

## 2014 USMLE Step I Survey

### 1. When did you start reviewing specifically for Step I? (n=97)

During the first semester of M2 year	8.25%
During the holiday break or prior to spring break M2 year	6.19%
During or after spring break (before the last core ended)	17.53%
After the last core of the M2 year ended	68.04%

#### Comments:

- I used First Aid all year to supplement the Core material but did not review specifically for Step 1 until May.
- I used the Kaplan bank during the year for the cores we were doing
- Summer after M1
- Summer after M1 year

### 2. How did you plan your study schedule for Step I?

- 4.5 weeks to get through all my resources, some twice.
- 5 weeks, 10 hours a day, review by organ system
- 6 weeks based on what others had told me
- A few M4 students sent me their schedules, and I made mine based off theirs.
- Advice from upperclassmen whom I trusted (>6 comments recommended this)
- Choosing subject matter assigned to a set amount of days to study it (>3 comments recommended this)
- Counted down from my test date
- Covered each chapter in First Aid and then went through the questions covering those topics in U-world, listened to Goljan's lectures, and read through Goljan's textbook and high yield questions.
- cramfighter - online scheduling service (>8 comments recommended this)
- Day by day according to topic, starting with the hardest. I studied with a friend and we numbered each system according to difficulty
- Decided to spend 1 and 1/2 weeks going through SketchyMicro, Pathoma and First Aid. The last 4 weeks I spent exclusively doing mixed Q-bank questions and studying/reviewing everything I got wrong or guessed on. Don't get too caught up in maintaining a schedule it's unnecessary and an added stressor. Dedicating myself to learning why I got U-world questions wrong took pretty much 4 weeks.
- Developed an excel file and used block scheduling
- Did a Google search for study schedule ideas then synthesized the ideas into my own schedule.
- Did FA + USMLERX on tutor mode to facilitate memorization of FA. USMLERX Q's are far easier than the real deal, but its utility is in memorizing FA. Also did Pathoma videos twice and 75% of UWORLD.
- Didn't have a plan, just started reading as fast as I could
- Divided the material up equally so I would finish First Aid and DIT exactly one week before my exam to allow one week of review.
- U world
- Fluid based on what I needed. I didn't use any service to plan it.
- Google, advice from upperclassmen, and classmate advice
- Help from students in the class above and the internet. Pathoma and First Aid along with relevant cores, and then U-world as it got closer to May.
- I decided to do a certain number of questions and review certain topics so that I would be done about a week before the test to then review.
- I divided the number of pages and questions I needed to get through by the number of days I wanted to complete them within. I then spread that number of pages and questions across the days based on organ systems so I knew approximately how much to complete each day in order to complete my goal. I also added in "flex days" during which I caught up if I had fallen behind, or took practice exams.

- I made a calendar/schedule and tried my best to stick to it. Doing it this way ensured that I got through everything I wanted to get through.
- I made out a calendar in google calendar with build in "catch-up" days and stuck to my schedule as close as possible.
- I multiplied the pages I needed to cover in first aid by the number of times I wanted to study them and divided those by the days I had to study.
- I only had time to prepare for step 1 after the last M2 exam.
- I planned my schedule based on how many weeks I had to study at a rate of 10 hours per day.
- I planned to cover ~20 pages of First Aid per day. I would study in the mornings and do UWorld practice questions in the afternoons. This gave me enough time to take each Sunday off and left a week prior to the test to focus on weak areas. I also took a practice exam each week on what would be my testing day (Tuesday) to track my progress.
- I planned to study for 37 days, which I charted and planned via an excel document schedule. My goal was to get 12 hours of studying in per day, which I broke up into three 4 hour blocks with small breaks between. The first block was a quick review of the previous day's practice questions, and a rapid review of the previous day's first aid section. The second block was all new first aid studying. The third block was two hours of continued first aid studying, and two hours of practice questions. Overall, I made it through First Aid twice from cover to cover, plus reviewed a few sections that I was week in as the test got closer, as well as approximately 1400 questions from a mixture of U-world and USMLE-Rx.
- I read the USMLE first aid, and did USMLE world practice questions alongside it.
- I researched study plans online, asked older students who performed well on the exam, and considered my own expectations for the exam and then decided how hard I needed to study to get the score I wanted. Based on that, I developed my plan and went to work.
- I scheduled an appointment with a private advising service.
- I scheduled each topic in First Aid a couple of days each. In those days I would go through the First Aid chapter and supplement the material with other review materials as needed. Every day I would also complete a block of questions from the U-world q bank and review the questions. Every day I would also go through 10-20 pharmacology flash cards. Each Saturday I would do a complete or partial practice exam and review material/questions as needed.
- I structured my schedule using Pathoma lectures - I chose which allotted about 4 chapters per week and focused on those topics, using Pathoma, First Aid, Uworld Qbank and pharm flashcards.
- I took a practice test and planned my strategy from there. I also followed Doctors in Training
- I tried to get through First Aid.
- I tried using Cramfighter but ended up deciding on my own that I would spend the first two weeks doing Doctors in Training and the second two weeks focusing on USMLE World questions.
- I used exam crackers to help schedule when I did things
- I used Google to pool multiple suggestions
- I used the website program called CramFighter. You input the books and #of questions you want to get done and it tells you how much needs to be done every day to reach that goal.
- I would do 2 46 question sets (random) per morning, 5-6 hours of DIT, an hour of Pathoma, 30 mins of Sketchy micro, and 1-2 Goljan lectures per day (while in the car or taking a walk). I did this Monday-Thursday. Fridays I took an NBME exam. Sat and Sunday I set aside to go through all the questions I had done that week, writing in a notebook notes about all the incorrect and correct answers. I would review the explained answers in the q-bank but also look up the topics covered in first aid, Wikipedia, and a pharmacology text book question by question.
- Looked at what other people had done successfully
- Looked online for suggested schedules and divided sections into 3 hour sessions, with 2 weeks for review of all material
- My brother sent me a study chart that he used of how to plan out blocks of time.
- On a sheet of paper.
- Pathoma First Aid U-world USMLERX NBME

