

USMLE Step 1 Preparation Guide

**Compiled by the Office of Medical Education
2018-19**

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USMLE Step 1 Exam Preparation

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Registering for and Scheduling Your Exam

How do I apply for Step 1? The initial application for Step 1 is done on the Internet. Refer to the 2019 Bulletin of Information at <http://www.usmle.org/bulletin/>

Go to <https://apps.nbme.org/nlesweb/#/login>

If this is your first time using the site, register by clicking on the link that says "**Register here.**" As part of the application, you must select a 3 month eligibility period during which you plan to take the exam. Payment is also required at this time. The 2019 fee is \$630. The effective are the three month eligibility periods beginning November 1, 2018 - January 31, 2019 and ending October 1, 2019 - December 31, 2019. Once you submit the online form, you will receive a link to the Certification of ID/Applicant Authorization form.

- Print out the application authorization form, which will require your signature and a picture. You do not have to get a passport photo taken—the Office of Student Affairs has printed copies of your white coat ceremony picture.
- Bring the form to the Student Affairs Office (Murphy Building 15th floor) to attach your white coat picture and request an authorized signature and school seal placement.
- After that, you're ready to mail it to the address listed on the bottom of the form.

Where do I take the test?

Step 1 and Step 2 CK may be taken around the world at any Prometric Test Centers that offers the exam.

Prometric test centers are located throughout the U.S. In Louisiana there are centers in the following locations.

- Alexandria
- Baton Rouge
- Bossier City
- Metairie *Location closest to New Orleans. The Metairie location fills up quickly, and it can be difficult to reschedule if you need to push your test back.

How do I schedule my test?

Once your application has been processed, you will receive an email from NBME notifying you that your application is complete. About a week later, you will receive a second email from them notifying you that your scheduling permit is available. This message will include instructions for accessing the electronic scheduling permit using the registration entity's interactive website.

PRINT OUT YOUR SCHEDULING PERMIT and keep it in a safe place. You **MUST** bring it with you to the test center on the day of your test. You will not be allowed to take the exam without your scheduling permit.

Once you've gotten your permit, you may schedule your test online at www.prometric.com for any available test date that is within your approved 3 month eligibility period. Not all Prometric centers are open on weekends, and USMLE exams are not necessarily offered every day the centers are open. Please note that May through July is one of the busiest periods for these testing centers because of the large USMLE demand during that time – PLAN AHEAD.

No fee is charged for changing testing appointments or locations 31 or more days prior to the first day of the scheduled test. Outside the approved eligibility period, you will need to reapply and pay an additional fee (check <http://www.usmle.org/step-1/> for current fee information). Also for answers to general questions refer to <http://www.usmle.org/frequently-asked-questions/>.

Preparing for the Exam

The advice on the next few pages (and in this paragraph) is compiled from the USMLE, the experience of Tulane University students, and experiences of other medical students from other institutions. Read it over, think about what works best for you by creating a plan, and sticking to it. Don't be distracted by the plans and advice of others once you've plotted your course. Find a few sources that work for you and focus. Good luck!

STUDY SKILL Guidelines for USMLE Step 1 Exam

Ultimate Goal: Learn and Retain Information

What do you need to know about getting a head start on USMLE Step 1 exam prep?

The decision on when to begin Step 1 preparation ultimately depends on the factors listed below:

1. Students with less anxiety about testing generally achieve higher tests scores. Students who are months out from the exam should try to focus on their current coursework material rather than stress about Step 1. When it is time to take the test, it's ok to be nervous before the test, but when the buzzer goes off, it's time to perform and be excited to showcase your hard work and talent.
2. Kumar et al. found that students who studied <40 days in their dedicated Step 1 study period achieved higher scores than students preparing longer than 40 days. The key is quality of study time not quantity.
3. It is extremely important to have a solid basic medical knowledge before one can expect to do well on Step1. Make learning coursework a priority.
4. If you are struggling in a particular subject, get help by talking to your course directors and or get a tutor.
5. If you are doing well with their coursework and managing time appropriately you can start to incorporate Step 1 prep.

Steps to Follow:

1. **Complete a self-assessment to see where your areas of strength and weakness are.**

Diagnostic tests are available from

- A.** USMLE: <https://www.nbme.org/Students/sas/Comprehensive.html>
https://www.nbme.org/PDF/NSAS/NSAS_Program_Information_Guide.pdf
- B.** Kaplan (a three-hour free diagnostic test) <https://www.kaptest.com/medical-prep/usmle/try-us-for-free/img-try-us-for-free> and
- C.** A variety of other online sources listed under "Resources".

One Example using NBME is as follows:

National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) self-assessments allow you to get a taste of what to expect.

- a. Start at the NBME home page to sign up for a practice test, *Comprehensive Basic Science Self-Assessment (CBSSA) = Step 1* <https://nsas.nbme.org/home>. NBME self-assessments offer you something that you cannot get anywhere else, making them invaluable because questions directly from the test writers. A 3-digit score that tells you where your aptitude currently lies. Conditions are similar to the actual testing experience in which there is a dedicated 4-hour time block to sit and give your USMLE preparations 100% of your attention. You will almost certainly perform better on your real exam by taking some NBMEs.
- b. At the absolute beginning of your dedicated study period, take an NBME to find out where you are today. Your score will likely be lower than your goal, but don't stress. Your score serves as a baseline of what you know verses what you might need to revisit. : If you answered questions incorrectly, don't get obsessed on what the correct answer is. Instead, given the topic, devote time into revisiting and developing a more complete understanding of the subject matter. After you have revisited your information, take another test.
- c. Three NBME tests seems to be the number to aim for Step 1. Strive to take different There is not much return taking the same test again and again.

