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**USMLE STEP ONE - BRIEF OVERVIEW**

Information taken from USMLE.ORG (2018)

**The Test at a Glance**
- 8 Hour Exam Session
- Will not exceed 280 (according to website) questions
- 7 Test Blocks (60 minutes each)
- 40 Test Items per block (an average of 78 seconds per question)
- 45 Minutes of break time, plus 15 if you skip the tutorial
- Short Survey after last block
- No penalty for wrong answers. No test block should be left with unanswered questions.

**USMLE STEP 1 – Test Specifications Systems and Processes**
- 60-70% - Systems: Immune, Musculoskeletal, Cardiovascular, Nervous, Reproductive. Endocrine, Respiratory, Gastrointestinal, Renal, Urinary, Lymphatic
- 15-20%. General Principles of Foundational Science
- 15-20% Multisystem Processes & Disorders, Biostatistics & Epidemiology, Population Health, Social Sciences
- Interdisciplinary topics – nutrition, genetics, aging, immunology
- Physician Tasks/Competencies

**What Types of Questions are Asked?**
- One-best answer multiple choice items
- There are no “except” or “not” on the exam.
- 3/4ths of Step 1 questions begin with a description of a patient.

**A Few Things to Consider**
- Make a realistic schedule. Plan for a “catch up” day.
- Tackle your weakest section first. Review twice. Leave short-term memory subject areas towards the end of your study.
- Beware of your feelings – don’t compare your study progress with peers.
- Create a comfortable environment with minimal distractions.
- Allow yourself 75 seconds for each practice question.
- When you practice, try different techniques to answer a question.
- Study clinical vignettes/case histories.
- CIN – Candidate Identification # - You need this to access your exam!

**During the test**
- Pace yourself.
- Go with your first hunch, unless you are a good second guesser.

Library source: [http://libguides.med.wmich.edu/TestPrep](http://libguides.med.wmich.edu/TestPrep)

Many sources relating to Step 1 can be found on this site.

WMed Academic Success – 269.337.6128
GENERAL STUDY TIPS FOR THE EXAM

- Be realistic about your study time.
- Plan your schedule around your “type” of studying. Adjust heavier material to your optimal time.
- Decide how many days needed for your independent study plan (ISP).
  - If you have 6 weeks, with 6 days per week, that equals 36 days.
  - If you have 3 blocks of 3-hour periods, that adds up to 9 hours a day.
  - Consider an Excel spreadsheet to plot out days and blocks per day.
  - Plan for leisure activities and outside tasks and test days.
- Select a review book, such as First Aid, as your foundation. Annotate and add visuals to related pages.
- Switch up your schedule.
  - Practice questions in the morning. Review in the afternoon. Or Review a weak topic in the a.m. and do practice questions in the afternoon.
- Write out topics to be covered. Rank them according to your expertise on each. Then decide how much time needs to be dedicated to each topic.
- Flashcards can be useful. Use cards or the pharm listings at the end of each system in First Aid. Focus on mechanisms, interactions, and adverse effects/toxicities.
- Take a practice exam. This will determine your strengths and weaknesses.

Advice from Kaplan:

USMLE Exams are similar to medical practice:
- Find key information
- There are distractions.
- There is time pressure.
- You must use probabilities to make decisions.
- You’ll never know it all.

Mistakes most commonly made when preparing for Step 1:
1. Passive studying
2. Insufficient practice with questions
3. Memorizing, not understanding the material
4. Inappropriate test day strategies
5. Misreading or misinterpreting questions
USMLE STEP 1 RESOURCES

Practice Materials: Start here.
Self-Assessment Exam: To evaluate your readiness: Questions from Step 1 bank (mostly retired)
[http://www.nbme.org/Students/sas/sas.html](http://www.nbme.org/Students/sas/sas.html)

Commercial Review Sources
First Aid for USMLE Step 1 (Tip: If purchasing a hard copy: Have the binding cut off and holes punched in and add your own notes to each section.)
High Yield Series
Goljan Audio Lectures and Rapid Review
Pathoma (Pathology)  Physeo (Physiology)
Cram Fighter: [http://www.cramfighter.com](http://www.cramfighter.com)
Underground Vignettes
UWorld: [http://uworld.com](http://uworld.com)  and [http://www.usmleworld.co/purchase.aspx](http://www.usmleworld.co/purchase.aspx)

WMed Resources
From our library: Test Prep  [http://libguides.med.wmich.edu/TestPrep](http://libguides.med.wmich.edu/TestPrep)
Includes Exam Master and USMLE Easy – These are free to download!
From our library: First Aid Basic Science Organ System – very helpful start:
From our library: Goljan’s Rapid Review Pathology
From our library: First Aid (Check for updated versions.)
From our library: USMLE Step 1 Secrets – good resource for the “big picture”. This is found on the test prep page for Step 1.

