

# Guide to Surviving First Year in Medical School

## Tales of gloom and gratification

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There are two types of students in Bangladesh, ones who are complete and utter disappointments to their parents, and others who study engineering or medicine.

Medical students feel a lot more strongly about their newbie experiences than others, and I thought their stories of pain and suffering should be documented with the gravitas they deserve. So after quite a bit of research and some lectures from my doctor parents who are perpetually disappointed in me for not choosing this line of study, I bring to you the guide for surviving first year in medical school.

**1. Your life = exams.** Look, I understand that you must dedicate a large amount of time to your studies no matter where you go. But you will not have to sit for exams *every day* anywhere else. There's a whole hierarchy of examinations that range from items to cards, terms, and profs. The exams never stop, and some day you will get used to it; although it's better not to get *too* comfortable. Don't lose your focus.

**2. Your death = exams.** There's a social sense of superiority surrounding med students, with everyone thinking that just because they got accepted into a medical school, they've got their lives figured out. Those are all lies. The new curriculum,



paired with a shortage of time and the teachers' relentless efforts to pressurise the students to the point of madness causes severe trauma. Despite sacrificing their social lives, even the best of students can fail. However, it's better not to commit suicide, because things get better.

**3. Don't faint.** Dissecting dead bodies is not as glamorous a job as many cop shows would have you believe, and idiotic feats like taking selfies with cadavers will

not make things easier. Most teachers don't allow the use of gloves (unless you can sneak those in), so be prepared to endure the stink coming from your hands for weeks. And unless you have someone to hand-feed you, you should also prepare to starve.

**4. Bond with your fellow future lifesavers.** Don't be that med student who has zero friends because they want to be insufferable witless nerds whose only

friend is Dutta's anatomy book. Besides, I hear med schools are the best place to find love. If it weren't, I wouldn't even exist to be the major disappointment that I am.

**5. The world is your oyster.** A common misconception about medical students is that they don't have any scope for ECAs. But you could always make time for national/international competitions designed specifically for students in medicine, or join any clubs in your institution. No clubs to join? Establish one; it's that easy.

After hearing the tales of what medical students have to deal with in their first year and what a huge shock it is to them after spending 12 years in the safety of their schools, I did not regret forsaking this subject at all. However, they do seem to be surviving this endless stream of traumatic experiences quite well, once they got the hang of it. It is the promise of a future in saving lives that keeps them going, they say. And what a beautiful, rewarding profession it is – saving lives.

*Aanila Kishwar Tarannum started hating on everything the moment she realised why her parents put so many As in her name: because they knew her transcript would be devoid of any vowels. Find out about her relentless rants on [facebook.com/Aanial](https://www.facebook.com/Aanial)*