The practice NBME test administered at Tulane is also a good self-assessment, but it is probably not a good idea to wait until that test to do a self-assessment forms of the test.

2. Create a study plan

Use the information from your diagnostic test to determine the amount of time to spend on each discipline. Create a realistic study plan. Some principles from USMLEHelp.com:

- **Save valuable time by planning your USMLE study in advance.** Construct a detailed study timeline and a detailed study schedule for each day of your USMLE Step 1 preparation. Do this by either creating a detailed schedule on a spreadsheet or making a daily planner as detailed as possible. These schedules should include reading assignments—including page numbers, the number and type of questions to do—and an approximate length of time for each task.
 - Make sure your schedule is very detailed and complete and leaves nothing to chance. Organize your schedule in such a way as to minimize fatigue. Evidenced based practices note that limiting one task (reading, doing question blocks, etc.) for no more than 2 hours at a time minimizes fatigue and allows your study to be worthwhile.
- **Make your schedule and stick to it.** Many have benefited from approaching studying for the boards as a job. Get 2 alarm clocks. One to start and finish, and one for breaks. They should be two different rings and easy to set. Set one for the amount of time you want to spend per day and the other is for your breaks. And stick to it. Build in a little wiggle room just in case.

- **It is vital that you include breaks in your schedule.** This can be a grueling period of time for you, so make sure you schedule breaks during the day. We recommend 10 minutes per hour so that your studying time is reduced to 50 minute intervals. You might not think you are ready for a break after the first 50 minutes, but study-marathons are not very effective. Your motivation level and overall efficiency will also be enhanced by adequate rest periods. It is also recommended to schedule days or half-days off, both to allow rest and to give yourself the opportunity to catch up if you get behind.
- **Spend time researching what is good for you, and stick with at the most 2 books.** Don't think that what works for one person will work for you. Some say First Aid is the series of books to use, some say Crush the Boards, while others say USMLEHelp Books are the way to go. Of course, we are very partial to which books you should choose!
- **Use review books that you are familiar with.** If you used a review book during class, use it now. There are so many books from which to choose, so if you have one with which you are familiar, use that one.
- **Review larger subjects while repeating blocks of questions of previous subjects.** Study the tough subjects intensely in the beginning, then come back to them for questions (and discussions). You will be amazed how much you pick up that second time through the blocks of questions.
- **Use practice tests to your advantage.** USMLE World is one good source of practice tests. Research supports the notion that completing more practice questions correlates with higher Step scores. Students who complete more practice questions not only review a greater diversity of material but also learn more about themselves and how to better tackle challenging Step 1 questions.

The key to getting a high score is learning to scrutinize Step 1 questions successfully. Challenge yourself to always question why you missed a question.

- d. Knowledge gap?
 - e. Fell for a distractor?
 - f. Read the question incorrectly?
- **Set a goal of completing a manageable number of practice questions** each day so as to complement, rather than hinder, coursework studying. Research suggests that students who answer 2,500 or more practice questions correctly, are three times more likely to perform better on Step, than those who either answer less questions or answer incorrectly.
 - **Schedule practice tests** at the same time of day and day of the week as the actual exam. As the test-date approaches, try to do several back-to-back one hour blocks to get yourself ready for the exam, or do two blocks of 40 question, split during the day.
 - **Don't completely blow off any subject.** It is senseless to miss some easy points in something like Biostatistics when the information can be picked up in just a little bit of time. If you say, "I won't study this part, or I won't study that part", you must realize that it does add up. Before you know it, 15% of the information that you could possibly have easily learned (behavioral science,

certain biochemical pathways, biostatistics, to name a few) could mean getting the score you want or not.

- **Don't freak out** that some people "say" they need only 4 weeks to study for a certain exam. Don't yawn and think, "What idiots" for people who need 6 months. Everyone is an individual and at a different level. Some are long out of med school, some are still in the midst of it. We can only suggest a minimum of 4 weeks and a maximum of 6 months for any given exam.
- **Don't think you can efficiently have a 12-hour study day.** It's not going to happen, unless you're robo-medi-cop, but otherwise, you're setting yourself up for failure. Kaplan and DIT suggest 10 hours of study per day; others recommend 8 hours or less (depending on your circumstances), 10 minute breaks for every hour. Find what works for you
 - One recommendation is to mimic the time you will spend at the actual exam: 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. You will train yourself to be highly concentrated in this timeframe.
 - If you cannot do this due to home or job-related issues, do not feel bad. Everyone has different responsibilities.
- **When do I schedule my exam? You ask.** That is also up to you, and dependent on your lists. What we suggest, but out of experience, is to **set a definite date**, and stick to it. You will know if 6 weeks is unreasonable, but you might know that 6 months will be murder. Review your lists, review your schedule, and take a deep breath and go on the USMLE website. You will know. **Once you set your date, don't push it back.** This is feedback from multiple sources!