Anatomy images:
Models: [http://daphne.palomar.edu/ccarpenter/Models/model%20index.htm](http://daphne.palomar.edu/ccarpenter/Models/model%20index.htm)
Head & Neck:
[http://www.lumen.luc.edu/lumen/meded/grossanatomy/x_sec/h_n/main_hn.htm](http://www.lumen.luc.edu/lumen/meded/grossanatomy/x_sec/h_n/main_hn.htm)
Neuroanatomy: [http://library.med.utah.edu/WebPath/HISTHTML/NEURANAT/CNS017A.html](http://library.med.utah.edu/WebPath/HISTHTML/NEURANAT/CNS017A.html)

Pharmacology: Flash cards on Amazon
[https://www.amazon.com/Lange-Pharmacology-Flash-Edition-FlashCards/dp/0071792910/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1383610486&sr=8-1&keywords=lange+pharmacology+flash+cards](https://www.amazon.com/Lange-Pharmacology-Flash-Edition-FlashCards/dp/0071792910/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1383610486&sr=8-1&keywords=lange+pharmacology+flash+cards)

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Pharm cards: On Amazon
https://www.amazon.com/PharmCards-Review-Cards-Medical-Students/dp/0781787416/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1383610510&sr=8-1&keywords=lippincott+pharmacology+flash+cards

Physiology: BRS (Board Review Series) On Amazon
https://www.amazon.com/BRS-Physiology-Board-Review-Series/dp/0781798760/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1383610524&sr=8-1&keywords=brs+physiology

UWorld/Quizlet Flashcards
https://quizlet.com/17241647/uworld-flash-cards/
USMLE STEP 1 TIP: Structured Support

If you feel a structured support program meets your needs as you prepare for STEP 1, here is a list of resources:

**Structured Support Programs**
PASS: [http://www.pass-program.com](http://www.pass-program.com)
USMLE Success: [http://www.usmlesuccess.net](http://www.usmlesuccess.net)
Med School Tutors: [https://www.medschooltutors.com/#mst-video-overview](https://www.medschooltutors.com/#mst-video-overview)
USMLE Tutor: [http://usmletutor.com/](http://usmletutor.com/)
Marshall H.E.L.P. [http://www.marshall.edu/medhelp](http://www.marshall.edu/medhelp) (for students with ADHD, LD)
Doctors in Training: [https://www.doctorsintraining.com/blog/usmle-step-1-general-study-plan/](https://www.doctorsintraining.com/blog/usmle-step-1-general-study-plan/)
Cram Fighter: [http://www.cramfighter.com](http://www.cramfighter.com)

Those in need of accommodations must apply directly to the USMLE website and have documentation up to one year in advance for application review.
**USMLE STEP 1 SCHEDULE PLANNING**

**Time Frame:** Four to six weeks are set aside for USMLE study.

**Daily Schedule:** Depends on your learning style, accountability and flexibility. A full day is 10 hours: (8-11 a.m.; 1-5 p.m., 7:30-10:30 p.m.) If you prefer a 9-hour day, then plot it out as well. Build in breaks/breathers- a personal day and exercise.

**Do it Yourself Planner**
Sounds antiquated but creating your own poster calendar with sticky notes for each day, works for some.
Setting up a scheduling system on your computer, PDA, etc. (Use a spreadsheet. Figure out total hours: For example: 6 days x 10 hours X 5 weeks = 300 hours.)

**Factors to Consider when creating a Schedule**
- Be comfortable with the format.
- Be flexible. Sequence and time allotted varies from student to student.
- Get organized. Have notebook (computer or paper) for topics that need more time.
- Check out the Test Date and preplan. Four to six weeks have been designated for your dedicated study time.
- Be realistic about distractions and procrastination. Set aside a scheduled phone/text time for friends and family. Tell them when they can expect to hear from you.
- Spaced repetition is essential, especially with rote memory items such as pharmacology.
- Schedule “me time” and basic necessities = shopping, laundry, etc.

**Study Group vs. Studying Alone**
Study groups allow exchange of ideas and support when you are discouraged. They also can increase anxiety and competition (not in a good way). If thinking of a study group, plan small (2-4) with a “study alone” time built in to the schedule.

