

The Franklin Method

Practice for the MCAT CARS Section



How often do you do that thing where you read an entire passage and then wonder – “What the hell did I just read?”. Your eyes were looking at what you were reading, but your mind was somewhere else.

Or to take a slightly different twist, how often do you find yourself reading a CARS question and thinking, “Wait, *that* was in the passage?” It’s amazing how much detail we can miss. You read an entire passage but the details somehow just evaporate from your mind the second you finish.

Well, I want to show you a technique I learned from reading about none other than Ben Franklin (you might have guessed that from the big picture of him on the cover!).



Is this thing on?

When Ben wasn’t busy experimenting with lighting or founding America, he was trying to improve his writing. And he came up with a simple technique that I’ve now ripped off.

First, let me explain what he did, and then I’ll give you the application to CARS.

Ben would take a book that he had on hand, read a bit, and set it aside. Then, a few days later he would come back and try to reproduce as much as he could from memory.

He was just trying to improve his writing style, but he was also at the same time training his ability to remember what he read.

This is a skill that is crucial for CARS. So, here's how we can develop this into a technique for the MCAT.

Application to CARS

Step one: Find some good reading material

I recommend looking for challenging but not incredibly difficult material. Articles from places like [Aeon](#), [The Atlantic](#), or [The Economist](#) are great. You want something that's about the same length and difficulty of a CARS passage (although it's okay if it's a little longer).

Step two: Read it

Try to read at about the same pace you would during the MCAT. Make sure you pay attention as you read! (Duh...)

Step three: Reproduce it

After you finish reading, set it aside for about a minute. Then, try to reproduce as much of the main argument as you can from memory.

You don't need to worry about trying to rewrite the entire thing.

The way I recommend approaching this is to first try writing out a high-level outline with all of the key points. Just get a blank piece of paper and write out the main points you can remember – leaving plenty of space between them.

Then, once you've got the key points in place, add as many details as you can remember to each one.

Step four: Grade it

Compare your outline to the original article. What did you miss?

Did you accidentally change something? Don't expect to get every detail right. But you should be trying to get the highlights.

A Few Final Thoughts

The Franklin Technique can be a huge help if you find yourself forgetting things when you practice CARS passages.

It can take a little while to see improvement, though. So give yourself at least a few tries before you give up.

If you want to find more CARS guides like this one, check out premedstrategy.com.

Want to take your CARS skills to the next level?

I offer one-on-one coaching for CARS. I do all sessions online, so you can connect from anywhere. Plus, I start everybody off with a free hour of coaching (no commitment).

Go to premedstrategy.com to get more details.