Step 1 Advice Booklet

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Introduction

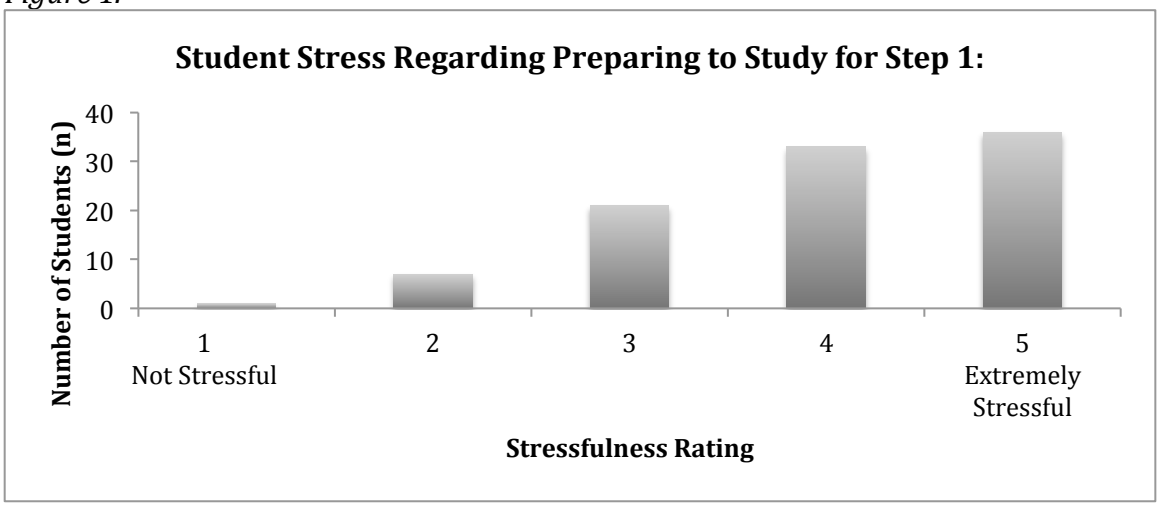
The purpose of the Step 1 Advice Survey was to collect anonymous information from current UCSD medical students who had completed the USMLE Step 1 examination. The survey aimed to ascertain various Step 1 study habits and resulting trends for the purposes of medical education quality improvement. The goal was to help better inform future medical students on what study tools/habits have been used in the past and what had worked for students, and to highlight any discovered correlations or significant findings. This survey will also help to inform the administration on student needs.

The results of this survey have been complied into booklet format to be distributed annually to second year medical students. This will hopefully reduce student anxiety, improve preparedness, and increase Step 1 scores.

This survey does not have IRB approval. It was collected for the sole purpose of quality improvement. No identifying information was collected. To qualify to have taken the survey, students needed to be a current UCSD medical student and have also completed the USMLE Step 1 Licensing examination.

One hundred current UCSD medical students completed the 'Step 1 Advice Survey'. Of those, 38 were current third year students and 62 fourth year students. Most students found preparing for Step 1 to be very-extremely stressful (*Figure 1)*. It was found that there was a moderately positive correlation between individual Step 1 score goals and Step 1 scores, (R^2 = .513, *Figure 2*), meaning that the higher the students step 1 goal, the more likely they were to achieve a higher score. Despite this, 31% of students were not satisfied with their Step 1 scores (*Figure 3)*. There was also a moderately positive correlation between MCAT scores and Step 1 scores; however, the factors that contributed to this relationship were not investigated (*Figure 4).* Lastly, there was a moderately positive correlation between exam scores during first and second year of medical school and Step 1 scores (R^2 = .37, *Figure 5)*.

Figure 1.



