

General Guidelines on Constructing a Study Schedule for USMLE Step 1

The Order of Subjects:

The general strategy should be to study longer-term memory subjects early and shorter-term memory subjects late. This will vary among students, but a possible sequence is:

Physiology
Pathology
Behavioral Science
Day Off
Microbiology/Immunology
Pharmacology
Day Off
Biochemistry
Neuroanatomy, gross/embryo/cell/histo
Wrap-up days (re-review Step-Up)
Take USMLE Step I

Order for Systems Schedule:

Basic Concepts / General
Endocrine
Nervous
Cardiovascular
Respiratory
Renal
GI
Musculoskeletal
Reproductive
Heme/Lymph
Wrap-up days

Suggested daily schedule:

8-12 Study
12-1 Lunch
1-5 Study
5-8 Exercise, dinner, errands, phone calls
8-10 (or 11) Questions

Note: Evening questions should be done from a variety of sources. Rotate the question sources using electronic question banks more often. Do questions randomly, and do not link them to what you studied during the day. Initially, do not time yourself, but do the questions to learn and to spend time with the explanations.

USMLE Sample Exam (download from USMLE.org):

Do it timed and simulated (150 questions in 3 hours) 3-4 days before the actual USMLE. (Do it in the evening questions time slot, or early in the morning and shift your study day forward.) Take it as it counts; then review it 2-3 times in the next few days to be completely comfortable with the screens, the way questions are posed, and to figure out why you missed what you missed.

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Assumption:

28 total days available, including the day before USMLE.
If you have greater or fewer days, adjust the schedule accordingly.
(For example, if you have 31 days, and 1/2 day to Behavioral Science,
1/2 day to Gross/Embryo, 1 day off and 1 day to wrap up.)

General apportioning of days:

Wrap-up (review in Step-Up) = 2-3 days before your exam
Days off (schedule as rewards for doing your work) = 1-2 days (depending on wrap-up)
Total full study days (excluding wrap-up and days off) = 24 days

Allocation of days by subject:

Pathology = 4 days
Physiology = 4 days
Pharmacology = 4 days
Microbiology/Immunology = 4 days
Biochemistry = 3 days
Behavioral Science = 1.5 days
Gross/Embryo/Cell/Histo = 1.5 days
Neuroanatomy = 2 days

Systems Schedule:

Nervous = 3.5 days
Cardiovascular = 3 days
Respiratory = 2.5 days
GI = 2 days
Renal = 2.5 days
Endocrine = 2.5 days
Reproductive = 2 days
Musculoskeletal = 2 days
Heme / Lymph = 2 days
Basic Concepts / General = 2 days

Note: A “day” for each subject means an 8-hour day per the reverse side.
An “hour” means a full hour with 5-minute breathers as needed.
In addition, you will do 2 hours of questions daily.

Disclaimer: This is a recommended schedule for USMLE Step 1 preparation and it may not be suitable for all individuals.