

minutes before the time designated on the admission ticket; however, do not come too early, as doing so may intensify your anxiety. When you arrive at the test site, the proctor should give you a USMLE information sheet that will explain critical factors such as the proper use of break time. Seating may be assigned, but ask to be reseated if necessary; you need to be seated in an area that will allow you to remain comfortable and to concentrate. Get to know your testing station, especially if you have never been in a Prometric testing center before. Listen to your proctors regarding any changes in instructions or testing procedures that may apply to your test site.

If you are experiencing symptoms of illness on the day of your exam, we strongly recommend you reschedule. If you become ill or show signs of illness (eg, persistent cough) during the exam, the test center may prohibit you from completing the exam due to health and safety risks for test center staff and other examinees.

Finally, remember that it is natural (and even beneficial) to be a little nervous. Focus on being mentally clear and alert. Avoid panic. When you are asked to begin the exam, take a deep breath, focus on the screen, and then begin. Keep an eye on the timer. Take advantage of breaks between blocks to stretch, maybe do some jumping jacks, and relax for a moment with deep breathing or stretching.

### After the Test

After you have completed the exam, be sure to have fun and relax regardless of how you may feel. Taking the test is an achievement in itself. Remember, you are much more likely to have passed than not. Enjoy the free time you have before your clerkships. Expect to experience some “reentry” phenomena as you try to regain a real life. Once you have recovered sufficiently from the test (or from partying), we invite you to send us your feedback, corrections, and suggestions for entries, facts, mnemonics, strategies, resource ratings, and the like (see p. xvii, How to Contribute). Sharing your experience will benefit fellow medical students.

► *Arrive at the testing center 30 minutes before your scheduled exam time. If you arrive more than half an hour late, you will not be allowed to take the test.*

## ► STUDY MATERIALS

### Quality Considerations

Although an ever-increasing number of review books and software are now available on the market, the quality of such material is highly variable. Some common problems are as follows:

- Certain review books are too detailed to allow for review in a reasonable amount of time or cover subtopics that are not emphasized on the exam.
- Many sample question books were originally written years ago and have not been adequately updated to reflect recent trends.
- Some question banks test to a level of detail that you will not find on the exam.

► *If a given review book is not working for you, stop using it no matter how highly rated it may be or how much it costs.*

► *Charts and diagrams may be the best approach for physiology and biochemistry, whereas tables and outlines may be preferable for microbiology.*

### Review Books

In selecting review books, be sure to weigh different opinions against each other, read the reviews and ratings in Section IV of this guide, examine the books closely in the bookstore, and choose carefully. You are investing not only money but also your limited study time. Do not worry about finding the “perfect” book, as many subjects simply do not have one, and different students prefer different formats. Supplement your chosen books with personal notes from other sources, including what you learn from question banks.

There are two types of review books: those that are stand-alone titles and those that are part of a series. Books in a series generally have the same style, and you must decide if that style works for you. However, a given style is not optimal for every subject.

You should also find out which books are up to date. Some recent editions reflect major improvements, whereas others contain only cursory changes. Take into consideration how a book reflects the format of the USMLE Step 1.

### Apps

With the explosion of smartphones and tablets, apps are an increasingly popular way to review for the Step 1 exam. The majority of apps are compatible with both iOS and Android. Many popular Step 1 review resources (eg, UWorld, USMLE-Rx) have apps that are compatible with their software. Many popular web references (eg, UpToDate) also now offer app versions. All of these apps offer flexibility, allowing you to study while away from a computer (eg, while traveling).

### Practice Tests

Taking practice tests provides valuable information about potential strengths and weaknesses in your fund of knowledge and test-taking skills. Some students use practice examinations simply as a means of breaking up the monotony of studying and adding variety to their study schedule, whereas other students rely almost solely on practice. You should also subscribe to one or more high-quality question banks.

Additionally, some students preparing for the Step 1 exam have started to incorporate case-based books intended primarily for clinical students on the wards or studying for the Step 2 CK exam. *First Aid Cases for the USMLE Step 1* aims to directly address this need.

After taking a practice test, spend time on each question and each answer choice whether you were right or wrong. There are important teaching points in each explanation. Knowing why a wrong answer choice is incorrect is just as important as knowing why the right answer is correct. Do not panic if your practice scores are low as many questions try to trick or distract you to highlight a certain point. Use the questions you missed or were unsure about to develop focused plans during your scheduled catch-up time.

► *Most practice exams are shorter and less clinical than the real thing.*

► *Use practice tests to identify concepts and areas of weakness, not just facts that you missed.*

### Textbooks and Course Syllabi

Limit your use of textbooks and course syllabi for Step 1 review. Many textbooks are too detailed for high-yield review and include material that is generally not tested on the USMLE Step 1 (eg, drug dosages, complex chemical structures). Syllabi, although familiar, are inconsistent across medical schools and frequently reflect the emphasis of individual faculty, which often does not correspond to that of the USMLE Step 1. Syllabi also tend to be less organized than top-rated books and generally contain fewer diagrams and study questions.

### Integration of AI in Medical Education: Transforming USMLE Preparation

The integration of AI into education signals a paradigm shift in the acquisition and application of medical knowledge. AI's increasing ability to process extensive data sets and adapt to various learning styles makes it an attractive tool in medical training and practice.<sup>17</sup> Studies have demonstrated that AI language models are capable of achieving high accuracy rates when answering USMLE-style questions, underscoring its potential in supporting medical education.<sup>18</sup>

Although undeniably powerful, effectively utilizing AI as a study tool requires both practice and individual trial and error. We suggest the following approaches and prompts that might help learners more effectively harness AI for exam preparation:

*Tailored Mnemonic Creation:* Devise unique mnemonics to aid in memorizing complex medical terms efficiently. AI models can be highly creative in generating new ones, although feedback and iteration will likely be needed to produce mnemonics that are both accurate and memorable.

Example prompt: Create a food-related mnemonic for remembering adverse effects 1, 2, and 3 of Drug A.

*Custom Summarization of Medical Texts:* Efficiently condense extensive medical literature into concise summaries, facilitating efficient and rapid topic reviews.

Example prompt: Summarize this medical school lecture into bullet points. Decrease length by 80%.

*AI-Generated Custom Quizzes:* Create focused practice questions.

Example Prompt: Create three vignette-style multiple choice questions testing presentations of lysosomal storage disorders.

*Clinical Case Simulations:* Utilize AI-powered simulations of realistic clinical scenarios to practice decision-making skills and application of medical knowledge.

Example prompt: Create an exercise to practice analyzing acid-base disorders requiring Winter's formula with step-by-step explanations.