Other advice:

As we were preparing this guide, we read advice from students in other schools and from Tulane students. Some are listed here. Contact the Office of Medical Education for more:

- The most **important** thing to do *is work hard in your classes to learn the material in that context, especially in your later classes.* The more you learn it, the less you will have to review.
- "Get one good review book and one good question bank and really learn them. Don't try to use too many sources." (First Aid and USMLE World QBank were the most commonly recommended, but every student is different, so go with what works for you)
- In the beginning it may be useful to do question banks by subject, but by the end, you should do them randomly to simulate the test.
- Remember that the UWorld QBank has explanations that are expert tools to learn from. If you understand the explanation for each answer option, you're prepared for five questions from every question in the question bank. Go through the question bank two times if you can, but if not, review the questions you miss. Some students recommend using a second question bank instead of repeating one.
- A common strategy if using First Aid is to remove the binding and put in it a binder. Annotate it as you prepare and add other materials related to the topics, so that you have one source to study

from. If you do annotate, use pens that don't smudge. If you use colored pens, specific ones for each resource, you will know where the information is coming from.

- Use active rather than passive study strategies to understand and retain new information. You can significantly increase the amount you remember if you review the material by writing down any esoteric or unexpected questions and keep a notebook of material not covered in your text resources. See Appendix B for Active Study Strategies.
- "Start early, stick to a schedule, and try not to become overwhelmed with all available resources."
- "Don't give yourself too much time to study – 4-6 weeks worked for me. Be prepared mentally for the anxiety the week before the test – focus on easier subjects to review." Common understanding is that after 8 weeks there are diminishing returns.
- Practice exams are not necessarily reliable predictors of your score. Use them to practice sitting for four hours at a time and to get your timing right for answering questions. You can also use them to guide your studying – to see what your weakest subjects are and to figure out what to review. Some people score higher than their practice tests, and some lower, so don't count on them to predict your score.
- You may be incredibly slow when you first start studying. Don't expect to get through 3 question blocks a day in the first week. You should be able to get up to about that much at your peak study rate. These are just estimates and everyone is different, but you can use that number to help you plan.

Examinees with Disabilities Requesting Test Accommodations

The USMLE program offers acceptable accommodations for examinees with disabilities covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Examinees who require test accommodations due to an eligible ADA disability, should get the information concerning procedures and documentation requirements in advance of applying for each Step or Step Component. Examinees with physical or health conditions who require additional break time should complete the request form located on the website and submit it with a letter from a qualified health care professional documenting the medical need. Requests for additional break time should be made prior to, or at the same time as, registration for a Step examination. Examples include lactation (to express breast milk) and diabetes (to monitor/treat blood glucose).

Test accommodations include but are not limited to the following:

Assistance with keyboard tasks
Audio rendition
Extended testing time
Additional break time
Enlarged text and graphics
Permission for assistive devices

Detailed information about test accommodations while taking a USMLE examination is available at the USMLE website.

Exam Content

About the test: Step 1 minimum passing score is **194**.

Step 1 is a computer based examination that is delivered at Prometric Test Centers around the world. The examination evaluates whether you understand and can apply key concepts of the sciences fundamental to the practice of medicine, with specific emphasis on principles and structures underlying health, disease, and types of therapy. Step 1 assures mastery of the sciences that provide contemporary foundations for the safe and competent practice of medicine, and the scientific principles required for maintenance of competence through lifelong learning. Step 1 is designed according to a combined content outline that structures basic science material along two dimensions: system and process.

- The Step 1 is a one day examination that is divided into seven 60 minute blocks lasting a total of 8 hours. The 8 hours includes the test itself as well as break time. The overall exam consists of no more than **280 multiple choice questions**. The number of questions per block will vary, but **will not** exceed **more than 40 questions each**.
- You will have about **1.5 minutes to** answer each question. During each block you can answer questions in any order, go back and review questions in the block, and change answers. Once you have exited a block or the time for that block has expired, you will no longer be able to review questions or change answers in that block.
- **Some blocks are harder than others**. Don't panic if your first block happens to be a more difficult one.

- **The questions are random**, so don't expect a block of pathology questions, a group of pharmacology questions, etc.
- **Some questions will include pictures and audio** - histology, gross pathology, CT images, etc., and heart sounds.
- **Step 1 includes only SINGLE BEST ANSWER questions.** This is the traditional, most frequently used multiple-choice format. These items consist of a statement or question followed by three to eleven response options arranged in alphabetical or logical order. Examinees are required to select the best answer to the question. Other options may be partially correct, but there is only ONE BEST answer. These aren't trick questions! They're testing your ability to discriminate.
- **It pays to guess if you don't know the answer.** All unanswered questions will be counted as incorrect. Don't be flustered by questions that you don't understand or that have totally unfamiliar content. They may be questions that are being field tested.
- Most score reporting of Step 1 results occurs **within 8 weeks of testing**, although you may receive your scores much sooner than this, often within three to four weeks.
- The **NBME's Comprehensive Basic Sciences Exam** is the closest thing to the real exam that they will let anyone see. In fact, since ALL of the items written by NBME are copyrighted, you should be a little leery of anyone other than NBME who claims to have "actual USMLE questions".
- For more information about the test and for up-to-date bulletins and announcements, see the USMLE website at <http://www.usmle.org/step-1/#content-outlines>

Content Outline and Specifications

The USMLE Content Outline (<http://www.usmle.org/pdfs/usmlecontentoutline.pdf>). Also see Appendix C) provides a common organization of content across all USMLE examinations. In addition, the USMLE Physician Tasks/Competencies (<http://www.usmle.org/pdfs/tcom.pdf>) outline lists tasks and competencies assessed throughout the sequence of USMLE.