**Start Here: Take the practice exams from NBME.** The exam provides a performance profile in a similar format as the Step 1 performance. This is a tool in creating a study plan. Rank how well you know each subject and how much total time you need to spend on each subject.
### SAMPLE 6-Week Intensive Study Plan (ISP) for Step 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weekly Notes/Reminder</th>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week One</strong></td>
<td>Prioritize weaker areas.</td>
<td>Organize materials. Pre-read Monday’s topics.</td>
<td>Neuro 2 qbank blocks Path 10q qbank Micro &amp; Immun 10q qbank</td>
<td>Psych 2 qbank blocks Path 10q qbank Micro &amp; Genetics 10q qbank</td>
<td>Cardio 2 qbank blocks BioChem 10q qbank Micro &amp; Genetics 10q qbank</td>
<td>Cardio 2 qbank blocks BioChem 10q qbank Micro &amp; Genetics 10q qbank</td>
<td>2-3 qbank blocks (Randomized) BioStats 10-20q qbank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week Two</strong></td>
<td>Refine your test taking skills.</td>
<td>Organize materials. Pre-read Monday’s topics.</td>
<td>Cardio 1 qbank block Respiratory 1 qbank block BioChem &amp; Nutrition 10q qbank Micro &amp; Immun 10q qbank</td>
<td>Renal &amp; Urinary 2 qbank blocks BioChem 10q qbank Pharm 10q qbank</td>
<td>Renal &amp; Urinary 1 qbank block Repro 1 qbank block BioChem 10q qbank Pharm 10q qbank</td>
<td>2-3 qbank blocks (Randomized) Read &amp; annotate all incorrect answers in UWorld. If needed, read other sources.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week Three</strong></td>
<td>Assess Study Plan. Attack weaker areas.</td>
<td>Organize materials. Pre-read Monday’s topics.</td>
<td>Repro 2 qbank blocks Anatomy 10q qbank Histology &amp; Cell Bio 10q qbank</td>
<td>Endocrine 1 qbank block Hema-Onc 1 qbank block Anatomy 10q qbank Histology &amp; Cell Bio 10q qbank</td>
<td>Hema-Onc 2 qbank blocks Anatomy 10q qbank Histology &amp; Cell Bio 10q qbank</td>
<td>Immunology 1 qbank blocks Pharm 10q qbank Phys 10q qbank</td>
<td>2-3 qbank blocks (Randomized) Catch up. Read &amp; annotate all incorrect answers in UWorld. Read other sources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assess Study Plan. Attack weaker areas.</strong></td>
<td>What worked on the test? What resources do you need?</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### SAMPLE 6-Week Intensive Study Plan (ISP) for Step 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week Four</th>
<th>Organize materials. Pre-read Monday’s topics.</th>
<th>Immunology 1 qbank block Pharm 10q qbank Phys 10q qbank Behavioral Sci. 10-20q qbank</th>
<th>MSK 2 qbank blocks Pharm 10q qbank Phys 10q qbank Behavioral Sci. 10-20q qbank</th>
<th>MSK 2 qbank blocks Pharm 10q qbank Phys 10q qbank Behavioral Sci. 10-20q qbank</th>
<th>GI 2 qbank blocks Pharm 10q qbank Phys 10q qbank Behavioral Sci. 10-20q qbank</th>
<th>2-3 qbank blocks (Randomized) Epi/Biostats 10-20q qbank</th>
<th>CBSSA Catch up. Read &amp; annotate all incorrect answers in UWorld.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week Four</strong></td>
<td><strong>Up your game this week. Look at wrong answers from a different perspective. “Can this question be asked differently?” If needed – rest!</strong></td>
<td><strong>Immunology 1 qbank block Pharm 10q qbank Phys 10q qbank Behavioral Sci. 10-20q qbank</strong></td>
<td><strong>MSK 2 qbank blocks Pharm 10q qbank Phys 10q qbank Behavioral Sci. 10-20q qbank</strong></td>
<td><strong>MSK 2 qbank blocks Pharm 10q qbank Phys 10q qbank Behavioral Sci. 10-20q qbank</strong></td>
<td><strong>GI 2 qbank blocks Pharm 10q qbank Phys 10q qbank Behavioral Sci. 10-20q qbank</strong></td>
<td><strong>2-3 qbank blocks (Randomized) Epi/Biostats 10-20q qbank</strong></td>
<td><strong>CBSSA Catch up. Read &amp; annotate all incorrect answers in UWorld.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week Five</th>
<th>Organize weaker areas. Pre-read for Monday’s topics.</th>
<th>Review Weaker areas</th>
<th>Review Weaker areas</th>
<th>Review weaker areas</th>
<th>Review Weaker areas</th>
<th>2 - 3 qbank blocks (randomized)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reassess your ISP. Repeat process and attack weaker areas.</td>
<td><strong>Organize weaker areas. Pre-read for Monday’s topics.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Review Weaker areas</strong></td>
<td><strong>Review Weaker areas</strong></td>
<td><strong>Review weaker areas</strong></td>
<td><strong>Review Weaker areas</strong></td>
<td><strong>2 - 3 qbank blocks (randomized)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week Six</th>
<th>Organize materials.</th>
<th>Review Weaker areas</th>
<th>Review Weaker areas</th>
<th>Review Weaker areas</th>
<th>Comprehensive Review</th>
<th>Comprehensive Review</th>
<th>Full-length practice test CBSSA 17+ 3 UWorld Blocks randomized OR 3 – 5 qbanks *Simulate the time of test, break schedule, snacks and lunch you will eat, etc.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week Six</strong></td>
<td><strong>Organize materials.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Review Weaker areas</strong></td>
<td><strong>Review Weaker areas</strong></td>
<td><strong>Review Weaker areas</strong></td>
<td><strong>Comprehensive Review</strong></td>
<td><strong>Comprehensive Review</strong></td>
<td>*<em>Full-length practice test CBSSA 17+ 3 UWorld Blocks randomized OR 3 – 5 qbanks <em>Simulate the time of test, break schedule, snacks and lunch you will eat, etc.</em></em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WMed Academic Support