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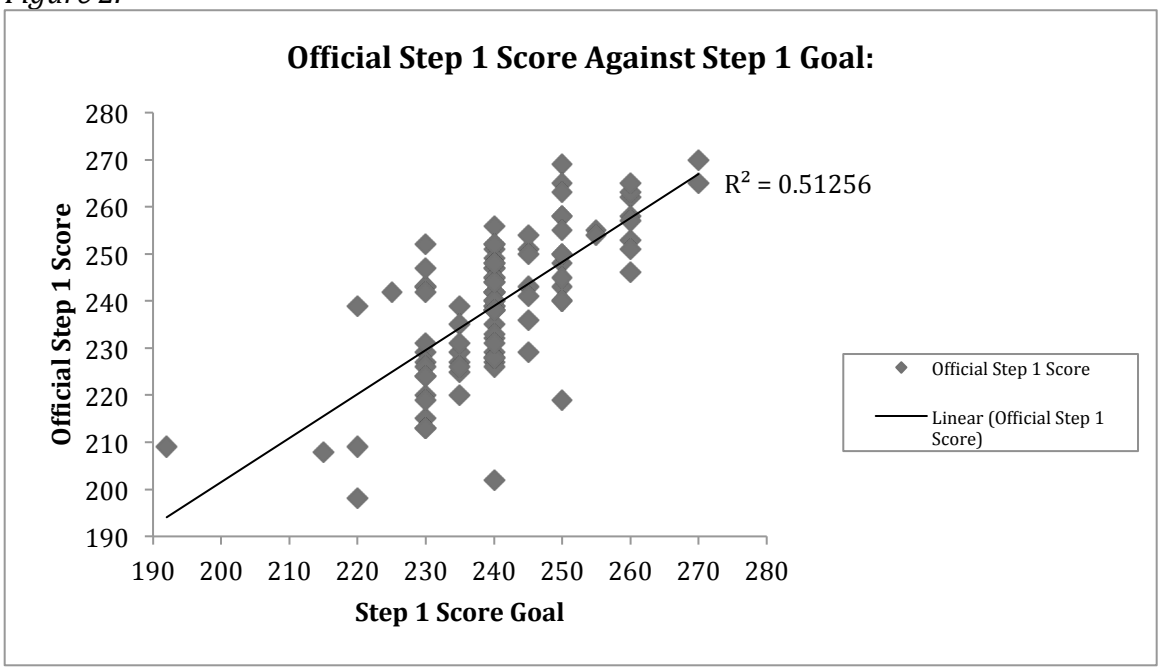

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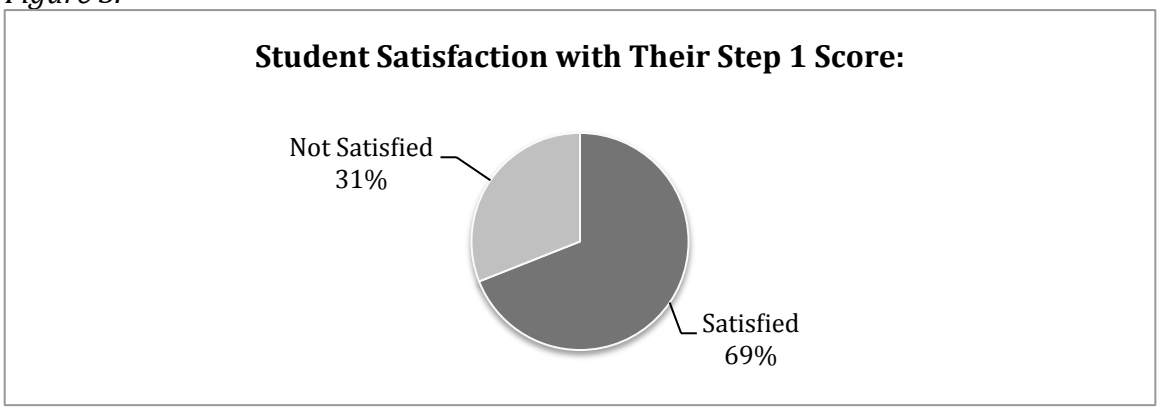