- Planned to cover study materials 2 times in my allotted study time.
- Pretty much just 8-5 every day, reviewed first aid and did U World twice
- Previous student-generated schedule
- Sat down with two other guys in my class, decided what topics we all struggled with and made those a priority to study first. Then filled in the blanks after that. Tried to group things like neuro and psych together or cardio and renal because they were closely related.
- Set aside the number of days I had and divided what I wanted to go through.
- Tried to do questions during the cores, then cracked down during the month after school
- U-world question sets to correlate with FA sections
- U-world questions, sketchymicro, Dr.'s in Training, Pathoma, and First Aid
- Watched videos to review for the first two weeks, then focused on review questions
- Winged it and the world wide web helped a little. I tried to read as many first aid pages as I could get through in the morning, then do U-world questions the rest of the day, and sprinkle in some U-world self assessments and NBME exams.
- With a friend who had a schedule from a past m3
- Wrote out an outline of weaknesses

**3. Did you utilize the UNMC exam feedback reports to guide your studying (i.e., more focus on areas of weakness)?**

6 of 93 (6.06%) students used it. Comments on how they used it are listed below:

*Of those who used it, they explained how*

- I didn't use them extensively, just checked to see what areas I was weaker in.
- I focused on my weak areas.
- I just observed which areas were my weakest and targeted those areas to be covered first in my study schedule and at least twice in my study plan.
- I spent extra time on the areas I was weakest.
- I wrote down areas where I scored worse--but the categories were so general that it was more helpful to just see the organ system I needed to work on.
- While they may be helpful for students that miss large sections, students who only miss a couple of questions in each section doesn't really help narrow anything down.

**4. Please indicate which item(s) you used that were most helpful and which were least useful**

*(Items are in descending order of Most Helpful percentage of respondents):*

	Count	Did not use	Least Helpful	Most Helpful
First Aid for the USMLE Step I	99	0%	3%	96%
USMLE World question bank	99	5%	0%	95%
Pathoma	99	24%	10%	66%
Doctors in Training	91	53%	4%	54%
USMLE/NBME websites (question banks)	91	47%	4%	48%
Goljan lectures	90	66%	10%	24%
Pharmacology Flash Cards	90	64%	19%	17%
USMLE-Rx (First Aid)	92	80%	5%	14%
Goljan Pathology Review book	88	84%	7%	9%
Firecracker	88	90%	6%	5%
Kaplan Q Bank	91	85%	10%	5%
Board Review Series (LWW publisher)	88	80%	5%	3%
Kaplan High Yield review	88	92%	5%	3%
	Count	Did not	Least	Most

		use	Helpful	Helpful
Appleton & Lange Review for the USMLE Step I	89	99%	0%	1%
Exam Master online (McGoogan Library website)	88	92%	7%	1%
Kaplan Medical USMLE Step I book	89	97%	2%	1%
UNMC syllabus material	88	79%	8%	1%
High Yield series (LWW publisher)	89	96%	4%	0%
USMLE Road Map series (Lange)	88	99%	1%	0%
USMLE Step I Recall: Buzzwords for the Boards	88	99%	1%	0%

The following items were not used by any students: NMS Review for USMLE Step I Series, Princeton Review, Step-Up, Underground Clinical Vignette Series, USMLEasy.

#### *Additional Resources*

- First Aid: Organ Systems (somewhat useful)
- Lange Biochemistry Flash Cards, Lippincott Microcards
- Micro Flashcards Most Useful
- NBME practice test - most useful
- Picmonic was very useful.
- Sketchy Micro. It is an online website with lectures on the types of bacteria. I consider that the only reason I knew the bacteria so well and I will recommend it to everyone I know.

