

top ten tips for surviving medical school

most of these apply to nurses as well... and any other student!

1 put God first

Daily devotions are an important and helpful way of reading Scripture and deepening your relationship with God. Find a time to read Scripture that works for you. Whether that's in the morning, during your lunch break or before bed, try to take some time out with God. Daily devotional books can help.

2 find a church

This is vital! Having a church family at university will help you settle into uni life and provide you with a support network amidst the challenges of medical school. Your Christian Union may organise a 'church search' where you can meet current churchgoers with other newbies and try out several churches together. They will welcome you, and more importantly feed you! In some big cities you can be spoilt for choice, with more churches nearby than Sundays in a year. Don't spend forever looking; aim to settle down during the first term and explore how you can serve.

3 join CMF

Getting involved in CMF is a great way of meeting other Christian medical students, who are often hard to find in a large year group. Having a group of friends who you can relate to both in your faith and studies will prove invaluable. The CMF meet-ups vary between universities but I guarantee all will involve food and either prayer or medical discussions of some sort.

4 get stuck in

Whether you are good at sport, art, coding or business, there are so many societies you can get involved with. Equally, university is the best time to try something new – so go for it! Joining a society is a great way to de-stress, meet new people and expand your interests and skills (not to mention having something to put on your CV).

5 don't get sucked in

Medical school can become very clique-y. You will naturally become very close to other medics, but friendships outside of medicine can be refreshing and just as strong, especially with Christians. Getting involved in your church and joining non-medical societies are good ways of escaping medical conversation.

6 don't worry about FOMO (fear of missing out)

Don't feel like you have to *go* to everything and *do* everything at university; no one can! Instead, choose one or two activities you enjoy and invest your time and energy into them and the people involved. Having your fingers in too many pies often means you cannot commit fully to each area and group of people. This can lead to superficial relationships with lots of people rather than deeper relationships with fewer.



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7 keep in touch

It is really easy at university to either get homesick or completely cut yourself off from home. Planning when to visit home ahead of time may give you something to look forward to. Allowing your family and friends into your struggles and enjoyments will provide an additional support network and help sustain long-distance relationships.

8 work for the Lord

Work is good. It's what God intended for us. Nonetheless, it can be hard. Your first year is the time you figure out what working pattern works for you – whether that is in groups or by yourself, in the library or at home. Don't feel like you have to nail this in the first week. It takes time for us to realise how we work most efficiently and how long it takes us to get through last week's lectures. You'll hear the phrase 'work hard, play hard' bashed around at medical school and to be honest, it is a good one to live by. Work as for the Lord in all you do, but remember to rest and spend time doing fun things. Some people find making a timetable of your week and marking out time to work and rest improves productivity and reduces the feeling of guilt when you're resting. Find a balance. There is always pressure to get ahead of the game and competition in medical school, but don't look for your identity in these things. Your identity is found in Jesus and Jesus only.

9 exams come and go

They often feel like the most important thing in the world but try to have perspective. Your first year exams are arguably the most stressful for a medic as you have never sat a university-level exam before and may have no idea how much you need to learn for each exam. The best thing to do is to work hard, pray and have time to unwind. Don't put pressure on yourself to get the top grades – you're only in first year and are still working it all out. Speaking to higher years about their experiences may be helpful or if you really feel stuck, speak to a tutor.

10 enjoy your holidays

They won't last long! Make the most of your breaks by doing whatever it is that you find relaxing and fun. Whether that's resting at home, catching up on your favourite TV programmes or backpacking around the world. Summer is also a fantastic opportunity to get onto a CMF or UCCF summer team or go to a Christian festival to refuel before the next term. Life can often feel like it is all about medicine 24/7. Planning fun things to do in the summer will give you something to look forward to as you trudge through exams. Don't feel guilty if you aren't spending your summer in the lab – it's not to everyone's taste! ■