The USMLE Content Outline organizes content according to general principles and individual organ systems. Test questions are classified in one of 18 major areas, depending on whether they focus on concepts and principles that are important across organ systems or within individual organ systems. Sections focusing on individual organ systems are subdivided according to normal and abnormal processes, including principles of therapy. Each Step 1 examination covers content related to the following traditionally defined disciplines:

- anatomy
- behavioral sciences
- biochemistry
- biostatistics and epidemiology
- microbiology
- pathology
- pharmacology
- physiology

The Step 1 examination also covers content related to the following interdisciplinary areas:
genetics

- aging
- immunology
- nutrition
- molecular and cell biology

Step 1 classifies test items along two dimensions, system and process, as shown in Table 1 below.

While not all topics listed in the content outline are included in every USMLE examination, overall content coverage is comparable in the various examination forms that will be taken by different examinees for each Step.

Most organ systems are partitioned into Normal Processes and Abnormal Processes, and include subcategories of specific disease processes. In most instances, knowledge of normal processes is evaluated in the context of a disease process or specific pathology.

The content outline is not intended as a curriculum development or study guide. It provides a flexible structure for test construction that can readily accommodate new topics, emerging content domains, and shifts in emphasis. The categorizations and content coverage are subject to change. Broadly-based learning that establishes a strong general understanding of concepts and principles in the basic sciences is the best preparation for the examination.

Step 1 Test Specifications

Table 1: USMLE Step 1 Test Specifications*

System	Range
General Principles of Foundational Science **	15% - 20%
Immune System Blood & Lymphoreticular System Behavioral Health Nervous System & Special Senses Skin & Subcutaneous Tissue Musculoskeletal System Cardiovascular System Respiratory System Gastrointestinal System Renal & Urinary System Pregnancy, Childbirth, & the Puerperium Female Reproductive & Breast Male Reproductive Endocrine System	60% - 70%
Multisystem Processes & Disorders Biostatistics & Epidemiology Population Health Social Sciences	15% - 20%
Process	Range
Normal Processes	10% - 15%
Abnormal Processes	55% - 60%
Principles of Therapeutics	15% - 20%
Other‡	10% - 15%

In addition to being organized by organ systems, test items on the Step 1 exam are organized by and constructed to assess any of the physician tasks or competencies listed below.

Table 2. USMLE Step 1 Specifications: Physician Task/Competencies*

Competency	Range
Medical Knowledge/Scientific Concepts	55% - 65%
Patient Care: Diagnosis History/Physical Examination Laboratory/Diagnostic Studies Diagnosis Prognosis/Outcome	20% - 30%
Patient Care: Management *** Health Maintenance/Disease Prevention Pharmacotherapy	7% - 12%
Communication Professionalism	2% - 5%
Practice-based Learning and Improvement	4% - 8%

* Percentages are subject to change at any time. See the USMLE Web site (<http://www.usmle.org>) for the most up-to-date information.

** The general principles category includes test items concerning those normal and abnormal processes that are not limited to specific organ systems. Categories for individual organ systems include test items concerning those normal and abnormal processes that are system-specific.

*** The Step 1 examination includes management questions in only the categories listed in this table. It does not include questions related to clinical interventions, mixed management, or surveillance for disease recurrence. † This category includes questions about normal structure and function that may appear in the context of an abnormal clinical presentation.

‡ Approximately 10%-15% of questions are not classified in the normal processes, abnormal processes, or principles of therapeutics categories. These questions are likely to be classified in the general principles, biostatistics/evidence-based medicine, or social sciences categories in the USMLE Content Outline.

Resources

Library Resources:

ExamMaster: free for Tulane students. Register at <https://tulane.myexammaster.com/>

Books

- First Aid for the USMLE Step 1 (McGraw-Hill Medical)
- Appleton & Lange Review for the USMLE Step 1 (McGraw-Hill/Appleton & Lange)
- Blueprints Step 1 Q&A (Lippincott Williams & Wilkins)
- Board Review Series (Lippincott Williams & Wilkins)
- High-Yield Comprehensive USMLE Step 1 Review (Lippincott Williams & Wilkins)
- High-Yield Pathology (Lippincott Williams & Wilkins)
- Kaplan QBook
- NMS Review for Step 1 (Lippincott Williams & Wilkins)
- Platinum Vignettes (Elsevier)
- Rapid Review Series -USMLE Step 1 (Mosby) aka Goljan's
- Robbins Review of Pathology (Saunders)
- Step Up: A High-Yield, Systems-Based Review for USMLE Step 1 (Lippincott Williams & Wilkins)
- Underground Clinical Vignettes (Lippincott Williams & Wilkins)
- USMLE Road Map Series (McGraw-Hill Medical)
- USMLE Step 1 Made Ridiculously Simple (MedMaster Inc.)
- USMLE Step 1 Recall: Buzzwords for the Boards (Lippincott Williams & Wilkins)
- USMLE Step 1 Secrets (Mosby)

Mobile Applications

- Cram Fighter (iPhone)
- Kaplan Mobile QBank (iPhone)
- Skyscape USMLE Step 1 Recall (Several)

Review Courses

Some students find the structure and discipline of a review course very helpful as part of their Step 1 preparation. Not all review courses are scheduled at a time that's convenient for first-time Step 1 test-takers.

