

Dr. Osborne:

My own sense is that many successful test takers and 'high achievers' ->

1. focused on the core courses over the next few months, using FIRST AID for the boards as a reference for notes & links to other primary sources, i.e. they concentrated on learning the material in the courses, and made sure that they put annotations in FIRST AID FOR THE BOARDS as a primary reference.

2. tended to use an online databank (Kaplan, USMLE world, USMLE Rx, etc) in the last 3 months trying to aim for ~1000 questions completed.

Jessica:

Picking up a couple of board review books and glancing through them would be helpful. Many of my classmates and myself recommended BRS (board review series) physiology and pathology. These are helpful, and would even be beneficial to skim during 2nd year.

Gabe:

Keeping strategies/advice concise is valuable - it's easy to get too much information from too many sources which threatens to "water down" the more important points.

Students should be wary of "peaking" too early in their board prep. When I first began my 3-weeks of studying for the exam I realized how much ground I had to cover in so little time and felt I ought to have arranged for more time. In the end, though, I realized that in those last couple days my stamina for long days at the library waned and the new challenge was holding on to the info I had learned. Many of my classmates reported a similar sensation - we had become anxious to take the test while material was still relatively fresh in our minds.

I agree that First Aid and a question bank should be students' primary tools. There are lots of other books out there - but I would advise students to focus their attention on really digesting one source (e.g. First Aid) before trying to add other sources. Don't spread yourself too thin.

Kevin:

Main goal: memorize everything in First Aid - It's worth getting the current edition (which usually comes out in December/January) since they add info every year

Second goal: Go completely through Qbank or USMLE world. I only used Qbank, but both are probably equally good (I used world for step 2 and was happy with it). I went through questions and answers fairly quickly, writing in details on core information in my copy of First Aid. I would not focus on esoteric questions (i.e. a genetic disease you never heard of) - even though they are in Qbank, they are still a low-yield.

Third goal: Know BRS phys and path. I also reviewed Goljan's rapid review pathology book which I had been reading during 2nd year.

Other tips:

Do not take more than 3 weeks to study. You will hit a wall and peak on your knowledge/energy before the test. I'm sure people re-learn this lesson every year, but an extra week will likely only hurt you.

Start using First Aid now in your courses to know what information is board relevant. I made note-cards that I used for the class and later to review for Step 1.

You can wait to start board prep until the end of your last class. There's a lot of pressure to start early, but I would recommend learning the material in your last course well.

That way you don't have to spend time on it in your board prep.

Get exercise, take breaks, sleep, etc during your board prep. I put in 12+ hour days for the 3 weeks, but took a couple half days to have fun and relax.

Make a study plan before the prep period. This helped me relieve some pre-study anxiety. I figured out how many Qbank questions are in each topic to decide how many days to devote to that area. I left a few days at the end to fill in what I couldn't finish earlier.

Focus on stuff you don't know well. It's much easier to study what you know and are good at but that is not high-yield.

Give yourself extra time for ID. It's high-yield and you haven't seen it in a year.

Biochem is low-yield (thank god!). I didn't spend much time on it and I had only a few questions on the exam. Most were related to diseases (i.e. mechanism of Prader-Willi)

Don't focus on your Qbank cumulative score. My score estimator was way below what I did on the exam.