers. <p>Since there were multiple reading passages, I tried to avoid leaving any answers blank. I guess because 45 minutes later, I would forget the details of the first reading passage. Though some questions for just too hard for me to answer, so I had to leave them blank for a desperate guess later on, or for a lucky eureka moment.</p> |
| Scheduled Break | 30 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> After you finish reading comprehension, a 30 minute timer counts down on your monitor telling you to take your break. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note: some test centers might require you to raise your hand to have a proctor come escort you outside. 5 minutes: I signed out, got my lunch and notes out my locker, then walked outside to a bench. 15 minutes: I ate lunch and reviewed my physics and quantitative reasoning notes. 5 minutes: I walked back into the test center, signed back in, and got back to my desk. The computer monitor read "5 minutes left", so I spent the time trying to remember any equations/concepts that might be useful and wrote it on my whiteboard. |
| Physics (40Q) | 50 | <p>Same strategy as bio, chem, ochem.</p> |
| Quantitative Reasoning (40Q) | 45 | <p>For my test center, I was able to use the keyboard's numpad with the on-screen calculator. Many of the questions were difficult, like, really difficult. I did a lot of plug and chug with the answer choices instead of solving the problems "correctly".</p> |
| Score pops up; Post Test Survey | | <p>Hopefully get a good score --> dance --> realize there are cameras watching --> quickly do post test survey and walk out. My test center also printed my unofficial OAT score report on paper. If you were late in the game with applying to schools as I was, some schools may want to see these unofficial OAT scores as opposed to waiting 2 weeks for the real ones.</p> |