#### **5. For review books or websites you used, please comment why particular resources were most useful.**

- Doctors In Training helped a lot. I just did a lot of USMLE questions w it.
- Doctors In Training made me an awesome calendar
- Doctors In Training was well structured and engaging, which made scheduling easy
- Firecracker offered an economical way to review reflexive type information year around.
- First Aid - An organized, condensed, concise review of everything. I bought the most recent available First Aid at the beginning of first semester M2 year and used it as a guide/reference throughout the year. I tried to make a point to have at least read through the related section before/during each core exam and ideally have taken some notes in it. If you keep up with it throughout the year, it's more digestible, as well as a review rather than your first exposure. I didn't/wouldn't bother getting the newest version of First Aid before the test. I think the value of using and getting comfortable with a copy throughout the year outweighs any value from the small changes or updates of a newest version. Pathoma - Dr. Sattar is great. He clearly has passion and skill for teaching. I also bought this at the beginning of first semester M2 year and used it throughout the year. He often explains the why of pathologies such that it sticks with you, which is clearly helpful for both core exams and boards. Especially when you buy these resources early, I think they really breakdown to being worth the money.
- First Aid and Pathoma are very good resources. Both are very thorough and contain pertinent information.
- First Aid certainly doesn't have everything you need to know for the test, but it lays the groundwork out very well and is important to go through multiple times throughout the year and your dedicated study time. Pathoma-gives great explanations on how and why the pathology of certain diseases is the way it is which is critical for Step 1
- First Aid condenses complex topics and organizes the information nicely.
- First Aid contained the necessary material and Doctors In Training helped me develop an approach, which was probably the most essential component. U-World was great for assessing knowledge gaps and practicing application of what you know. It gave a window to how a given topic can be approached by a test maker and wrapped within a question stem.
- First Aid covered the most high yield topics
- First Aid covers the high yield topics and is a good general review material. Goljan lectures were nice to listen to while exercising or doing other activities. Pathoma is especially helpful if used throughout

- the year by watching the lectures for topics that are being covered in class. Pathoma is probably a little more detailed than required for Step 1 on some topics.
- First Aid- essential but not complete. Supplement with another book like Kaplan review
  - First aid had exactly what was needed with no extra fluff.
  - First Aid has a lot of high yield topics and does a great job with pharmacology
  - First aid has all basic info and Pathoma explains pathology very clearly.
  - First aid has all the details you need, the problem is it doesn't explain much. UWorld gives awesome explanations
  - First Aid has almost everything needed for the exam, but Doctors in Training helped to fill in the spaces that First Aid did not cover. Picmonic is a great resource for visual learners like myself. Pathoma has always been a great pathology resource because of the high yield facts and easy to follow lectures.
  - First Aid has been doing this for so many years that they have it down pretty good as to what is going to be on the test. Pharmacology flash cards (Lange) were great at presentations and presenting high yield facts. I would compare them with First Aid but it was nice to stare at a different type of paper other than a book.
  - First Aid- is a must
  - First Aid is a must have although it should not be the only resource used as it is missing some information. The Goljan review book was helpful for me both during classes and in studying to help me understand material I did not fully understand since it is more specific than First Aid and some notes.
  - First Aid is concise while also comprehensive. Pathoma videos helped create visual mnemonics for more complex pathology and some normal physiology.
  - First Aid is great because of everything it contains but use it as a reference for learning. Staring at a chapter for an hour did nothing for me. Doing Uworld questions and going back to first aid to learn why I got it wrong was the most beneficial for me
  - First Aid is helpful to go through a few times to nail down the basics
  - First Aid is pretty indispensable as far as a concise overview of the must know information. Probably best if used with some sort of supplement since it doesn't provide a lot of explanation - this can often be accomplished with a simple Google search though for the areas you don't understand.
  - First Aid is the only actual textbook you need
  - First Aid is the single most effective book for studying for Step 1 that I was able to find. I looked at a few other options as well, but ultimately chose FA and was glad that I did. Regardless of how I actually performed on the exam, I didn't feel completely blind-sided by any question (to which I give credit to both First Aid and our first two years of lecture, as they both played a huge role in this). The Biochemistry and Microcards were extremely valuable. They really simplified very diverse topics and did a good job targeting important concepts Pathoma was very useful as well, reinforcing ideas laid out in first aid but in a "study-guide" format.
  - First Aid is undoubtedly the bible. It is the densest and the highest yield board review book. Pathoma with online lectures helps explain the pathophysiology extremely well.
  - First Aid provides a good framework and USMLE world questions give both self-assessment with excellent feedback on their questions.
  - First Aid really hits on the stuff you're likely to see on the test.
  - First Aid should be your Bible; any other resources are merely to clarify material or, if there is time, continue to add depth to your knowledge. You can easily get overwhelmed with material.
  - First Aid was a great outline and the q banks helped fill in the holes.
  - First aid was concise and very high yield
  - First Aid was concise yet detailed with useful pneumonics
  - First Aid was nice because it covered everything succinctly.
  - First Aid was very helpful in covering the high yield concepts.

