Designing a Study Plan for

STEP ONE

Calendar Outline:

1. Fill in your Exam Date
2. Set a STEP ONE Goal Score
3. Ideally, the length of your study plan should be within 33-40 days within a 6 week timeline. After 40 days, research has shown diminishing returns on your study efforts.
4. Set a practice test 3-5 days before your actual test date.
5. Build your calendar to include study breaks: one full day or two half days about every 7 days.
6. Plan in maintenance activities such as walking the dog, doing laundry, grocery shopping, meals, etc.
7. Burnout happens about week 3-4. Schedule something that will energize you and give you a break from studying.
8. Set Practice tests CBSSA every 7-10 days (total 3 or 4).
9. Schedule a review day after your practice test. Use a test item analysis to inform, modify, revisit and or strengthen topics.
10. Block off 2-4 hours weekly for review or catch up.

ADD: What to study and when:

1. Assuming you will complete 2,000-2500 questions before your NBME test, look at your calendar with the number of days you have devoted to study. Calculate the number of questions you must complete each day to achieve this goal.
2. Use a layered approach to studying. Ideally, you will complete a series of 3 phases during your dedicated study time.
   a. Divide your USMLE study schedule into three phases. Use U World Questions to help you learn and First Aid as your first “go to” to check answers and organize information.
   b. Phase One: First Passage through Systems include questions on specific subjects. Start with the System and Subject within the system that has challenged you the most. (Lowest score on test, least amount of material learned. (i.e., System: Cardiovascular System: Subject: Physiology
      i. Divide each study day into 3 parts: Morning, Afternoon, and Evening.
      ii. Divide your day into activities (reading; looking at videos; answering questions reviewing flashcards etc.).
      iii. Determine the length of time you will spend on each activity and assign times to the activities. The order of the activities is one of personal choice. It depends on the time of day when you are most/least alert etc.
EVERY STUDY DAY ESSENTIALS:

iv. Do a block of questions per day in tutorial mode. Check your answers and review those that you got incorrect. In general, somewhere around 3 hours should cover a full World block; one hour for question completion and 2 hours for answer review. You don’t want to go through them too quickly, nor should you spend 4 hours on a single block.

v. Next, use review material to help you learn what you did not know from the questions. Use First Aid and use sticky notes / highlight / record / where you find correct answers to questions missed.

vi. At the end of each system, test yourself using 20+ questions from each topic reviewed thus far in testing mode.

Example: Cardio System: Subject Physiology identified as weak area:

- Preview Cardio/ Physiology in First Aid
- Do 10-20 questions in tutorial mode. Review correct/ incorrect questions. Use supplemental review as needed.
- Same Routine: 10-20 questions
- Add a layer of another resource to help you learn the material if needed.
- Review Cardio Physiology in First Aid to organize, highlight, sticky notes
- Continue through pathology and pharmacology with the same approach
- Integrate 20 questions of random cardo questions
- 20 questions from subjects reviewed so far (i.e. Cardio, Pharm, pathology)

c. Phase 2: Second passage through the systems including high yield review of the system with a focus on questions and transition to random/testing mode. (i.e. 40-60 Cardio Questions, High yield review and 60-80 questions = 120-140 questions daily.

d. Phase 3: High yield review of several systems daily (40-60 questions) with transition to random questions in testing mode (80-100)=160 daily.

3. Put the plan into action, striving for the right amount of flexibility. Your plans are a guideline, and should be subject to change, but you definitely don’t want to fall more than 1 day behind. Do not allot the same time for everything. Let practice exam scores and quantity of material guide how long you spend on a subject. Don’t waste your time relearning minutiae of things in which you are already strong.

4. For NBME practice tests, find a quiet, private area where you can simulate the real thing. They are another way to build stamina and control your anxiety levels. Have a plan for how you will take your breaks and give it a trial run. Most people have anxiety after the first block, so a break after the first block may be helpful. At most, take the first 3 sections then use your break time more regularly after the subsequent sections. If you feel you need to change the break schedule, it’s best to learn that beforehand and not on test day.
Guidelines for What to Study for USMLE Step One

1. Basics of **pathology**: Abnormal processes account for 55-60% of Step 1 questions so the better you can understand and articulate pathology and inflammation, the easier your studying and retention will be.

2. Pharmacology is generally minimally tested. Understand the basics by using a space repetition system (flashcards, Anki) and reviewing these based on the system arranged in First Aid. Is recommended. Therefore, if they do come up in questions, you have the basic knowledge to make the connections.

3. Review anatomy by organ system as covered in First Aid is sufficient for your preparation. In general, Step 1 is not very anatomy heavy.

4. Be able to apply a concept such as disease, pathogen, or enzyme to an unfamiliar scenario. Therefore, rather than solely memorizing facts, study for **understanding**. Be able to answer the question: **WHY?**

5. Mechanisms are tested. Questions generally involve clinical scenarios that inquire about what’s occurring at the organ, cellular, or molecular level. Learn in what way diseases and drugs work. Be able to answer the question **How?**

6. Learn the basic characteristics of diseases and drugs. Questions about whether proteins, lipids, or carbohydrates are involved, or whether the process is infectious, neoplastic, or inflammatory.

7. Step One does not contain higher-level clinical knowledge. Generally, questions asking about clinical management of patients can be answered from knowledge of the underlying mechanism of disease.

8. Classic disease presentations are on the test. You are not required to identify peculiar, unusual signs and symptoms. Concentrate on learning only the classic, typical presentation.

9. Data interpretation is required. Be able to look at a table or graph and answer questions. Questions may be about causes, relationships etc. (i.e. recognize from a table the relationship between insulin in one column and glucose concentration in another).

10. Scientific words and sophisticated challenging vocabulary will likely be on the test. Utilize strong reading and vocabulary skills.

11. Clinical images such as X-rays, CT scans, and MRIs will likely be present on the test. Images on the exam will be typical, simple -recognizable examples of common pathology. Also, you will likely be able to answer the question without the image by reading the question carefully and focus on the description (patient demographics, symptoms, and signs).