DOCTORS IN TRAINING
http://www.doctorsintraining.com
Part 1: Questions and Video Answers You will receive 34 sets of 10 short-answer questions three times a week posted to your dashboard.
Part 2: Videos Focused high-yield videos, 70-75 hours, incorporating active learning principles. The course contains more than 800 images, illustrations, charts, graphs, and pathology slides and has a corresponding study guide.
Cost: See website for current cost

KAPLAN

<http://www.kaptest.com/Medical-Licensing/>

LivePrep: Structured, live lecture-style preparation.
7 week course or 14 week course; see website for current prices

CenterPrep: Review video lectures at your own pace at a Kaplan center.
3, 6, or 9 month access; see website for current prices

Classroom Anywhere: Over 240 hours (14 weeks) of live online lectures.
See website for current class dates and costs.

LivePrep Retreat: 6-week live lecture retreat in a hotel setting. Previous retreats have taken place in Atlanta and Chicago.

*Must call Kaplan for current pricing and more information.

Live Question-Based Integration: 28 hours of guided USMLE question-based review.

Pathophysiology (2 sessions)

Pharmacology (2 sessions)

Biochemistry (2 session)

Microbiology (1 session)

Call Kaplan for current pricing and more information.

OnlinePrep: Web-based course with access to approximately 200 hours of online video.

3 month access or 6 month access; see website for current pricing

High Yield: 50-hour fast-paced online review; see website for current pricing

*Most programs also include access to assessment tests and simulated exams. Bundle packages (including access to Kaplan's QBank) are available. Free Live Online seminars and practice exams are also offered by Kaplan; check their website for current details.

FALCON PHYSICIAN REVIEWS

<http://www.falconreviews.com>

Live: 7-week intensive review offered in several U.S. cities. Package includes over 300 hours of live lectures, access to USMLE World QBank for 3 months, clinical vignettes and case students, daily Q/A sessions, and two NBME exams.

*Prices vary by city location.

Live Online Review: Over 275 hours of live classroom instruction accessible from any device with internet access. Includes an interactive eBook, 6-months of USMLE World Q Bank, 30 hours of integrated cases, and two NBME exams.

Price: Check website for current prices

Live Online Integrated Cases: 30 hours of live online case-based review over 6 days; see website for current pricing.

Self-Study Online Review: Over 200 hours of multimedia instruction optimized into 115 hours of streaming video lecture material; organized into 10- to 40-minute modules. Includes interactive e-books and the option of purchasing QBank of your choice and Becker textbooks.

NORTHWESTERN MEDICAL REVIEW

<http://www.northwesternmedicalreview.com>

Options include short-term live lecture review courses (3-15 days), private tutoring, question bank access, video library access, hard copy study materials and books.

Live review courses last between 3 and 15 days and typically take place in East Lansing, MI or Chicago, IL. They also offer "cruise reviews". Visit their website for more information and pricing.

Question Banks

Practice questions are a **key component of USMLE Step 1 preparation**. Many students suggest obtaining access to more than one question bank (USMLEWorld and Kaplan are the most popular choices). UWorld is reputed to have more difficult questions and is considered the gold standard. Common advice is to thoroughly understand the questions you answer incorrectly and **NOT** rush on to do more questions.

QUESTION BANK	DETAILS	COST
Kaplan Medical (QBank) http://www.kaplanmedical.com	Internet-based question bank providing tailored CBT-format exams (over 2,000 questions). Test content and performance feedback are provided by organ system and discipline. Questions are representative in style and at times content to those on the actual exam. Reading the often detailed explanations is time well spent. There is a free online demonstration. Requires time commitment. iPhone and Android accessibility	See website for current pricing
USMLE World http://usmleworld.com/	An excellent bank of well-constructed questions that closely mirror those found on Step 1. Questions demand multistep reasoning and are often more difficult than those on the actual exam. Offers excellent, detailed explanations with figures and tables. Features a number of test customization and analysis options. Unfortunately, the program does not allow other application windows to be open for reference. Users can see cumulative results both over time and compared to other test takers. Mobile companion app available for iOS and Android-based devices. *This is a very popular resource among Tulane students.	Pricing varies by length of access. See website for current pricing.