- First Aid, and the First Aid General Principles and Basic Sciences books were very well organized and as concise as possible. The many diagrams/charts were applicable. First Aid also has a rapid review that was beneficial.
- First Aid: Useful for reference but it wasn't my primary resource for studying Pathoma: great overview of all systems. Perfect for quickly reviewing deficient areas Sketchymicro.com: Thorough and easy way to learn microbiology
- Goljan lectures are great to listen to while still in school (and while studying for Step1 specifically) because he has a great way of making things understandable and really helps solidify concepts we learn throughout 2nd year First Aid is thorough, but also keeps things simple.. good diagrams/tables/charts for review
- NBME exams
- Pathoma and First Aid were the best
- Pathoma is a fabulous pathology review, but it is not the only pathology review you should use. First aid is a must have.
- Pathoma is a great review course, but also a good review book. The book is set up as an outline that makes it easy to follow and put information in easy to remember groups.
- Pathoma is the thing to use throughout the year for basic understanding. DIT is necessary for the desiccated time
- Pathoma- very concise. Videos explained concepts behind a lot of the pathology
- Pathoma was a great review, it provides a good way of thinking about things so they are easier to remember.
- Pathoma, first aid and U-world. Wouldn't waste my time on anything else.
- Patrons was great for reviewing pathology and going through during second year. First aid was useful as a general overview of everything. Goljan was good for more in depth pathology review.
- Sketchy micro easily got me all the micro points on the exam. The videos are funny and actually seemed like a break when I watched them. Pathoma was incredibly helpful to watch when I could not do work anymore. It was really helpful for me to confirm my knowledge or fill in gaps but can be really dense sometimes to use as first line learning. First aid is great, gold standard but I was not able to just sit and read it. I annotated it and reviewed it a few days before so that was good. I also rented a pharm review book from the library and it was helpful for just driving home some concepts of pharm that I needed.
- The books did a good job of covering all the material in a condensed format, DIT was helpful in terms of keeping me on track to make it all the way through the material, and Pathoma was a nice review of the high yield information on the test.
- The most thorough reviews were the most helpful. The "high-yield" reviews like First Aid and others were good as a re-introduction to the subjects before digging deeper into them in the BRS and Goljan review.
- They are simply the best resources. First Aid has everything you need to know, and Dr Sattar gives you the information that is most high yield with Pathoma.
- They hit on the main points and either helped me remember what I had learned about a given topic or made me realize that the information given wasn't enough and that I need to study a topic more because I didn't understand it well.
- USMLE world was very similar style to the Step 1 questions. Also, the First aid for USMLE step 1 was very helpful to me, i thought it covered almost everything on my exam.
- U-world
- U-world and first aid are most helpful. BRS physiology was excellent for review of difficult organ systems. Goljan path book helped review somewhat. Micro flash cards and pharm flash cards are also helpful.
- U-world questions helped point out weaknesses and were more thorough than other resources
- U-world questions made you make sure you really understood the material, and first aid was concise, great pictures and helpful memory tips

**6. For board review courses (either live or online), please comment why the course was most useful.**

- Because Pathoma was a lecture series, it emphasized info that I might have overlooked in First Aid, and it presented a different point of view on many topics that was more thorough and better to understand than First Aid
- DIT - I appreciated the structure DIT offered. Although they for the most part do just walk you (often verbatim) through First Aid, I don't think I would have been as focused simply sitting down with First Aid. They also sometimes offer alternative ways to think about or remember things and have little quizzes that force you to repeatedly review. Goljan lectures - Great to listen to anytime you need to bust outside and walk or exercise. He hits a lot of important stuff, pulls things together and is usually good for a laugh.
- DIT built review into the program and emphasized which concepts were most important, which was very helpful
- DIT constantly quizzes you over old and new information which was the best part of the course.
- DIT gave me a structured method of getting through First Aid for the first time.
- DIT helped keep me from falling behind in my schedule. It also gave the highest yield information.
- DIT incorporated a schedule and had multiple review questions with entertaining videos to keep attention.
- DIT instructors were funny enough that I didn't fall asleep listening to lectures. Which was important when I was watching 8 hours of lectures a day
- DIT is boring, so be prepared. I used it for one day then stopped using it. I read through it a bit and didn't see anything that was of use.
- DIT is useful because it is well structured and thorough.
- DIT- only good to help keep a good schedule and good for review of complex topics
- DIT works great for laying everything out in an engaging way. It connects the pieces together and forces you to remember what you reviewed from previous lectures.
- Doctor in Training walked me through the important materials efficiently.
- Doctors in Training- Comprehensive review covering material not covered in class. Very straightforward in what is tested and what is not. Keeps you on track. Would recommend to anyone trying to get a high score. UWORLD and FA are obviously the standard
- Doctors in Training is a great resource. They are not as fine tuned as First Aid but they do fill in the gaps that First Aid doesn't cover. They have a great way of explaining how you can think through certain problems and help make you recall information. Kaplan Online just lists facts and might as well be an extended First Aid. I would honestly say its a waste of money.
- Doctors in Training videos expanded upon and supplemented First Aid well, and allowed for more active learning than simply reading through First Aid.
- Doctor's in Training was a good way for me to force myself to get through First Aid the first time. Some of the information was extraneous but it was a helpful way to review the information initially.
- Doctors in Training was a waste of money. Study first aid on your own if you have the motivation
- Doctors in Training was concise, their videos were brief, and their presentation was memorable. They were deft at making a topic stick and constructing their video material around the attention span of the viewer. Topics designated as high yield were deconstructed into exercises, like Lewis notes, and the student was often challenged to recall the information. That was helpful.
- Doctors in Training was most useful because it helps get through your first pass of First Aid quickly
- Doctors in Training: I used it to provide a broad overview of all topics during the first couple weeks of studying. I thought it was good for that purpose but I didn't go very in depth with it.
- Doctors-in-Training covered a wide variety of topics and helped point out which things may be more important than others
- Goljan explains concepts wonderful. Helped to understand material instead of memorizing
- Goljan lectures are good for listening to when you're working out or driving, etc. He gives some really good explanations on things and ties in different areas together instead of just pathology.