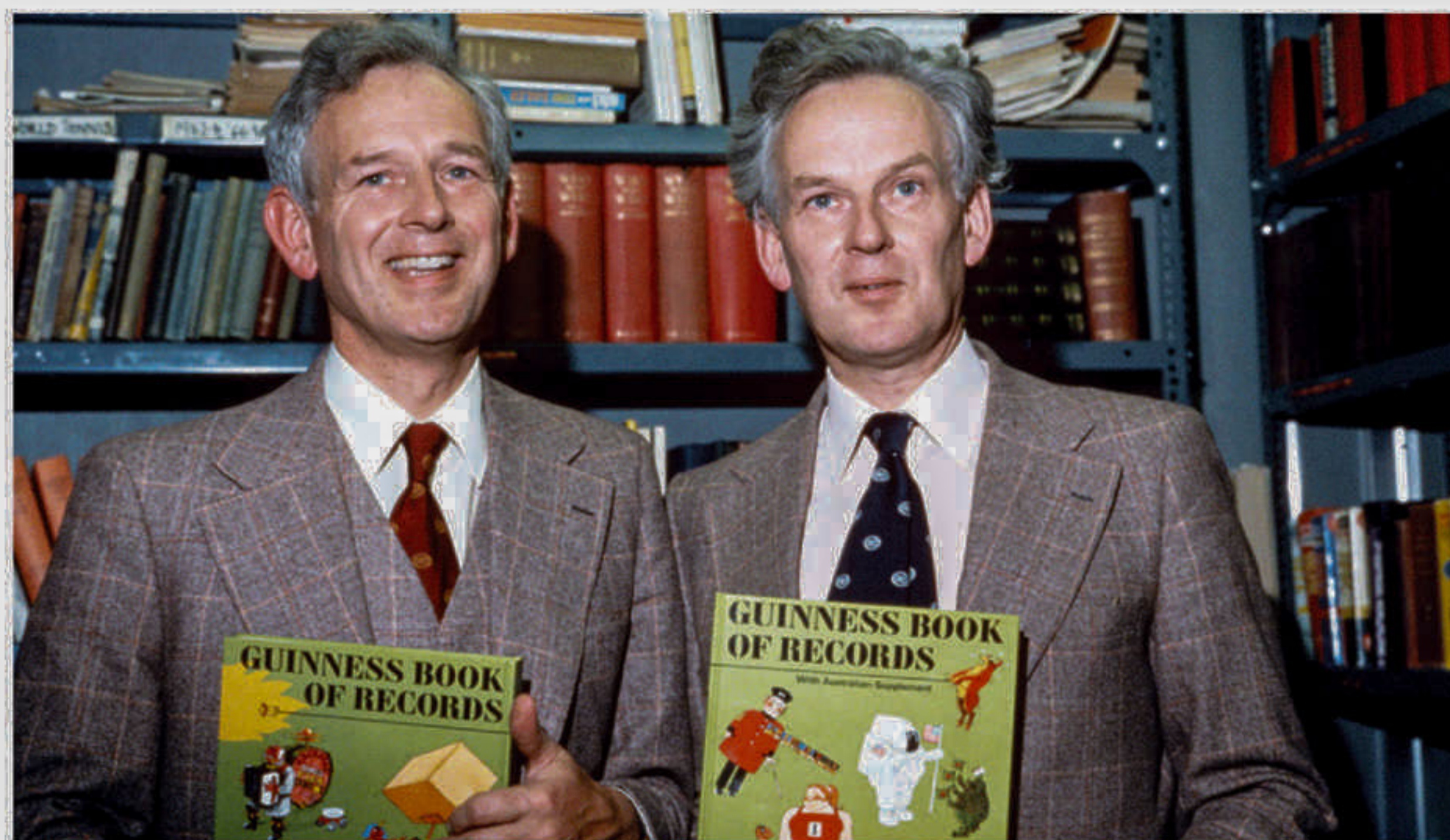
# THE ONLY RECORDS YOU WANT TO BREAK

ECHOES BY  
**ASRAR CHOWDHURY**



In November 1951, Hugh Beaver, then CEO of Guinness Breweries went shooting birds with friends at County Wexford in Ireland. Beaver missed a shot at a Golden Plover. This led to a debate: which is the fastest game bird in Europe, the Golden Plover or the Red Grouse? Unfortunately, the answer couldn't be found in any reference book. Beaver thought questions like this arise in the minds of most people. At the heat of the moment he decided to commission somebody to write a book that compiles answers to this and similar questions.

Guinness employee Christopher Chataway referred two of his old friends from Oxford University: the twin brothers, Norris and Ross McWhirter. They were running a fact-finding company at Fleet Street in London. Beaver commissioned the McWhirter twins to compile a book that provided information on extreme facts (note the word 'extreme'). The McWhirter twins worked day in and day out. On August 27, 1955 they finished the 198 page compilation of The Guinness Book of Records. The first instalment didn't sell well. However, news soon spread. By Christmas 1955, the book became the number one best-seller in Britain. In 1956, it launched in the USA. Sixty years later, in 2015, The Guinness Book of World Records, as it's now



known, has officially sold 100+ million copies in 100 countries in 37 languages. This makes it the highest sold copyrighted book in history.

On its sixtieth anniversary, what's baffling is why does The Guinness Book of World Records keep baffling us year after year? The answer lies in the word 'extreme', and a little bit more.

We're fascinated by extremes because extremes aren't the average. The average is what we see every day. Anything outside the average lights up our eyes and our

mind. An average person won't capture our attention, but the tallest and the smallest person; the heaviest and the lightest person; and others likewise will. There's more to extremes, though.

There are constant extremes and there are moving extremes. Constant extremes are universally accepted facts like Mount Everest is the highest peak in the world. Moving extremes are the extremes that change from time to time. During special years like an Olympic Year; or a World Cup Year current extremes will be moving

and some existing records will certainly be broken. It's the moving extremes or records that attract us and keep us fascinated. In a BBC interview in 1979, Norris McWhirter mentioned that 22-23% of current records become outdated each year. Keeping the mind constantly baffled by records of extremes was one skill the McWhirter twins were very good at.

Record Breakers was a BBC TV Show for children, aired between December 1972 and December 2001. The McWhirter twins would appear on the show and answer questions from a panel of children. The record breaking feat was that the twins did so from memory. After Ross McWhirter's assassination in 1975, Norris continued. As time went on, the compiling team grew larger as the book was translated into more and more languages and more and more records were made and broken.

The Guinness Book of World Records is testimony to our fascination for extremes. One Guinness Record may never be broken: won't there be next year's edition of the book? Your guess is as good as mine.

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