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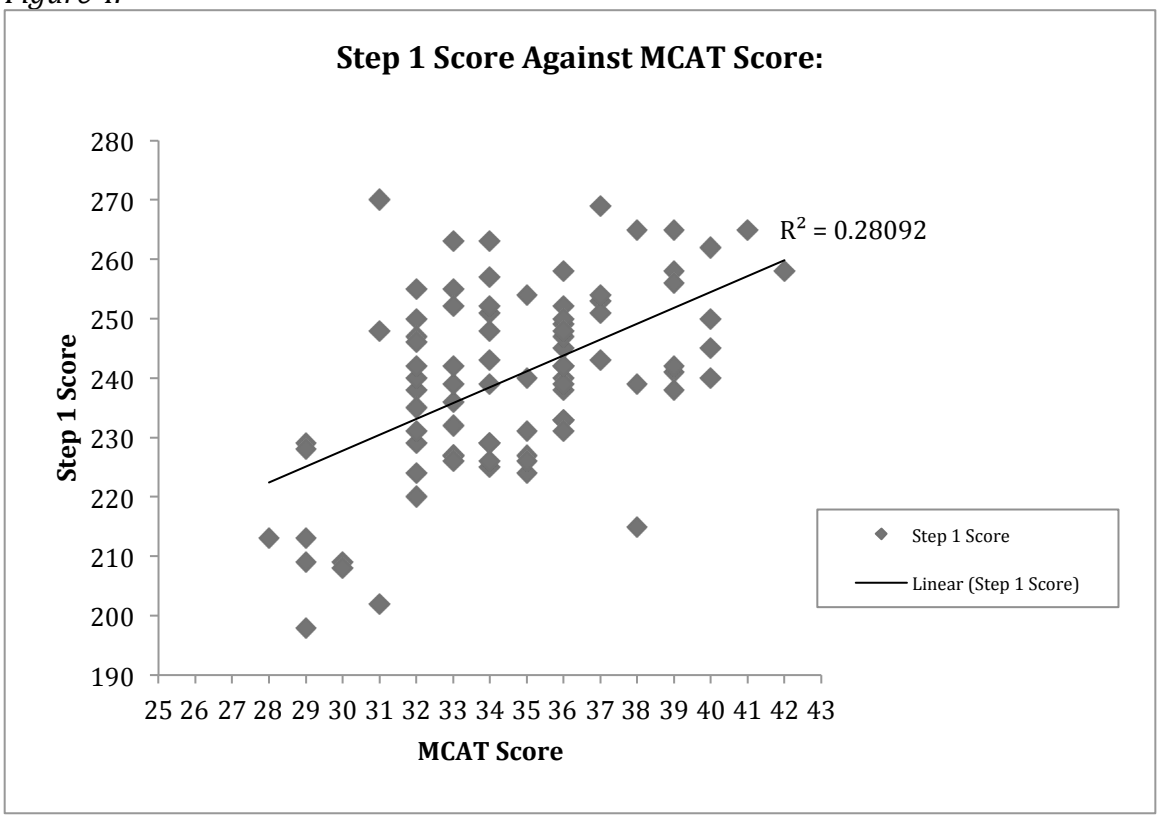