- I did Kaplan review courses and they were helpful.
- I listened to Goljan when I could (in the car, on walks, while cleaning my apartment) and, like Pathoma, it was a great way to reinforce and commit info to memory and fill in gaps.
- Not useful at all unless it's Pathoma
- Pathoma - great bridge into the pathology sections of First Aid. Offers really nice explanations that utilize concepts to help memorize the pathologic findings. Very useful for the M2 cores as well. DIT - lectures are a good supplement for First Aid; forces you to memorize some details that you may not have otherwise. I didn't think the extra information that DIT had in its study guide was very high yield.
- Pathoma provided a very concise and very easy to understand overview of many elements of pathology. It connected many areas and focused on diseases.
- Pathoma was a great pathology review. The lectures and textbook are both very concise. The lecturer provides useful ways to think about and remember difficult topics.

**7. For question banks, please comment why the question bank was most useful.**

- Feedback and explanations from U-world were really helpful
- I felt U-world had good explanations for questions and covered most of the material that showed up on the NBME tests... I felt that the actual Step1 exam was much more difficult than would be indicated by the NBME/USMLE.org exams. I haven't received my USMLE score yet, but I would feel lucky to score within 20 points of my last 2 NBME exams
- I used Kaplan during the year and did as many questions as I could to reinforce what we were doing in class. I liked this because I was able to use the questions to LEARN and identify patterns within a subject. I used the USMLE world Q-bank to TEST myself and get an idea of where I was at. I only ever used 46 question random testlets with U-world. Additionally I bought two physical books of questions (one Kaplan and one that follows first aid). I used these physical question books starting over spring break to just fill in. These were good for learning and testing and were really great when I was traveling, wanted to sit outside/on the couch, or when my eyes could not look at a screen anymore. I'm a huge proponent of limiting my screen time.
- Need to do either Kaplan or Rx during the year and U-world during dedicated
- plenty of questions, good quality
- Practice questions are the best way to learn, especially since U-world explanations are so detailed.
- Practice reading and interpreting board-style questions.
- Q-bank gives very detailed answers. I used this as review and a learning tool. Spend time learning what you get wrong and you will eventually get smarter, even if you don't feel like you are.
- Q's much like the test
- Questions are the best way I learn and remember what I learn so qbank was good obviously because it had so many.
- Realistic questions from U-world. Kaplan not as much- often focused on memorization of minutiae/trivia
- The format of USMLE World Question Bank is exactly the same as the real exam. The questions are a little harder than the real ones and they are all very well explained.
- The most helpful aspect of U-world was it's comprehensive question information. Wrong answers were explained and topics were thoroughly reviewed.
- The USMLE question bank was useful because it provides an explanation for each question which helps you continue to review as you are studying new material.
- The U-world Q Bank was tremendously more useful than the Kaplan Q Bank. The Kaplan Q Bank Did not offer easily accessible explanations to why each answer option was incorrect, while the U-world Q bank did. Essentially, in a sample question that had five potential answer options, you got five full explanations, unlike Kaplan.
- U world- many questions (2000+) and good explanations of the correct and incorrect answers.
- USMLE and NBME were exactly like the exams. I felt very comfortable during the test.
- USMLE Q bank only because I used it most.



- USMLE World - only q-bank I tried so I can't compare it to anything. But it offered challenging questions with excellent explanations for both the right and wrong answers. Can learn a lot just from reading through those.
- USMLE World asks very difficult questions but provides great feedback. Some material is extraneous but overall it is an essential resource.
- USMLE World has an extensive question bank with very thorough explanations.
- USMLE World is a must. I felt many of my actual questions from Step 1 were worded similarly to U-world.
- USMLE World question bank is a must-have as it lets you go through over 2,000 boards-style questions and gives full explanations. I learned most of the information I didn't know by using the question bank.
- USMLE World questions were very similar to actual test questions. Use them and try to get through each question at least twice (especially ones you answered incorrectly).
- USMLE World was the only question bank I used and I thought it included almost all relevant subjects with plenty of questions. I got through all the questions but not until my last week of studying
- USMLE-Rx is great early on in your studying because its explanations correspond with First Aid and give you page numbers. However, you cannot beat U-world as far as questions go. You should start U-world no later than 4 weeks before the test and try to get as much out of it as possible.
- USMLE-Rx was nice to do with core during the year. Core always spends an excessive amount of time on pointless material because a director thinks it's interesting or something (looking at you excessive number of seizure and transfusion lectures) and Rx shows you what is actually important for boards.
- USMLE World was by far the best representation of boards questions
- U-world allows you to see why the other answer choices are wrong and gives a thorough explanation of the correct response. You can select to do only the questions you missed the first time which is nice.
- U-world is incredible, the level of thinking for most of the questions was comparable to the actual test. The test is a little more vague at times but U-world is great for preparation for multilevel thinking I did the NBME online tests. I thought they were great. The vignettes were overall shorter than what's on the actual test but as far as getting used to taking a timed test, it was helpful. Their feedback is extremely useful as well.
- U-world is the best resource. About 1/3 of my actual test questions were literally the same or very similar to these questions.
- U-world Q bank is essential to complete before Step 1 as it quizzes the information you've studied in First Aid, and it provides explanations for all 2000+ questions.
- U-world Q-bank was a great way to not only learn new material but to prepare for the testing format, to get used to the time increment given for questions and to learn how to think critically for the exam. I was happily surprised at exam time that the test format resembled the Q-bank format exactly.
- U-world - takes longer than you think, so start early if you can Kaplan- detailed questions sometimes but definitely worth doing. Great supplementation to U-world if you have time because it helps get the extra points not covered in FA or U-world
- U-world was the most useful. I also used First Aid Rx throughout the year and especially early in my studying for boards to get more questions. The questions are more valuable the first time you go through them. I recognized the questions too much when I repeated some of them.
- U-world: Very similar (perhaps even a little more challenging) than my real test. I saved it for my studying after school got out and barely made it through once. I'm still torn on whether I think it'd be better to use it some throughout the year versus saving it for the last month. I think it is ultimately a learning rather than assessment tool. Whether it's U-world or not, I think there's probably some benefit to going through some type of boards-style questions (maybe Exam Master or a question book if you don't want to fully commit to something like Kaplan) before your dedicated study time so you know generally what to expect. NBME practice exams: I took two during my dedicated study