<p>USMLE Consult http://www.usmleconsult.com</p>	<p>A solid question bank that can be divided according to discipline and subject area. Questions are more straightforward than those on actual exam. Offers concise explanations with links to Student Consult and First Consult content. Users can see cumulative results both over time and compared to other test takers. Premium Review offers a Robbins Pathology test bank featuring 500 USMLE-style questions as well as the Scorrelator that predicts your USMLE Step 1 score.</p>	<p>See website for current pricing.</p>
<p>USMLE Rx http://www.usmlerx.com</p>	<p>A well-priced question bank that offers Step 1-style questions accompanied by thorough explanations. Some obscure material is omitted, making it more straightforward than other question banks. Each explanation includes high-yield facts and references from <i>First Aid</i>. However, the proportion of questions covering a given subject area does not always reflect the actual exam's relative emphasis. Question stems occasionally rely on "buzzwords". Most useful to help memorize <i>First Aid</i> facts. Provides detailed performance analyses.</p>	<p>Pricing includes "Until you pass" option. See website for details</p>
<p>USMLE Easy http://www.usmle-easy.com</p>	<p>A question bank based on the PreTest series. Many questions are shorter and more obscure than those on the actual Step 1 exam. Users can track questions completed as well as customize tests. Useful as a supplemental review after other resources have been exhausted. <i>*USMLEasy Lite (25% of questions) is available for free through AccessMedicine (see Online Resources).</i></p>	<p>Call for pricing: 1-888-307-5984</p>

Online Resources

ONLINE RESOURCE	DETAILS	COST
Pathoma https://www.pathoma.com/	High yield pathology. Try the free trial to see if it works for you. Gives access to six online videos. The paid version has a textbook and access to online videos.	Starts at \$84.95 for 3 mo. Access; 12 month and 21 month access also available. Paid version includes iPad and iPhone support (not Android)
AccessMedicine http://www.accessmedicine.com	Innovative online resource that provides students, residents, clinicians, researchers, and all health professionals with access to more than 60 medical titles from the best minds in medicine, updated content, thousands of images and illustrations, interactive self-assessment, case files, diagnostic tools, a comprehensive search platform, and the ability to view from and download content to a mobile device.	Free for Tulane students through Matas Library subscription (can be accessed from the library website through the "databases" link).
NBME Self-Assessment Services http://www.nbme.org/students/sas/sas.html	The material presented in these self-assessments is provided by the NBME for educational purposes only. Medical students and graduates may find them to be useful tools as they prepare for USMLE Step1, Step 2 CK, and Step 3. Participants will receive a performance profile and a score interpretation guide immediately after completing a self-assessment.	See website for pricing
WebPath: The Internet Pathology Laboratory for Medical Education http://library.med.utah.edu/WebPath/	Contains over 2700 images with text that illustrate gross and microscopic pathologic findings along with radiologic imaging associated with human disease conditions. For self-assessment and study there are over 1300 examination items. There are more than 20 tutorials in specific subject areas.	Free.

Other Electronic Resources

Goljan's Audio Lectures. A number of students have recommended these as excellent resources that are in more depth than is necessary but provide a useful, exam-oriented bringing together information, and

provide a welcome break from reading. One student recommended that when you've covered a topic, go for a walk and listen to Goljan. These audio lectures are available through the internet.

On the other hand, the Goljan lectures were recorded in 2001, and the material has not been updated to reflect new material and understanding. Some students prefer to view **Pathoma** on-line videos. <http://www.pathoma.com/features-and-pricing>.

SketchyMicro – Recommended for micro. <https://www.sketchymedical.com/>. SketchyMicro correlates well with First Aid, and it's very easy to annotate First Aid from this resource.

SketchyPharm is now available, however it has mixed reviews on forums.

Self-Care

It is important that, even while in your dedicated study time, you take care of yourself. Remember to look up from studying sometimes, visit with people who care about you, do something fun once in a while. Avoid burn out.

Below are some student comments on what they'd do differently that are related to self-care:

- When I wasn't being productive, I didn't pull the plug on "studying" as soon as I should've. When you're burned out, push back from the table and take a break.
- Exercise regularly and eat well. If you don't, you'll break down mentally and physically.
- I would definitely make more of a concerted effort to have a study group and/or schedule time to see friends at MUCH more frequent intervals. Everybody will tell you not to pay attention to how everyone else is studying, which is excellent advice but also serves to drive people away from their classmates during study time. I took this too much to heart in the first couple weeks and avoided (the library) to study by myself. It was awful. If you have a significant other or are going home to your family to study, that's great; but I didn't have either of those resources and the isolation of Step 1 prep was what nearly drove me over the edge. You need to eat, you need to sleep, you need to work out if that's your thing; but don't forget human contact as well.

Remember that there are resources at Tulane to help you deal with the stress of Step 1 preparation. If you would like support or ideas for self-care, please contact Karen Weissbecker-Remer kremer@tulane.edu.

“She provides excellent counseling and will walk you through any steps you need to take should adverse events arise.”

The Week of the Exam Day and the Day of...

Advice from Kaplan:

Tips for the Week Before

During the last few days before the exam, you should be tapering off your studying and getting into mental and physical shape.

