Guide to Veterinary School Preparation

Background: What does becoming a veterinarian involve?
Loving animals is not enough! Veterinarians have excellent communication skills, have strong leadership skills, have a solid science background, take initiative, are self-motivated independent learners, and have a passion for animals.

Steps to becoming a veterinarian:
1. Most students attend a four-year institution and graduate with a bachelor’s degree while completing the requirements for veterinary school
2. Apply to veterinary school at the beginning of your fourth year (applying your third year without a bachelor’s degree is also an option in some programs)
3. Complete the four-year veterinary school program to receive a Doctorate in Veterinary Medicine (DVM)

It requires eight years of school to become a veterinarian, more to obtain a specialization or board certification

Make sure it’s what you love:
- Start getting veterinary/animal experience NOW
  - Make sure veterinary medicine is your passion
  - Can you see yourself as a veterinarian in 10 years?
- Veterinarians see sick/suffering animals, blood, and tolerate strong smells almost everyday

In high school:
- Set a strong foundation in your science and math classes for the college level courses you will soon be taking
- Keep track of ALL of your veterinary/animal-related experiences; you will need this detailed log for filling out your veterinary school application
- Get involved in extracurricular activities to build time management and leadership skills
- Research veterinary schools and identify the ones you are interested in attending before you begin your undergraduate program
  - What are the differences in the schools (i.e. prices, location, program)?
  - What is important to you about the school you attend?

In college:
- Maintain a high GPA
- Take initiative in your classes; become a student leader
- Become comfortable relating to people from diverse backgrounds as you will be doing with your clients
- Be confident in your choice of veterinary schools and ensure that you are completing all of the necessary prerequisites for each of the schools you choose
- Gain as much veterinary experience in as many areas as possible. Log these hours.
- Begin studying for your GRE and be sure to take the GRE well before your vet school applications are due
- Begin making connections with faculty, professors, and veterinarians for letters of reference which will be included in your veterinary school applications

Keep in Mind:
Yes, veterinary school is hard to get into, BUT if it is what you want, it is achievable if you are focused and willing to make academics your priority!

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