time - one a couple weeks into studying and one a week before my test. Unlike U-world, these are for assessment rather than learning.

- U-world -every med student must use it. I got the six month but actually recommend saving a little money and doing the 3 month instead. Rx-used during cores and OK for giving another perspective on first aid but definitely not enough by itself to do well on the test
- U-world the best by a mile, or at least a kilometer. I used Rx during the year, and tried to go thru all the questions over each organ system after we covered the system in class. I rarely got them all done, but I thought this was helpful, and helped solidify the major concepts and get used to the style of USMLE questions. But Rx was far inferior to U-world.

## **8. How did you decide on a date range to take the exam?**

- 5 weeks from the end of school.
- 6 weeks after m2 so I could have a 1 wk break
- Advice from previous students was the primary reason I chose to take it 6 weeks out after the M2 year. This was the perfect amount of time
- Based in classmates' preparation times and my schedule during the summer
- By the advice of people who'd already taken the test, most of whom recommended taking it earlier than you might think you'd want to --> five weeks of studying.
- Counted 5 weeks and a day from when we got out and I would start studying. Most upperclassmen said 5 weeks was a good time block.
- Counted out 35 days of studying and added in breaks where I needed/wanted them.
- Didn't want to drive myself crazy by studying. Studied 6 weeks but wish I would have taken it a week earlier
- Didn't want to study longer than 6 weeks
- Gave myself five weeks, but probably could have done it in less.
- I chose the time that would give me the longest amount of break time post-test.
- I freaked out and pushed my date back at the last minute. I would've been fine only studying five weeks. It was a bad idea.
- I had 37 days to prepare for the exam. I attended the lunch time presentations about Step 1 during our second year. One of the larger determinants was the student panel that gave a presentation and made it clear that taking too much time was detrimental to board scores.
- I heard 4-5 weeks was sufficient time from older students.
- I heard that 35-37 days was the optimal amount of time.
- I knew that I took more time to get material down compared to classmates so I added time onto the 35 days that was recommended
- I studied for 5.5 weeks and thought that it was a good time frame. You can get burned out if you go longer and you risk not covering enough if you go much shorter.
- I took the exam as early as possible mainly because of my own study habits. Having the shorter period, about five weeks, gave me no other choice but to make my studying as efficient as possible, I also wanted some vacation time.
- I took the exam on the 17th and have myself 6 weeks. I liked this because giving myself that extra week was what I factored into my weekend being "free" to really redux each question I had take in the preceding week. I felt like I really understood why I got each question right and wrong and have myself some time before reviewing testlets that I took. It's really easy to just skim over reviewing questions right after you take practice sections
- I wanted 6 full weeks to study for the test because I studied in three blocks of two weeks. I left a few extra days in there in case of emergencies or days off.
- I wanted about 5-6 weeks to study, and by the time I was able to schedule my exam, there were only a couple options within that time frame
- I wanted to take it early and knew that after about 5 weeks, my ability to study effectively would decrease based on past experiences and feedback from previous classes.

- Past students said 35 solid days of studying. I scheduled 38 days after the first Monday of Summer so I could have a few break days.
- Talking to current M3s, many said 30-35 days was about the right amount of time to study. I chose 35 days, but I probably could have stretched it to 37 or 38 days, but I wouldn't go longer than that.
- The research that was presented to us in class suggested that scores peak around 5 weeks of studying. Also, talking to upper classmen revealed that most that took longer than that felt that they were getting burned out or missed their peak, and studying less than that they felt underprepared.
- The schedule I made
- Tried to find a balance between my perceived attention span and my desire for a vacation
- Tried to take it earlier but they had no spots. I think my score was actually lower because I took the exam late and stopped studying.