1. "This is a great time to review storage disorders and vitamin deficiencies, as these tend to be easily forgotten if not frequently reviewed."
2. **This is not the time for cramming new material...**but time to organize and integrate what you already know. Work on making what you know more accessible.
3. **Review keywords, phrases and concepts.** Look over your summary notes one more time. This is the time to drill yourself on essential information. The key is to practice recall, not simply read over the material again. What you need to know is probably already in your head. Your task now is to train yourself to access it when you need it. Doing practice questions is a good way to reinforce your recall skills. Use them to clarify your understanding.
"If there's anything you feel you need to memorize again, save it for the last week/last few days before the exam."
4. **No one can know everything that is asked on this exam.** Be honest with yourself about what you do and do not know. Knowing that you do not know something gives you more sense of control on the exam and makes you less likely to panic when you encounter the material and/or waste time on questions you are not likely to get correct.
5. **Get yourself onto the right time schedule.** Wake up every day at the same time you will need to on the day of the exam. This will get your circadian rhythms coordinated with the exam schedule. Do not nap between 8:00am and 5:00 pm; otherwise, you will be accustomed your body to shutting down during the critical exam hours. If you get up at the same time each day, you will find it easier to fall asleep at night. By getting into a proper sleep-wake cycle, you will find it easier to get sleep the night of the exam as well.
6. **You should be getting a sufficient amount of sleep.** For most people that means at least 6 to 7 hours a night. Sleep is an essential time for your brain to consolidate what you have learned. You need sleep; it makes you a more efficient learner when you are awake.
7. **Take some time each day to relax.** Have a good meal. Take a walk in the fresh air. Find time for exercise. The change of pace will refresh you and the physical activity will help you relax and sleep at night.
8. **If you haven't done so already, visit the Prometric Test Center** where you will be taking the exam. It will be indicated on your exam entry ticket. This will ensure you know how to get there and how much time you should allow for the commute. You can see where you should park, and see what the computer set-up is like.
9. **Review the tutorial at** <http://www.usmle.org/practice-materials/index.html>. Become familiar with

the interface, the location of key information on the screen and how to navigate between screens. If you walk into the exam familiar with the exam, you will not have to use any of your valuable break time to do this on the test day.

Tips for the Day before the Exam

1. Take the day off from studying. This is your day to relax and gather your strength before the main event. Get out of bed at the same time you will have to get up the next day. If you feel you must study, limit yourself to reviewing your own notes and flashcards.

2. Have some fun. Go for a walk. Listen to your favorite music. Go see a good comedy or an action movie that will allow cathartic release. Go shopping. Spend time with a significant other. Do whatever you like. You have worked hard and deserve it.

3. Make sure that you have checked out the basics for the exam:

- Have you worked through the USMLE tutorial?
- Do you know where the Prometric center is, and how to get there?
- Do you have alternative transportation if, for example, your car does not start?
- Do you trust your alarm clock to wake you up in time? If not, make arrangements with friends as back up. You want to be sure to wake up rested, refreshed, and on time.
- Layout what you'll need for the exam before you go to sleep. This includes photo identification, scheduling permit and confirmation number, as well as any personal items like eyeglasses. While you're at it, don't forget to pack a lunch!
- "Choose an appropriate outfit. You get security checked every time you come back to the exam room, which eats up your break time. They make you turn your pockets inside out (avoid pants with pockets), take off your shoes (avoid shoes with laces), and roll up your sleeves (short sleeve shirt, unless you get cold easily). They also don't allow sweat shirts. If you know you are always cold, dress in layers."

4. Call your friends and classmates and make some plans to celebrate. You'll need to blow off some steam anyhow, and talking with colleagues will remind you that you are not in this by yourself.

5. Be sure to do some physical activity. Just taking a walk for an hour will help relax you.

6. Get a good night's sleep. To help you sleep, consider a hot bath or warm milk. Avoid taking sleeping medication as it may leave you groggy in the morning.

Tips for Test Day...(USMLE, Kaplan)

When you come to the exam, you need to bring your scheduling permit and a form of legal identification:

- passport,
- driver's license with photograph,
- national identity card,
- other form of unexpired, government-issued identification,
- ECFMG-issued identification card.

Important Note: Your name as it appears on your Scheduling Permit must match the name on your

form(s) of identification exactly. If the name listed on your Scheduling Permit is not correct, contact your registration entity immediately.

- 1. Arrive at the Prometric Test Center 30 minutes early so you are not rushed and have time to get organized.** You will be given a locker to store your personal items and then assigned a computer station. Remember that you have a total of seven hours to complete 280 questions, and a total of one hour to be used throughout the day for breaks and lunch.

2. To cope with fatigue, you will need to schedule breaks. Our recommended schedule for the exam is:

Question Block	Break time at end of Block
Block 1	No break
Block 2	5 minute break
Block 3	5 minute break
Block 4	30 minute break
Block 5	No break
Block 6	10 minute break
Block 7	Done!

This allows you 10 minutes extra to use as needed. Remember that you will need to sign in and out when you take breaks. You should also be aware that if you leave the exam room *during* a block, it will be marked as an irregularity in your testing session. Therefore, you need to consider after each block if you want to take a bathroom break.

3. Start with the beginning of the question block and work your way to the end. The idea here is to get into a rhythm that will help create what one psychologist calls a "Flow" experience. The flow experience is a state of optimal concentration and maximal performance.

4. Do not skip any questions. If you don't know it when you come to it, you are not likely to know it later. Skipping around wastes time and can end up confusing you. Deal with each question as you come to it, answer it as best you can, and *move on* to the next question.

5. Limit your use of the marking feature to no more than two or three questions per block. Of course you should answer each question as you come to it, but you may want to double-check yourself on a few questions. The marking feature lets you return to review and reconsider questions *if* you have time left over. Used correctly, marking will help you revisit questions where you have a high probability of getting the answer correct. Misused, marking causes you to not give a question your full attention the first time around. You simply may not have time to go back and look at questions you have marked, especially if you mark a lot of them.

