

USMLE Step 3 Tips

(Unsolicited advice from a friend!)

Resources:

- UWorld: Qbank, Self-Assessment, CCS, Biostatistics
- Sample questions on the USMLE website (70 questions)
 - o <http://www.usmle.org/practice-materials/index.html>
- NBME Form 4
 - o <https://nsas.nbme.org/home>
- First Aid for Step 1 – to quickly review drug MOAs if you have time / want to
- 90 page PDF document of high-yield notes from UWorld
 - o <http://forums.studentdoctor.net/threads/usmle-world-step-3-pearls.1176035/>
- PowerPoint with some extremely helpful tips for CCS:
<http://www.slideshare.net/usmlegalaxy/archer-usmle-step-3-ccs-workshop-2012>

Day 1: Foundations of Independent Practice (FIP)

- It's all MCQs: 6 blocks of 40-ish questions each (38 to 40 questions); 60 minutes per block
- 45 minutes of break time (50 if you skip the 5 minute tutorial)
- **Lots of biostats!**
 - o If biostatistics is not your most favorite subject and you think you could use some extra practice, UWorld's biostats module (\$25) is well worth the money, and doesn't take long to get through.
 - o Definitely do all of UWorld's Qbank biostats questions and redo incorrect questions.
 - o Thankfully, there are very few questions on the real exam that required calculations (compared to UWorld); vast majority are conceptual questions you can answer without having to use your "scratch paper" or a calculator.
- This day also includes pharmaceutical advertisements and scientific abstracts. Some of them are very, very long. Might consider saving some for the end of the block so you don't waste a lot of time on it, in case you are short on time.

Day 2: Advanced Clinical Medicine (ACM)

- Minimum of 45 minute break (will talk more about break time)
- **180 multiple-choice questions**
 - o 6 blocks of 30 questions each
 - o 45 minutes per block
- I had two audio questions on my exam.
- **Computer-based case simulations (CCS): 13 cases**
 - o Each is 10 or 20 minutes of real time
 - o These cases went by much faster than I was expecting them to. When everyone says on SDN that they finished Day 2 "hours" early, it's actually true. Having said that, take advantage of the extra break time that you accrue by finishing cases early – take a break, get a snack, etc. Even though you could finish quite early doesn't necessarily mean you should.

- Apparently, CCS performance can be the difference between passing and failing. The software takes some getting used to and you **MUST** take the time to become familiar with it **BEFORE** you walk into the exam (see USMLE website for tutorial).
 - **Must do:** the six practice CCS cases on the USMLE website
- UWorld CCS includes 51 simulations (with answers/discussions) and 41 case “read-outs” (not simulated, you just read about more cases and how you should handle them in terms of the software).
- I hated UWorld’s CCS cases because they were super glitchy. The real exam was much more straightforward and far less annoying compared to UWorld. I could only force myself to do a handful of UWorld’s simulations, but I did read all of the answers to the cases (the clock management and scoring sections, as well as the 41 read-out cases). I think that did the trick!
- As pretty much everyone will tell you, the cases are common / straightforward diagnoses. No zebras.
- I don’t think I killed any of my patients, but people have said they killed a patient and still passed. That’s comforting.

Random Tips / Suggestions

- Use your phone to take photos of helpful flowcharts / diagrams on UWorld so you can quickly review important concepts in your spare time.
- Aim to complete the whole UWorld Qbank, then go back and redo incorrect problems (make that your priority rather than immediately resetting the entire Qbank – focus on what you don’t know!).
- Do at least a couple full-length timed practice tests (I don’t know about you, but I didn’t want to walk into a 7 hour exam cold).
- Try to stay off SDN
- Some people have stressed out about the recent changes to the exam, which apparently include increased Step 1 type material (basic sciences) – I wouldn’t freak out too much; as I suggested earlier, if you have time you can review drug MOAs and such from First Aid. I personally didn’t notice much; I did not get any crazy biochemistry enzyme pathway type questions.
- If you are like most people and finish the CCS cases early, you will rapidly gain break time. So if you are feeling very fatigued from the multiple choice portion early on, you could gamble a bit and take a longer break (when you actually need one), knowing that once you hit CCS you will make up for it quickly. (This could be a gamble, but still good to be aware of!)
- Remember that biostats, drug ads, and abstracts are only on Day 1. If you have some time before Day 2 and will be studying, don’t bother with those types of questions anymore.
- My opinion: you’re better off doing practice questions / timed tests, etc. This is not the time to read a thick review book cover to cover. Even as a pathology resident on a light rotation, I didn’t have the time or desire to do that.
- If you’re stressed out: remember that this exam has a 98% pass rate. If you didn’t have problems passing previous Step exams and you’re taking this seriously, you’ll most likely do just fine!

Additional Resources

- **Online MedEd** – awesome videos! Great for reviewing a couple of tricky subjects (like EKGs and treating arrhythmias), but you probably won't have much time. <https://onlinemeded.org/>
- **Medbullets** – was told about this, looks decent, but again, time issue!
<http://www.medbullets.com/>

YOU GOT THIS!