**8a. Did you have difficulty getting your preferred examination date?**

Yes: 9                      No: 90

**8b. Please estimate the amount of time (in hours) that you studied**

	Individually	Small Group
Avg	67.32	6.14
Min	0	0
Max	128	84
N	71	6

**9. Did you feel prepared for Step 1?**

Yes: 76                      No: 24

*If No, the following comments were made:*

- Did not do enough practice questions
- Didn't give myself enough time.
- I did a good job preparing myself, but UNMC does not do a good job when it comes to preparing for boards.
- I don't think anyone every really feels prepared for it; you just have to prepare as best as you can with the time you put forth and trust your work.
- I feel that I still have a lot of materials to cover.
- I felt like a lot of the test questions were beyond the scope or were just not covered by the review courses and or book.
- I really didn't stick to my study plan. I had no time to do practice questions because of this, probably failed.
- I struggled throughout the school year and didn't feel like I had mastery of many of the subjects. The time allowed to prep for Step 1 was sufficient to review, but not to learn the material. I felt that I spent the first portion of my study time learning how to study for Step 1 and not until it was too late did I feel I knew how and what to study. If I had to take the exam again and study again, I feel I would do so differently and be better prepared.
- I struggled to pull together all of the information I had studied to answer the 2nd and 3rd order questions.
- I will preface this statement with saying I have not yet received my results, but I felt utterly unprepared for step one. The material covered was largely not emphasized in my first year especially. Particularly, the biochemistry portion I feel was not adequately addressed in core. Lysosomal and glycogen storage diseases as well as congenital metabolic disorders and vitamin deficiencies in correlation with clinical presentations were massive topics in studying and I feel as if they were only briefly mentioned in passing in core. I desire our university's future to be filled with students who are better prepared for these topics than I felt and would recommend highly focusing the biochemistry core more largely on topics covered in first aid and recognition rather than amino acid numbers and

- basic chemistry. In addition, I felt that core test questions were exceptionally easy compared to USMLE vignettes. I felt I performed rather well in the first two years of core and had hoped to be acquiring test taking abilities that would serve me well for the exam however I felt as if I was sadly mistaken. The core question difficulty was nowhere near as difficult as USMLE questions. Although I'm sure there are levels of didactic teaching I'm unaware of in testing here at UNMC, it feels like a disservice to not have had more difficult core questions on our examinations second year. I believe I had a false sense of confidence that my core performance would carry into taking step one and it would be a disservice to continue to let us get by with such straightforward questioning on our examinations. I want few things more than success for our students here at UNMC. I pray this feedback will be considered in revising the curriculum not from a heart of bitterness but from a desire to improve. Thank you so much for the opportunity to yield feedback to impact our future.
- Our tests and lectures were nothing like the test. I took the test with Creighton kids and in between the testlets they talked about how their teachers had covered questions similar. I felt left out to dry. I learned more from DIT than the past two years.
  - Personal circumstances hindered my studying so I did not feel prepared going in.
  - The USMLE questions caught me off guard. They were very much more big-picture integration than I had been led to believe by w bank questions or student feedback.
  - Too much stuff, and I didn't feel confident.

**10. Please make additional comments about the preparation and examination process that would be helpful to next year's students.**

- "Buzzwords" are necessary to learn, but they aren't quite as high yield as you might think. They like to describe the buzzword scenarios a lot more than actually give the word itself. Regardless of how many times you read through First Aid or do practice questions, there are still going to be questions on the exam that you haven't seen before. So expect it and don't get thrown off by it on test day.
- Biochem never really comes up again in the M2 year. I would consider reviewing that entire section of First Aid over Christmas break or spring break so you have at least seen the information. I ended up buying pharm and micro flashcards after class ended and wish I would have gotten them at the beginning of the year and used them during the year when we were covering those topics.
- Disregard what your professors say is important. They are wrong. Pay attention to what First Aid, Uworld, and Pathoma spends time on. Pathoma during the year is your saving grace. Bad lecturer today? No worries, just watch the 10 minute video on Pathoma and you'll be ahead of your classmates.
- Don't freak out about studying during the school year. There really is plenty of time after classes are done.
- Don't worry about studying till after the cores are over, just study hard for the regular core material. Would maybe be helpful to review pertinent microbiology to each core throughout the year either in the curriculum or on your own, but definitely not necessary.
- Either do not give yourself more than 6 weeks to study or schedule in some days off during your study time. After 5 1/2 weeks I was out of motivation and felt like I was forgetting more than I was learning in the last few days before my test.
- HIGHLY recommend studying with a partner
- I honestly felt that going over questions was the best way to learn the material. For me, reading or watching videos was only somewhat helpful, but answering questions was more active and useful.
- I took 2 practice exams (4 hours in length) from the NMBE website. I felt that they were confidence boosters. But the actual exam was much more difficult than these practice tests!
- I wish I would have done practice questions throughout the year, doing questions as they pertained to each core. I think I would have been more comfortable pulling information together. Though I was burning out by the 5th week of studying, I still felt overwhelmed by the material I realized I still didn't have a good grasp on.
- I would start using first aid during the core that you have it at the beginning of the 2nd year. I did that at the end and it seemed to help.

