

# Tips to Help You Prepare for Step 1



The Learning Center is here to help you achieve success on your USMLE Step 1 exam. Follow the steps below to get moving on that road to success!

---

*Studying for this exam is hard. You might feel exhausted, isolated, or discouraged, as these are among the common feelings associated with studying for Step 1. But you don't need to walk this path alone.*

---

*The following tips are suggestions that will lead to success on the USMLE Step 1 exam. Use these tips as is or modify them to help you build a study plan based on your preferences and needs.*

1. **Pick your test day and sign up.**
2. **Choose your resources.** Limit yourself to about six. Include a question bank (e.g., UWorld) and First Aid of course. Additional resource options could include Pathoma, Anki, Boards and Beyond and Sketchy. Practice exams (NBME and UWorld) are a must.
3. **Review the material.** One option is to conduct your review by systems. Plan to spend 1-3 days on your review of each organ system depending on your comfort with the material. Spend 3 days reviewing the systems that are more difficult for you. Less difficult topics can be reviewed in a day or two.
4. **Decide how to manage your days.** We recommend keeping your days relatively consistent, so you don't have to think too much about it. We suggest three study blocks per day, each about three hours long.
  - a. Here's how your first week might look:
    - i. Block 1 (8am to 11am) — 40 UWorld questions in time mode/mixed topics and review.
    - ii. Break from 11am to 12pm.
    - iii. Block 2 (12pm - 3pm) — Topic review based on your response system to #3 above.
    - iv. Break (3pm - 4pm)
    - v. Block 3 (4pm - 7pm) — Continue to practice information retrieval (flash cards, making charts or concept maps, studying with a partner, etc.).
  - b. By week two you will likely want to increase to 2 blocks of test questions for at least some of the time. By week three, you should be up to 2 blocks a day on most days. By week four you can build in some 3-block days *all in timed test mode*.

## 5. **Breaks.**

- a. Build in short breaks during the day at the rate of about 5-10 minutes/hour.
- b. Build in at least one or two longer breaks into each study day.
- c. Create an end of the day boundary - stop early enough to give yourself time to wind down and do something else before bed.
- d. Take one full day off each week. You need time to recharge!

## 6. **Assessments.**

- a. About once every 7-10 days, take a practice exam of your choice.
- b. Take three, four or more practice exams over the course of your dedicated study time.
- c. Take the last practice exam about a week to 10 days before Test Day.
- d. The Free 120 is a great option to use 4-5 days before exam day.

## 7. **Assessment Review.**

- a. After taking your practice exam review your wrong answers soon, same day is best.
- b. Categorize your wrong answers. Was it...
  - ...A strategy mistake?
  - ...A knowledge gap?
  - ...An obscure detail many others got wrong too?
  - ...A careless mistake?
  - ...A result of being tired, anxious, or under time pressure?
- c. Doing a careful analysis of wrong answers is important to help you adjust your study plan going forward.

8. **Take care of yourself** as you go! Try your best to get enough sleep, exercise, healthy food, and drink. Build in some downtime every day. Enlist your family and friends for support. We need one another to get through hard times.

9. **Check out our website** for printable resources such as our fillable “Step 1 USMLE Sample Study Plan” PDF and our “Spaced Retrieval Practice” PDF. We also have links to recommended videos that explore the topics of retrieval practice and strategies to master USMLE questions.

---

*We are here to support you! Call our office or email us today to make an appointment with an Academic Success Coach.*

---

**The Learning Center**  
University of Rochester  
1-154 Dewey Hall  
[learning@rochester.edu](mailto:learning@rochester.edu)  
(585)275-9049