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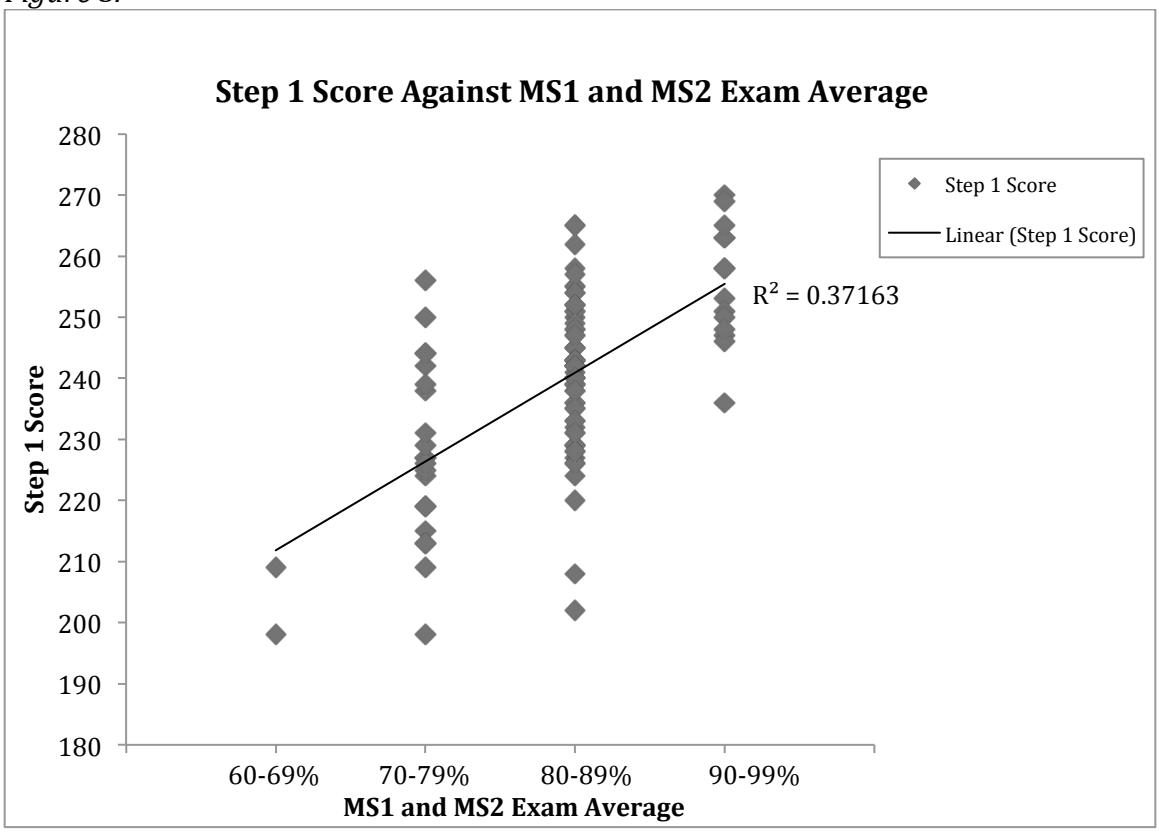
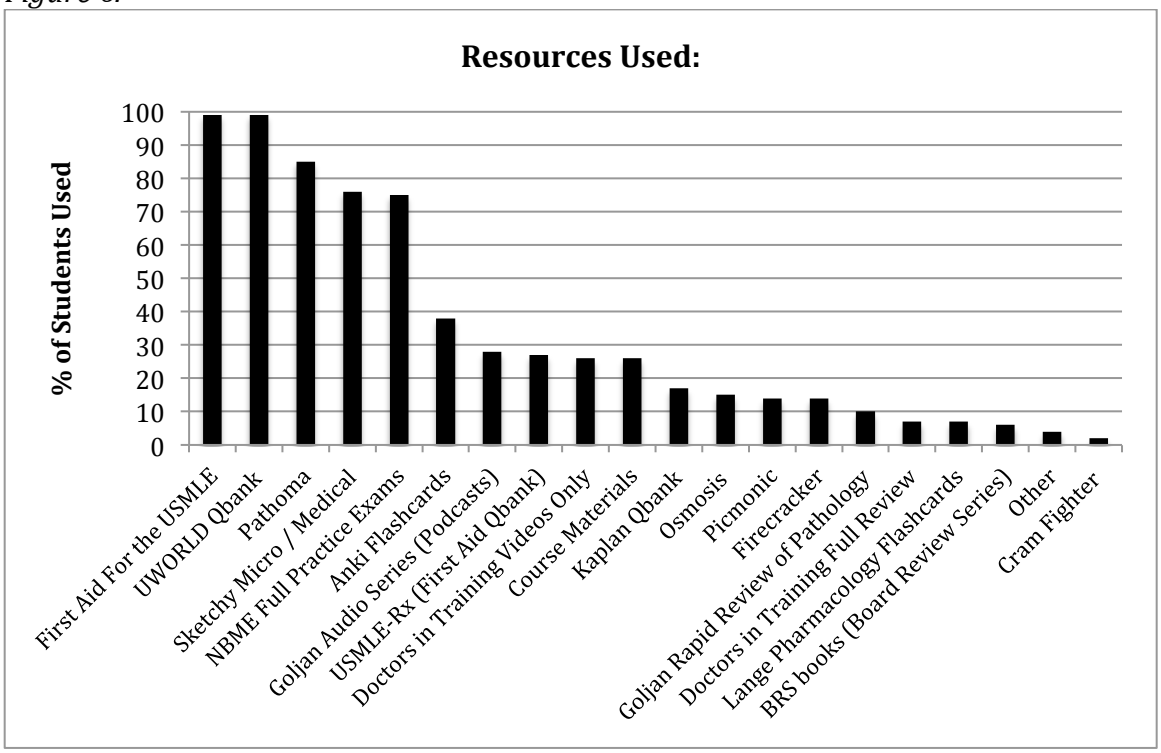


