

Because so many of you have contacted me about studying for Step 1, I am sending the whole class my advice. Please remember this is only one opinion, and this advice may not apply to you. There were people in my class who studied for the boards for a total of 2 weeks and did very well. If you are one of those people, this advice is probably not for you.

**About me:**

Briefly, I am a MS4. I failed Step 1 on the first attempt. My score was 168. In studying for Step 1 the second time, I attended a great board review course and additionally did every question in both the Kaplan Q bank and USMLE WORLD Q bank (about 5000 practice questions). When I retook Step 1, my score was a 230. I subsequently scored a 256 on Step 2. (I share my exact scores only to let you know where I am coming from).

**A basic study approach I would recommend:**

With that being said, I would recommend the following general study approach to Step 1:

***Number one priority:***

START SOONER THAN LATER. If you are like me, I needed way more than 4 weeks to study effectively for the boards.

***Number two priority:***

DO AS MANY PRACTICE QUESTIONS AS YOU CAN!!!! (and understand them of course) I am convinced you will do very well on the cardiovascular section of Step 1 if you do the following:

- 1—do **ALL** of the practice questions untimed for the cardiovascular system in a Q bank
- 2—understand why you got the answer right or wrong to each question
- 3—read the explanation provided for each question
- 4—then refer to your study books (First Aid or BRS physiology etc) if you still need more help understanding the principles highlighted in the questions

I believe this will help you to do much better than if you read everything in first aid or BRS physiology about the cardiovascular system five times and then did only a few of the practice questions. The actual test is practice questions. The Q banks do a great job at identifying the most important topics to cover and making you think critically about those topics (not just read and memorize). If you do the above listed steps for every section, you will have a great understanding of the most important topics covered on Step 1. Let the practice questions guide your study and your reading. This will be the highest yield for your study time.

***Number three priority:***

DO OTHER READING (that is not based from particular practice questions in the Q bank)

**Something else you MUST do:**

TAKE ONE OF THE FIRST TWO PRACTICE TESTS OFFERED BY NMBE. I would not sit for the actual exam if you have not passed one of these practice exams. They are a good marker of how you will do on the real test. (For both Step 1 and Step 2, my actual scores correlated well (within 10 points) of my actual exam scores.) They cost about \$48 and 3 hours to take. If you are scheduled to take the actual exam and do poorly on this practice exam just prior, I would postpone my test date. If you passed the mock boards offered by the school, you probably do not need to take this test. This is the link to the practice exams:

<http://www.nbme.org/programs-services/medical-students/sas/faq.html>

**TOPICS COVERED ON THE BOARDS and the resources I would recommend to study for each topic:**

Generally, the High Yield Series is very helpful.

**General topics covering all systems:**

**Microbiology**

Q bank, First Aid is sufficient

**Pharmacology**

Q bank, First Aid is sufficient

**Anatomy and Embryology**

Q bank, First Aid, High Yield Embryology has explanations for some Q bank questions that First Aid does not

**Biochemistry / Molecular biology**

Q bank, High Yield Biochemistry

**Genetics**

Q bank, High Yield Biochemistry

**Immunology**

Q bank, Medical Microbiology & Immunology Examination & Board Review LANGE series

**Behavioral Science / Biostatistics**

Q bank, High Yield Biostatistics

**Specific systems (include physiology, pathophysiology, histology, etc)**

**Cardiovascular**

Q bank, First Aid, then maybe BRS patho and BRS physio

**Respiratory**

**Gastroenterology**

**Renal**

**Hematology / Oncology**

**Reproductive / Endocrine**

**Skin / Connective Tissue / Musculoskeletal**

**Nervous System**

Q bank, High Yield Neuroanatomy

**Advice regarding Q banks:**

When I retook Step 1, I did every question of both Q banks. My average on each section was anywhere from 30%-90%. (your average does not matter as much as what you learn from the question . . . so that when you see the info again on the real test you will have a great average).

My two cents about the Q banks: Both are great. Both have different questions. The computer interface in USMLE World is EXACTLY like the real test (unlike Kaplan). Kaplan includes some oddball questions that I did not spend huge amounts of time trying to understand. WORLD questions are maybe a bit harder, like the real test. THE REAL QUESTIONS ON MY EXAM: I felt were fairly straight forward. There were some curveballs, but relatively straight forward. Both Q banks are similar and will help you prepare for the exam.

**WOULD YOU LIKE MORE HELP?**

Congratulations if you are still reading this verbose email. If any of you want help to study for the boards, let me know. I can answer specific questions or help you set up a study plan from now until June.

ALSO: If people are interested, I can do maybe 6-12 free review sessions between now and June. They would probably last a couple of hours each. I can provide copies of some of my personal notes and review really high yield confusing topics that took me hours of personal study to really try to figure out and memorize. I hate wasting people's time, and these sessions would cover pertinent information. Reply to this email if you would be interested. This might be a good way to help some of you to start studying earlier than later.

Good luck,

MICHAEL WILSON