

## Volunteering Placements

Volunteering is the cornerstone of many great medical school applications. More than anything else, volunteering shows real commitment to the cause.

Given that it usually takes place over a long period of time, it also allows you to develop personally and form relationships with people. That's why Medical Schools love seeing it.

This page answers the following questions about volunteering placements:

- What counts as volunteering?
- How long should I volunteer for?
- What will I learn from volunteering?
- How do I get voluntary work?
- How can I make the most of my volunteering?

### What Counts As Volunteering?

Volunteering is an invaluable experience, both in terms of writing it on your application, discussing it at [interview](#) and developing your own skills.

A very popular form of medically-related volunteering is working in a care homes with elderly patients. During this time, you might help the staff serve food or organise games with the patients. We recommend securing one of these placements if you can.

However, while volunteering can be medically-related, it doesn't always have to be. Some medical schools place equal importance on medical and non-medical work experience. [Brighton and Sussex Medical School](#) have recently taken this approach.

Others, like [Imperial](#), see it differently, placing more emphasis on medicine-related placements. So, make sure you do your research. As you get further down the road of choosing your four Medical Schools to apply to, you can gear your volunteering efforts to appeal to them.

Ultimately, we believe that all volunteering is valuable to some extent, if it builds the proficiencies needed to study Medicine. So our advice is to be creative.

Whether working at an old peoples' home or volunteering in your local book shop, you can still develop some of the key traits required to be a doctor.

### How Long Should I Volunteer For?

Ideally, you should look to organise a long-standing volunteering role. This shows commitment and will also allow you to develop your skills set over time. Some of the most successful medical school applicants have visited old peoples' homes weekly for 6 to 18 months.

Long-term volunteering allows you to build rapport with patients you see on a regular basis. This is a very rewarding experience and one which will become much more common as you progress through your training at Medical School – and beyond.

## **What Will I Learn From Volunteering?**

Volunteering allows you to see the realities of healthcare in an often-challenging setting. It also shows excellent, often ongoing, commitment. This provides the chance to build empathetic relationships with people from different generations and backgrounds.

## **How Do I Get Voluntary work?**

You can find out more information about volunteering by contacting organisations such as [Do It,Community Service Volunteers \(CSV\)](#), [Youth Action Network](#) and [St John Ambulance](#).

Apply to local care homes and charity shops. They are often eager to get an extra pair of hands on-board.

Non-medical volunteering is typically easier to secure than GP and hospital placements, so you can take it on while you seek out those marquee placements.

## **How Can I Make The Most Of My Volunteering?**

Whatever the volunteering role, try to extrapolate anything that you feel is relevant to your Medical School application.

As always, reflection is the key. Don't forget to use your free [personal portfolio](#) and our three-step reflection plan.