Step 1 Resources

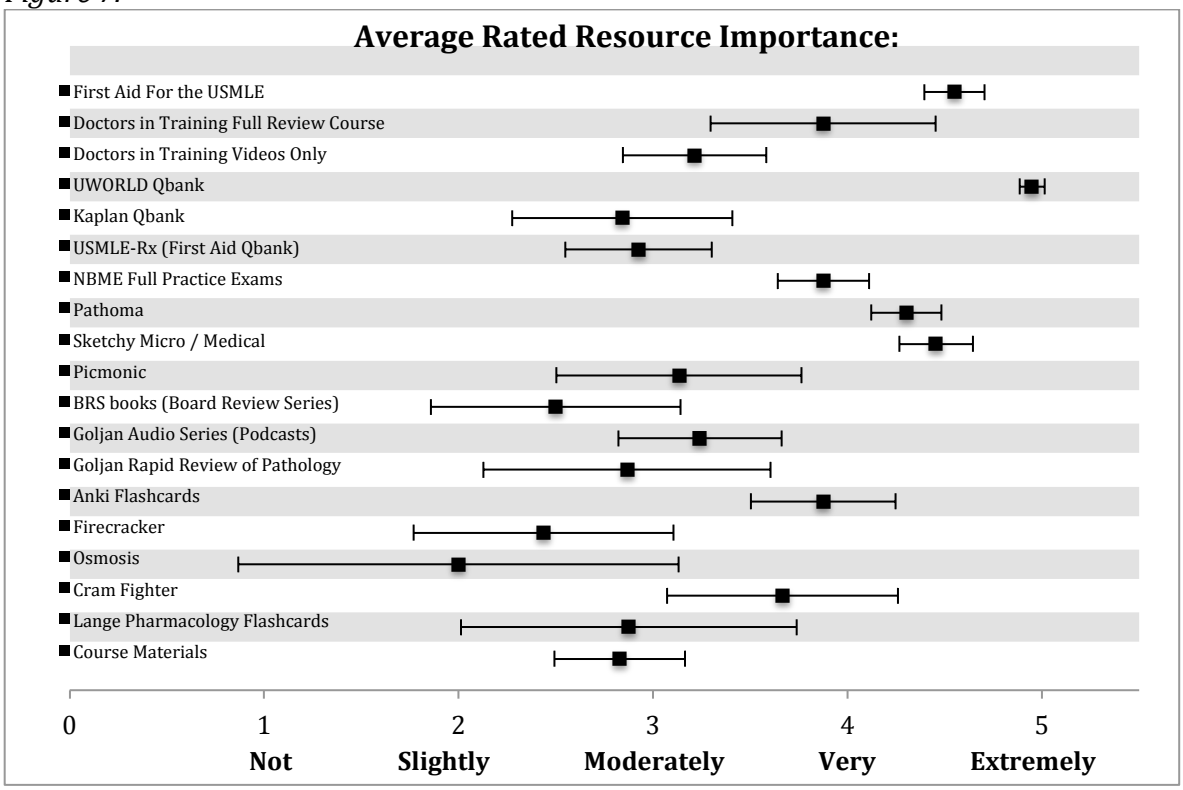
Many resources can be used to prepare for Step 1. Some resources were preferred during the year and others during the dedicated study period. The most common resources used were First Aid For the USMLE and UWORLD Qbank, both with at 99% of students surveyed having used those resources (*Figure 6)*. The next most common resources used were Pathoma (85%), Sketchy Medical (76%) and the NBME Practice exams (75%). Other notable resources include Anki flashcards, the Goljan Audio Series (Podcasts), USMLE-Rx Qbank, Doctors in Training Videos and course materials from the first two years of medical school.

Figure 6.



Surveyed students rated each resource (only if they used that resource) from not important at all (score of 1) to extremely important (score of 5), (*Figure 7*). UWORLD Qbank was found to be significantly rated as the single-most important resource with the narrowest 95% confidence interval (Avg 4.95, CI 4.88-5.01). Other resources with confidence intervals falling in the rated 'very important' to 'extremely important' range, in order of average rated importance, include First Aide for the USMLE (Avg 4.55), Sketchy Medical (Avg 4.46), Anki Flashcards (Avg 3.88), Pathoma (Avg 4.3), NBME Practice Exams (Avg 3.88), Doctors in Training Full Review Course (3.88), and Cram Fighter (Avg 3.67). BRS, Firecracker, and Osmosis were found to be the least important resources, with averages of 2.5, 2.44, and 2.0, respectively. Rated importance is also displayed by percentage, based off the number of students who used the resource (*Figure 8*). Lastly, the number of resources used did not seem to positively or negatively impact score (*Figure 9).*

Figure 7.



