

Board Prep Advice

You are in training for test day— your studying should mimic the actual test day.

- Study in one-hour blocks, take 5-8 minute breaks between study blocks.
- Do not drink, eat or take bathroom breaks during your one-hour study blocks—you won't be allowed to do so on test day.
- Do not listen to music or TV while studying. You may even consider wearing ear plugs or headphones (most test centers do not allow you to wear ear plugs, but will provide you with headphones).
- Exercise—at least once a day
- Eat healthy—avoid sugars and simple carbs. Get in the habit of eating snacks every hour, rather than a mid-day meal—you will not be eating lunch on the day of the exam.
- Do one full-length practice test the week before the exam. Assimilate the practice day to be as close to the real day as possible.
- Use the “method” for answering multiple choice questions (Q, S, P)
 - Read the Question stem FIRST
 - Then read/skim the paragraph and summarize the Scene
 - Identify Normals (normal labs, PE, etc.)
 - Formulate a Prediction
 - Then do “ABC’s”
- Whenever you do questions, use your laminated sheet and whatever question method you have devised.
- Question sources
 - Kaplan Q-bank
 - Do sets of 50 questions across all disciplines and topics (unused questions only)
 - Set your goal to score at least 65% on blocks of unused questions (200 questions average) one week before the test. Some blocks will be higher, others lower, just be sure to average your percentage over 200 questions.
 - NMS book
 - Kumar & Klatt Pathology Review (do all of the questions!)
 - Lange's Katzung Pharmacology Review—the questions at end of chapters are good.
- NBME Self-Assessment Services—4 blocks of 50 questions (200 questions total) for \$50. USMLE score report provided immediately upon completion. There is also a free 50 question sample test provided through NBME.
https://external1.nbme.org/nsasweb/servlet/ mesa_main *Recommend doing at least one of these 200 question tests no less than one week before your exam—if you get a passing score (> 182), the next week of studying is icing on the cake; if you do not get a passing score, consider postponing your exam. You may post-poner without a fee one week before your exam date.*
- Familiarize yourself with the NBME test tutorial before exam day. This will allow you to skip through the tutorial (15 minutes) during the board. That time will be added to your break time, so you will now have 60 minutes of break, rather than 45 minutes.

- Study with other students. Quiz and teach one another. If you are unable to study with other medical students, teach your family/friends concepts. It takes time, but if you understand material and can teach it, you can be assured you know it. Again, you are better off knowing less material really well, rather than trying to master it all, and failing at it!
 - Meet with 2-3 students once or twice daily for an hour (no more). Provides a good break from solo studying, rejuvenates your energy, and provides a good forum for covering key topics, e.g. teach each other heart murmurs, draw & explain the cardiac cycle, quiz on bugs & drugs.
- Pace yourself. The day before the boards, do 50 questions beginning at 8:00am, review those questions, and relax. Do not study any more that day—see a movie, go shopping, go for a hike.
- Do not nap during the day during your study month—you need to train your brain to be awake and alert from 8am to 5pm!
- Visit the test center in advance. Ask/assess the following:
 - Allowed to use ear plugs? (most likely not, headphones provided)
 - How many pens and dry erase boards provided? (usually 2 pens, 3 boards and eraser)
 - Locker provided? (usually, yes)
 - Refrigerator or microwave available (most likely not)
 - Number of test stations
 - Other tests offered at site—some sites offer typing tests—try to avoid that!
 - How noisy is the neighborhood, building, etc.
- Have fun on test day! Really.