- I would suggest looking over biochem and microbiology throughout 2nd year because they are old topics from M1 year. Pick a couple pages and memorize them for that week. You'll probably forget by May but you'll pick it back up much faster. I learned you can't study micro or biochem enough. Just glance through each section as you are going through them during M2 year. I had to study my tail off in M2 year (for cores) so I didn't have time to study extra boards stuff but I still glanced in First Aid just to see what was expected of us by boards that was not being covered in class. You need to look at every little detail in First Aid. Every word matters. Naturally, you are going to overlook something every time you go through a section and think it's brand new the next time, but just make sure you look at the words that seem hidden.
- If I had stuck to my schedule, two months of time after the M2 cores finished would have been a great and plentiful time slot to study.
- I'm sure you know by now, but there's only so much you can study in one day. Keep a normal sleep schedule and don't forget to take it easy in the evening.
- I felt prepared and then I took the exam and it felt like I didn't know anything so students should be aware that it happens. You study a lot and then when you take the test you have to give it your best "guess" which is actually informed and probably right but I wasn't used to not knowing the answer for sure.
- It is essential that you focus on the boards relevant material during the year and try to learn it. Most of what they teach is not boards applicable, but follow along with first aid to understand which topics will be the most important for the test. Also realize that UNMC does not cover a lot of the topics on the test, you will need to spend time on these topics to have any sort of chance at getting a high score.
- Just get through the school year and don't be freaked out when you come across stuff you've never heard of before when studying for boards. You will get through everything and remember it better than you think. Remember that professors are teaching for their exam. Don't listen to anything the administration has to tell you about how you're going to do on boards based on their statistics. Their numbers apply to the class as a whole and not necessarily you as an individual. Don't let how you do in school change your confidence by either making you over/under confident. This is unlike any test you've ever taken. Core exams are NOTHING like boards. They serve a different purpose.
- Keep it in perspective and just do your best. It was easy to tip the scale, becoming very anxious and stressed out. Take comfort in your work ethic and trust in the process.
- Know thy self before taking others advice to heart. Make a schedule that works for you and study in a way that works for you. Ignore what other people are doing and how well they claim they are doing. Do tons of questions, read through first aid (multiple times, ideally), and only use other resources if you have time and are weak in that subject area.
- Know yourself. Know when you need to exercise, when you need a break, who helps make yourself better and who doesn't. Balance is hard, fleeting at times, but gets easier with effort and consistency. Build good habits. Don't forget to call your parents. Spend what little time you will have with those you love.
- Minimize your resources and get the most out of them. Follow along in class with the Goljan lectures and get through them at least once before school gets out.
- Practice questions... practice questions... practice questions...
- Prepare early, UNMC's curriculum is scattered and unstructured. It does not provide adequate board review. Get FA at the beginning of year two and prepare early and cover high yield concepts that are not taught or barely touched on. Also, don't be surprised if there are a lot of concepts on the real exam that aren't even mentioned in FA. FA isn't as high yield as people say, it's more of an outline. However, if you know FA + UWORLD, you probably can at least get an average score.
- Review pharm all year long.
- Schedule time in for breaks or if something comes up then you aren't stressed about losing a few hours due to something else happening in your life that needs attention. Don't worry about comparing how to study or how much. Different things work for different people.

- Schedule your exam early so that you have no issues getting your desired date. I am a big supporter of trying to set some part of your day aside to keep yourself sane-- exercise, spend time with a significant other/spouse, cook yourself dinner, etc. I cannot stress enough: this is a marathon, not a sprint. Get enough sleep, eat well, hydrate... take care of your body. When you get anxious, take deep breaths and remember that if you put in the time and effort things will be just fine.
- Set a goal score and base your study schedule off how hard you think you will have to study to get that score. Then just make sure you stick to your schedule every day. If you get behind one day, make it up the next. Don't slack off. Also, make sure you do as many practice questions as possible.
- Start early, do many, many questions, DIT is wonderful. 5 weeks is a great amount of time to study specifically for step.
- Start the first day of M2 year, don't wait until January, spring break, or May.
- Start using First Aid as early as possible during the M1 and M2 years. Start doing questions from McGoogan or another Q bank as early as possible during M1/M2 years. Focus on pharmacology and microbiology and frequently refresh on these topics. Use Pathoma for cores and for review.
- Take full day breaks because the last couple weeks gets very hard to focus. Take a few practice exams.
- Take it earlier than you think you need to. I wish I'd have taken it not much more than 5 weeks after core. I feel like I lost a lot that last week
- The best advice I have is to get through all of the information in a way that works for you. You can't worry about what other people are doing - just pick some method and stick with it.
- The curriculum of the second year ideally should be much more tailored to preparing students for this test. I felt that some of the areas in First Aid were largely ignored during the second year core classes, and we spent quite a bit of time on areas that were way beyond the required information for step 1.
- The test is supposed to be difficult no matter how prepared you are. Expect to see several questions per section that you are unfamiliar with.
- This may seem a little ridiculous but- I rented an office downtown from after spring break until my test date (I negotiated to about \$100 per month including internet and parking, fully furnished). The importance of this isn't to encourage people to rent offices but to make sure they have a place that is quiet, where they are comfortable, and where they can separate studying from life. It was very important to me to have a reason to get up, get dressed. I left my books at the office and would come home and make sure to get 8 hours of sleep
- Use firecracker from the beginning of M1 year to make it less of a burden of memorization versus application.
- Using the scheduling tools like CramFighter or one offered by DIT, in my opinion, is an absolutely fantastic tool that is underutilized. It sets a schedule for you, to prevent getting hung up on difficult topics that can easily swallow up a large portion of your study time. It helped my stay on track and keep my cool if only by giving me peace of mind that I would get through everything I wanted to by the test day if I followed the schedule. It took the guess work out of timing, which is a huge stress in this case, for myself at least.
- U-World questions can be very hard. Some were a lot harder than what was on the actual exam. Don't get discouraged by missing a few U-World questions.
- Would have started earlier. Highly recommend you use First Aid and Pathoma throughout second year.
- You should have lecturers focus their lectures on material Step 1 covers instead of their certain type of research or specialty. I felt I learned everything on the test on my own.