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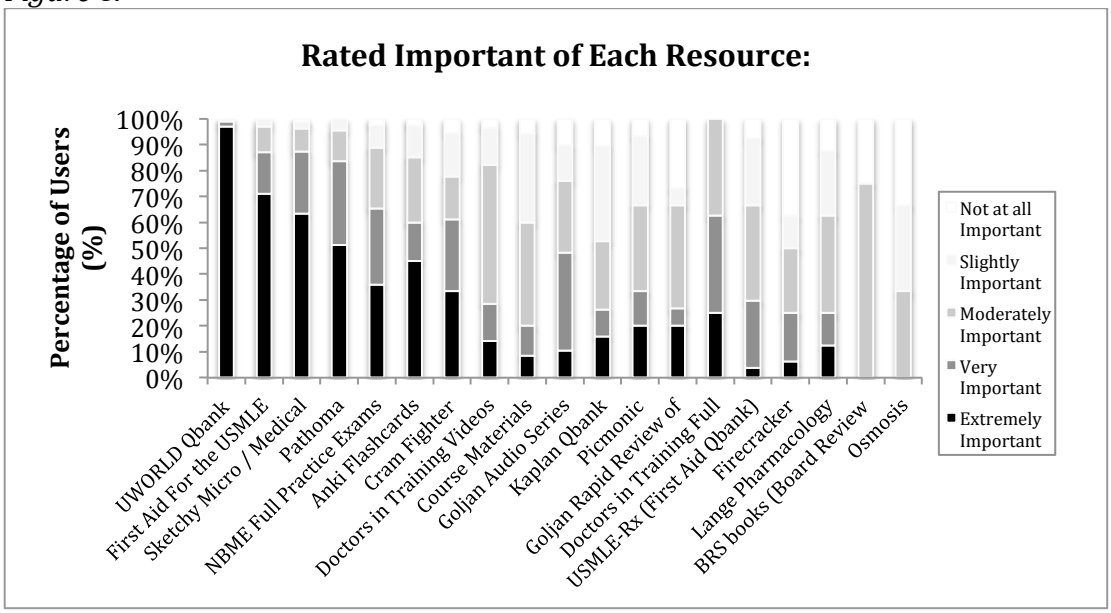

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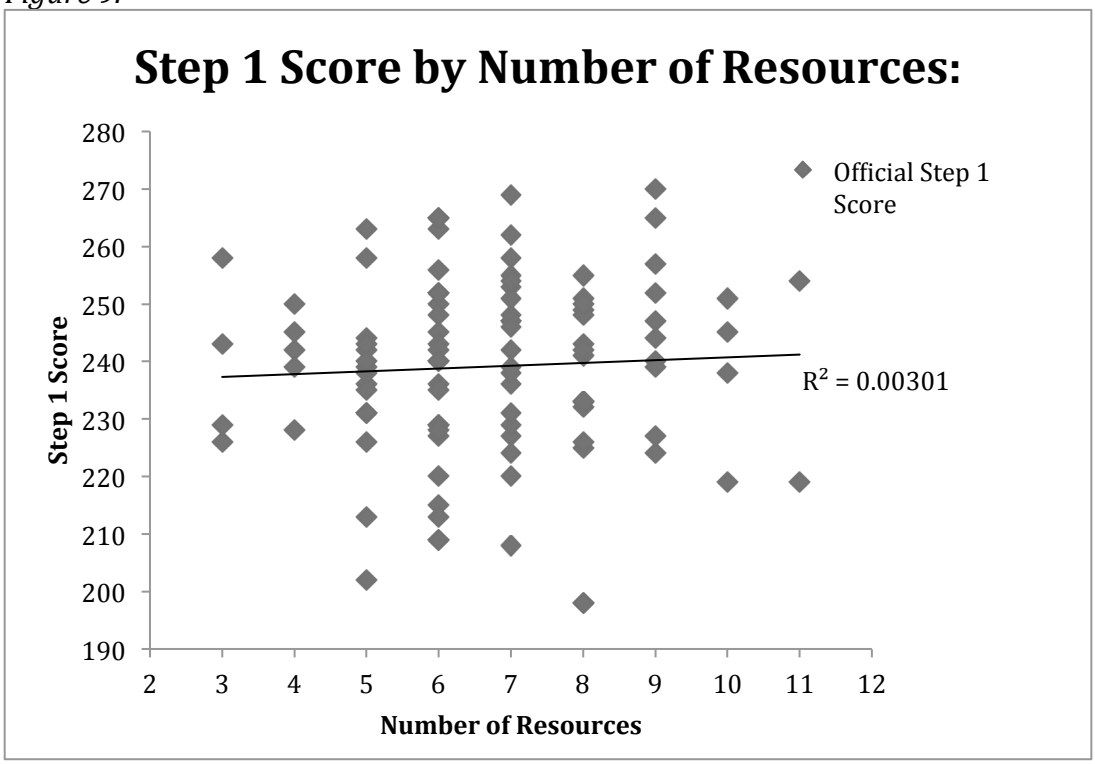