6. Be cautious about changing answers. In general, your odds of changing a correct answer to a wrong one are so much higher than the reverse that it is simply not worth the risk. If you change an answer, you are most likely making it wrong! Your first impulse is usually the correct one. Stay with it unless some clear insight occurs to you.

7. If you finish a question block with time left over, go back and "check" only those answers that you have previously marked. Checking almost always leads to changing and tends to reduce your score. If you have a spare moment, make sure that you have entered an answer for every question in the block and

then, relax. Sit, take a break, and mentally prepare yourself for the next block of questions. Focus on the questions to come, not the ones that have passed.

8. Monitor your time. Know how much you have left, so you do not find yourself rushed at the end. Work on your pacing from the beginning of the question block. Check your watch every 10 questions to make sure you are on the correct pace to finish. If you pace yourself throughout the block, you should not be squeezed for time at the end.

“When you are taking the exam, there should be a pane on the left side of the screen that tells you how many questions you’ve answered/marked so far in the current block. Be aware that this pane may have a scroll tab and there may be additional questions if you scroll all the way to the bottom. Don’t pace yourself based on your (visual) progress down the page (i.e. not all the questions will be in your field of view. If you’ve finished half the questions, make sure that it is actually question #20 and not question #18, otherwise you might get to the bottom of the page and have 4 questions left with 2 minutes to answer them.)

10. **Relax.** During the breaks between question blocks, try to relax and not think back over the exam. **The desire to recall questions is strong, but not helpful.** Those questions are in the past; you will never see them again. Focus on relaxing and making the most of your break. Remember, you will always tend to remember those questions you get wrong.

11. You can have food and drinks outside of the exam room, or in your locker for breaks. Bring lots of food and drinks to the exam so you can have little snacks throughout the day to keep your energy up and eating avoid big meals that will make you tired.

12. You may not have any of the following in the exam room:

- mechanical or electronic devices, such as cellular telephones, personal digital assistants (PDAs), calculators, watches of any type, electronic paging devices, recording or filming devices, radios;
- outerwear, such as coats, jackets, head wear, gloves;
- book bags, backpacks, handbags, briefcases, wallets;
- books, notes, study materials, or scratch paper;
- food, candy, gum, or beverages.

13. Personal Item Exceptions (PIEs)

The personal items listed below **are permitted** in the secure testing area. During your USMLE Step 1 examination, **you do NOT** need to make a request or submit documentation to NBME for approval if you have a medical need for one or more of the items listed below. Items are subject to inspection by test center staff. Please show the item to test center staff when you check in for your examination.

Medical Devices and Medicine

- Arm/shoulder sling
- Bandages
- Braces – neck, back, wrist, leg, or ankle
- Casts/cervical collar
- Cough drops (must be unwrapped and not in a bottle/container)
- Earplugs (foam with no strings) Step 1, Step 2 CK, and Step 3 only
- Epi-Pen
- Eye drops
- Eye patches
- Eyeglasses (without the case)
- Glucose monitor
- Glucose tablets

- Handheld magnifying glass (non-electric, no case)
- Ice packs/heating pads
- Inhaler
- Medical alert bracelet
- Nitroglycerin tablets
- Pillow/lumbar support
- Pills (must be unwrapped and not in a bottle/container)
- Stool for elevating a limb
- Surgical face mask Step 1, Step 2 CK, and Step 3 only
- Walking boot casts

Medical Device Attached to a Person's Body

- Catheter
- Colostomy bag
- Heart rate monitor
- Insulin pump
- Oxygen tank
- Spinal cord stimulator
- TENS units
- Urine drainage bag

Communication Aids

- Hearing aid/cochlear implant without Bluetooth/wireless enabled
- Vocal cord magnifiers

Mobility Devices

- Cane
- Crutches
- Walker
- Wheelchair

If you have a medical condition that requires use of an item NOT on the above list, contact the NBME Personal Item Exception (PIE) Coordinator at pie@nbme.org or 215-590-9700 for additional information on how to request a personal item exception.

Notes:

For Individual Consultation on STEP ONE Preparation or Tutoring Request Contact:

Dr. Gale Naquin, Learning Specialist

School of Medicine

1430 Tulane Ave. Suite 1730

New Orleans, Louisiana 70112

504-988-6598

gnaquin@tulane.edu

<http://tulane.edu/som/ome>

Subject	Questions			
Anatomy	221		2490	
Behavioral Science	169			
Biochemistry	165			
Biostats	66			
Embryo	48			
Genetics	84			
Histology	30			
Immunology	93			
Microbiology	224			
Pathology	589			
Pathophysiology	239			
Pharmacology	385			
Physiology	177			

Systems		Week 1	Week 2	Week 3
Allergy and Immunology	24	10		
Biostats and Epi	46			15
Cardio	325	60	40	
Derm	66			20
ENT	12			12
Endocrine	190	40		28
Female repro	63		20	
GI and Nutrition	240	70		
General principles	73			20
Heme/Onc	237		70	
ID	139		35	28
Male Repro	24		10	
Misc	33			
Nervous system	314		95	
Ophtho	11		11	
Poisoning	6		6	
Pregnancy	29		19	
Psych and behavior	117		20	
Pulm	197		70	
Renal and electrolytes	154		50	
Rheum and ortho	145			50
Ethics	45			
Total Questions	2490			
Questions completed by	799			