Adapted from Step 1 Method
USMLE STEP 1 Working the QBank Questions

1. Identify a question bank. Use our library for information.  
   https://libguides.med.wmich.edu/TestPrep/GettingStarted

2. Select questions that align with your current course.

3. Read the lead-in (question) first. This will guide you to look for cues within the vignette or main body of the question. Anticipate the answer.

4. Read the body of the question.
   a. Identify clues related to patient history and risk factors. Look for abnormal and unique symptoms.
   b. Do not overthink – remember to consider what is most likely or common.
   c. Check the key signs and symptoms.
   d. Summarize significant details.

5. Rule out options based on your summarization.
   a. Select the best answer option and move on.
   b. Read the lead in again to ensure that your answer fits.

6. Read the answer explanations, then annotate your central text.
   a. Visit this helpful site for annotations. 
   b. Aim for completing 3-5 questions per night and 25-40 questions on the weekend, before your Independent Study Plan (ISP) starts.
   c. Identify strengths and weaknesses. Prioritize weaker areas and spend more time on learning.

7. Aim for 60% - 70% correct.


Taken from Gebremedhin (2012). A step by step guide to success on the USMLE Step 1 exam.

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USMLE STEP 1 TIP: TASK LIST

Adapted from University of Massachusetts (with permission)

Daily Goal: Accomplish at least five tasks and work for at least 10 hours. Develop a plan that works best for your needs.

| 1 | Actively read broad resources by self-quizzing |
| 2 | Actively read narrow resources by self-quizzing |
| 3 | Review pharm table/cards |
| 4 | Review biochem cards |
| 5 | Do a block of questions for topic of day |
| 6 | Complete questions randomly mixed for review topics |
| 7 | Review condensed notes from courses |
| 8 | Review feedback notes from missed questions |
| 9 | Briefly review topic studied yesterday |
| 10 | Commercial Review (your choice: i.e. Sketchy Med, Pathoma, etc.) |
| 11 | Watch videos (your choice: youtube, commercial, WMed, etc.) |
| 12 | Other: |

WMed Academic Support 269.337.6128
# DEDICATED STUDY TIME CHECKLIST FOR SUCCESS

(Adapted with permission of CMU, Office Medical Education)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>RECOMMENDED CHECKLIST</th>
<th>COMPLETED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td>I have reviewed USMLE Step 1 website information.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td>I understand what and how I will be tested.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
<td>I have assessed my content knowledge strengths and weaknesses.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
<td>I have created a dedicated study plan with goals.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td></td>
<td>I have secured the resources I need for my study time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td></td>
<td>I have planned blocks of time for concepts, organ systems, questions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td></td>
<td>My plan will allow me to complete two or more Qbanks per day (on average).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td></td>
<td>I will finish UWorld questions (or other Qbank) at least once.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td></td>
<td>I will integrate ACTIVE LEARNING: taking notes, creating flashcards, explaining concepts, mind maps, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td></td>
<td>I have a distraction free, protected study area.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td></td>
<td>During my most productive time, I review the challenging areas.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td></td>
<td>I will do a trial practice test, with Step 1 exam-like conditions.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td></td>
<td>I have incorporated memory devices to increase long-term retention.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td></td>
<td>I have scheduled regular breaks within each study block and allow time for my brain to relax.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td></td>
<td>I have allowed time for leisure and maintenance activities (e.g. exercise, shopping, entertainment, cleaning, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td></td>
<td>I have communicated my study plan to my family and friends.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td></td>
<td>I have scheduled a few catch-up blocks or half-days.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td></td>
<td>I consider that motivation may lessen and I have a plan for re-energizing myself.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td></td>
<td>I have scheduled a final NBME practice test at least a week prior to the Step 1 exam date.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td></td>
<td>I have scheduled 3-5 days of comprehensive review before the exam.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td></td>
<td>I will RELAX the day before the exam.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td></td>
<td>I will have my ID, directions, break treats, etc. ready to go.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Other:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes or Reminders:**