

Success in Biochemistry UF PHPB Program

It is likely, given your proximity to this program's finish line, that you have by now heard something about Biochemistry – a course which has inspired pre-health horror stories and anxiety for generations of Gators. My professors described it as a medical school-level course, and the amount of material is enough to overwhelm any student who has previously only relied on sheer intelligence and a dash of procrastination. Symbolically, it is appropriate that Biochemistry is the final science course of the program, as it will test the discipline that you have developed and the knowledge you have gained in your prerequisite courses, while ushering you into the world of demanding professional school-level curriculum.

I say these things not to scare you, but rather to understand that this course is unlike any course you have taken. Having just finished the Organic and Physics sequences, you will find that Biochemistry does not require nearly as much problem solving ability as those courses and is primarily built around memorization. While studying for Biochemistry, it is absolutely crucial that you understand the chemical logic behind the various mechanisms and processes that show up throughout the semester. This will allow you to really understand why the body does what it does and will surely help you retain what you have memorized.

Whether you recognized it or not, Dr. J spent the entire semester of Organic 2 preparing you to succeed in Biochemistry, emphasizing the chemical logic that you did not know would show up time and time again the following semester.

REMEMBER:

- The reality is that this course is manageable, and that getting an A is very possible.
- It is important for you to remember that you have already overcome four semesters of grueling coursework, and that you are starting this semester with refined study habits that you likely did not have even a year ago.
- If you struggled in Organic, do not be nervous. Biochemistry is a breath of fresh air, and you will be thrilled to learn the science that will be the basis of your future career in medicine, veterinary medicine, dentistry, or pharmacy.
- The course is challenging, but in my estimation, it is not the hardest course in the program.

WHAT TO STUDY:

As previously mentioned, this is a memorization course.

- You will need to memorize everything on every slide, unless your professor specifically says that it will not be tested on (it is not uncommon for the professors to throw out entire slides or to tell you that you do not need to memorize a specific mechanism or chemical structure, for example).
- Slides with “REF” in the top right, contain material to reference or reinforce your understanding and do not need to be memorized.

- It is definitely beneficial to understand the topics covered on REF slides even though you will not be tested on them.
- If you come across a chemical structure with a star next to it, you will need to memorize that as well (just like Dr. J taught you).

HOW TO STUDY:

Biochemistry is a four credit course, with four lectures each week.

- The night before or the morning of lecture
 - Review the lecture slides for the first time. Do not worry about getting everything down, rather,
 - Familiarize yourself with the topics that will be covered and make connections with material that you have previously learned (whether earlier on in Biochemistry, or in prerequisites like General Chemistry, Biology, or Organic Chemistry).
- During class
 - Follow the slides while paying special attention to your professor's lecture and do not worry about writing everything down. Instead,
 - Audio record the lectures either with the Notability tablet app (recommended) or with your phone.
- After class
 - Study the slides with the recording of your professor's lecture until you have memorized the material.
- Over the weekend
 - Take time to listen to that week's lectures once again, and spend time on each lecture reviewing any structures or mechanisms that you need to memorize.
- By the end of the week
 - You should have reviewed each lecture's slides at least five times. This will minimize the amount of studying you need to do as the exam approaches.
- One week before the exam
 - Exam questions tend to be straightforward and directly from the slides, so to study for the exams, review a few lectures every day beginning about a week from exam day
 - Attend the TA review session held a few days prior
 - Take the practice exam. The practice exams tend to be very similar to the real exam and are therefore good indicators of your competency.

As you can see, Biochemistry is a big commitment, but it is doable. I hope this guide both calms your fears and is useful in creating a study plan this semester. I wish you all the best!

