

USMLE Prep Strategies

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The following are suggestions and opinions of 2 UH students who graduated from UH in 2015 and both got scores of 240-260 in USMLE.

For Step 1,

I think the things that everyone MUST HAVE is:

1) **USMLE World Question Bank**: This is not a text book. It's a question bank (online mondaï shuu) that EVERYONE in the U.S. gets. Do it TWICE. The best way to study for step 1 is doing as many questions as possible!!

- Also, addition to the question bank, you can buy 2 Assessment Exams which I highly recommend (They are practice exams that give you a score prediction, it's pretty accurate) https://www.uworld.com/step1/step1_qbank.aspx

2) **First Aid 201x**: Get the newest edition (comes out every year). EVERYONE buys this book too http://www.amazon.com/First-Aid-USMLE-Step-2016/dp/1259587371/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1450506781&sr=8-2&keywords=first+aid

Another good resource for pathology is:

Pathoma

<http://www.pathoma.com/>

If you buy this you get access to a book and video lecture series. Very simple and good resource.

Others:

- **Kaplan Question bank**: Again this is an online question bank. Some people do this if they want to do more question, but it is not as good as USMLE World.

For Step 2CK:

1) **USMLE World Question Bank Step 2CK**: Just like Step 1, everyone does the USMLE World Question Bank

https://www.uworld.com/Step2CK/Step2CK_qbank.aspx

Other than that, there is no 1 book that is best for step 2. Popular ones are:

- 1) First Aid Step 2 (newest edition)
- 2) Master the Boards Step 2 (I used this one).
http://www.amazon.com/Master-Boards-USMLE-Step-CK/dp/162523113X/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1450507016&sr=8-1&keywords=master+the+boards+step+2

For Step 2CS

- 1) **First Aid Step 2 CS**: I used this one, and it is very popular.
http://www.amazon.com/First-Aid-USMLE-Step-Fifth/dp/0071804269/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1450507098&sr=8-1&keywords=first+aid+usmle+step+2+cs
- 2) **USMLE World Question Bank Step 2CK**.
https://www.uworld.com/Step2CS/Step2CS_cs.aspx

For Japanese students, I suggest they only use a few resources (First Aid + USMLE World) instead of trying to learn from too many resources.

With regards to studying for USMLE step examinations, it is really broken down into 3 major parts, which I utilized different resources. R and I utilized roughly the same books and question banks, so I will try to explain what we used, the rationale, and the effectiveness of respective resources.

Step 1:

Question Banks

- 1) **USMLE World QBank** - this is by and far the best question "bank" available. The questions, by consensus, the most consistent and accurate in terms of level of difficulty. There are approximately 2000 questions across all specialties. R and I went through this question bank 2 times through. Of note the USMLE World Qbank can also be purchased with 2 simulated exams, which you should absolutely purchase and utilize because simulating an actual exam is very important.
- 2) **NBME examinations** - These are simulated exams produced by the NBME and therefore are the "closest" to the real questions on the exam. In fact, some people have said that a few questions (only a handful) have been the same question reused on their actual examination or a familiar picture/pathologic specimen was shown on their actual test that they had already seen on the practice NBME. Is a bit costly per exam, but well worth the price.
*** Note neither of the practice exams is as long as the actual exam. So R and I would either do 1 practice test and several extra blocks or sometimes take two NBME's back to back to simulate an accurate length of exam
- 3) **Kaplan USMLE Question Bank**: also an excellent question bank. R and I did these questions by organ systems to learn the material first (along with reading USMLE Step 1 First Aid). These questions focus on more minutiae, which is good and bad. The good is the breadth appears to be

greater and the level of detail seems to be more nit-picky, but also it will have questions that are outside of the "bread-and-butter" cases. If you have to choose between this and USMLE World for time or budgetary constraints, USMLE world is by far the best

4) **Extra questions**: there are other qbanks and question resources such as **USMLE Rx, First Aid Q&A, First Aid Cases**, which are also useful, but I think should be utilized as ancillary qbanks (question banks) if you have absolutely extra time and have completed the above resources.

Books:

1) **First Aid for USMLE Step 1**: BY FAR THE MOST USEFUL BOOK. Memorize this book cover to cover. Almost every bread and butter question will have the answers in this, but it is in bullet point format which some people don't like. It is updated every year so buy the latest version.

2) **Kaplan Review for USMLE**: Similar to first aid, but in Kaplan format, but it is included usually when you buy Kaplan qbank. Usually memorizing step 1 takes all the time

3) **Step 1 secrets**. I think this is a great read. Easy to read case vignettes with very critical clinical pearls which are good for the exam.

Utilizing these resources alone should be more than sufficient to do well on step 1. Additionally, doing questions on a daily basis will take lots of time. To give you an idea, R and I, while doing qbank averaged only about 80-120 questions per day because of reading, annotating, and researching pathophysiology or pharmacological principles, etc related to a question we might have gotten wrong.

If you have questions about step 2 or 3, I can write you again, but step 1 is usually the biggest hurdle.
