

MY STEP 1 EXPERIENCE AND MY PREPARATION METHODS - n=1

Score: 254

Preparation time: 9 months

Took the exam on October 25th, 2019

I will place my NBME scores first because I know this is what many of you are looking for.

SCHEDULE OF NBMES AND SCORES

NBME 12 ~lower 230s **offline** ~3 months prior
NBME 13 ~lower 230s **offline** ~3 months prior
NBME 15 ~upper 230s **offline** ~3 months prior
NBME 20 ~lower 240s **online** ~2 months prior
NBME 21 ~lower 240s **online** ~2 months prior
NBME 22 ~lower 240s **online** ~1 month prior
NBME 17 ~lower 240s **offline** ~1 month prior
NBME 23 ~upper 250s **online** ~1 month prior
NBME 24 ~lower 240s **online** ~3 weeks prior
UWSA 1 ~lower 240s ~2 weeks prior
NBME 18 ~lower 240s **online** ~1 week prior
UWSA 2 ~lower 250s ~4 days prior
Free 120 ~89% ~2 days prior

METHODS

The first thing I would like to say is that I was scared to take this exam as probably you are. And in retrospective I can say that this exam definitely requires hard and serious preparation. But beyond that, exam is pretty feasible and if you respect your preparation enough, you'll probably end up scoring more than expected.

The second thing is that every student must create its own study guide and schedule, which should be dynamic and adaptive to one's necessities and capabilities.

First thing I did, and I would do again if I had to, is to gather >40 step 1 experiences of people that obtained a score above your desired one. Main sources -from my experience- for these experiences are reddit step 1 community and Facebook step 1 preparation forums. The experiences that you gather should be recent, ideally not more than a year and a half old. From these experiences, extract the sources used and list them in order of frequency. Then decide which sources you are going to use.

My sources, somewhat hierarchical order:

1. U World
2. NBMEs
3. First Aid
4. Boards and beyond
5. Anki – Zanki, Pepper, 100 anatomy concepts
6. Pathoma
7. Sketchy Micro
8. AMBOSS
9. BRS Physiology
10. USMLE Medical Ethics by Conrad Fisher

Phase 1

10-11 months before the exam

I did my search to define the sources I would later use for my preparation and started using Anki with the Zanki deck to become familiar with the kind of things I would later have to study and memorize. I almost finished the biochemistry section.

Phase 2

9 months before the exam

I started watching boards and beyond and reading first aid in the order of first aid. I was aiming for 7 hours a day of study. I finished all basic concepts with this method. On the pathology chapter I watched pathoma's basic concepts on pathology videos.

Phase 3

7-8 months before the exam

When I finished all basic concepts and moved on to system sections on first aid, I used the same methods as in phase 2. There were two differences: 1, for each system I watched pathoma's corresponding videos. And 2, I incorporated a 40-question "quiz" of U World after each system. These "quizzes" contained questions only on that system. If I scored >70 I would "graduate" from that system and move to the next one. I finished all systems along with ~60% of U World questions.

Phase 4

5-6 months before the exam

I started doing U World randomly and finished all questions.

Phase 5

3 months before the exam

I did my first offline NBME to assess myself. Then I did all marked and wrong questions on U World.

Phase 6

2 months before the exam

I started reading first aid again in order. Cover to cover. I identified weak topics and started making these lists:

1. Topics I needed to review at least 3 more times
2. Topics I needed to review at least 2 more times
3. Topics I needed to review at least 1 more time
4. Topics I needed to memorize.

Additionally, in this phase I selected flash cards from the Zanki deck subject by subject. This selection was focused on pure topics that needed memorization. And I dedicated 1 hour daily to Anki. I also realized doing U World second time wasn't beneficial for me and I started complementing my study with random AMBOSS questions. I continued doing NBMEs.

Phase 7

1 month before the exam.

I focused on finishing reviewing the lists made on phase 6 + AMBOSS random questions + NBMEs.

Phase 8

1 week before the exam

Pure memorization on volatile stuff. Formulas, genes, mutations, etc. And some random questions to maintain momentum.

Final notes

1. Throughout the study but specially on the last month of preparation is very important to work on test-taking abilities. I cannot stress this enough.
2. I aimed to study 7 hours throughout my preparation 6 days a week. Some weeks I studied less than that and some weeks more than that. In the final month I think I was averaging around 10-11 hours a day.
3. It is very important to be sensitive with your tiredness level. If you feel slow and tired it is better to rest than to continue studying. Some weekends I couldn't study at all. I felt burnout more than four times throughout my preparation. I rested and then went back to study.
4. Try to follow your plan and schedule but keep in mind it is almost impossible to do it perfectly. Accept this and do your best.
5. Try to remember yourself that your preparation is finite and eventually it will end.
6. Seek sources of motivation and peace.

Please ask me anything. I am happy to help.

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