Resource Opinions

Students were asked to give free-form feedback on each study resource used, and the feedback was then reviewed, spelling was checked and grammar corrected, and inappropriate or 'n/a' comments were removed. Recurrent themes and/or key points the author found relevant or helpful were bolded below.

First Aide for the USMLE:
Most students felt this was a vital resource, some got it unbound, many wrote notes in the book's margins. Many felt that this was a better to use as an outline, for reference, graphs, mnemonics, and quick facts, rather than something to study from directly; however, others used it as their primary guide. Most found this resource to be worth the money.

Must have
Must have
Read a portion each day, ***annotated with other study materials***
Reference and notes in the margins. Worth the money.
I used this as my main resource, and would add handwritten notes form other resources into first aid. ***I would read a designated chapter each morning for a few hours and then do UWORLD questions.*** I probably read the entire book at least 3 times.
Read through the whole thing. Great succinct resource. Worth it.
Only used for lists e.g. CYP450 inhibitors or toxins and antidotes. Otherwise it was difficult to study from.
I used it as a reference/to get ***good mnemonics***. I didn't find it super helpful though.
Adjuvant to UWorld, I used it as a reference for topics I got wrong on UWorld.
Annotated, using Kaplan review videos, definitely worth the money.
Worth the money.
Took notes throughout 2nd year classes in the book and while reviewing UWorld questions. Worth the money.
Used daily and sequentially.
Used it as ***my "Bible" for all notes***. I read through FA and highlighted key points. I also took notes from other resources into FA so I would have everything in one place***. I reviewed the high-yield section immediately before taking Step 1.***
As a "textbook" to review many basic concepts
Helpful for supplementing UWorld as provides fairly comprehensive review
Memorized every word of this -- by far the most important part of my studying.
I read it cover to cover, highlighted, used flags. ***FA is passive learning, so it shouldn't be a first-line resource.*** It's good in that it touches on all the major areas to know, but basically was just bulleted

outlines with hit-or-miss mnemonics. Felt like I wasted a lot of time on FA that should have been spent on UW.
I unbound this and took the small sections to study during the relevant blocks during the year. I also wrote my Pathoma notes down in first aide so that I would have all my notes together
I ***used it for the purpose of synthesizing information*** from various other resources (e.g. Pathoma, DIT, etc.). I actually really didn't enjoy "studying" from FA, but it is excellent for note taking.
Used as a guide during lectures. Tried to reference lecture material with FA and read FA in conjunction with lectures. Great resource for bullet-point type info, but does not really "teach".
A must-have, annotate as you go along.
Kind of a "home base " for studying. Went through it a total of 3 times and reviewed missed and challenging practice questions in first aid.
I split up my "study days" by chapter of First Aid, and would try to spend a few days on each chapter really learning the material.
Good for review. Needed.
Went through this with the DIT videos and annotated. Then re-read the whole book and the notes.
I used it to study during the first two years, and I used during devoted study time. ***It's essential***.
Excellent resource, I did 2-3 passes of this book while I was using other resources like UWorld and Sketchy Micro to complement First Aid's material and annotated my textbook so that this was my central study guide.
Used by reading, following along with USMLE-RX, and by ***annotating in the book***.
Critical, this was the framework on which I organized material in my mind.
Read, highlighted and annotated every page of the book. This is the golden resource that has almost everything you will ever need to know. ***Absolutely worth the money***. Did a second and a VERY cursory third pass of the book prior to the test.
Helpful but not enough detail/explanation by itself (for my style).
Good for reference. ***Wasn't able to read/study from***.
Read through book 2x.
100% necessary. I used it to take notes while using other resources (DIT, UWorld, Pathoma). The week before the exam, I split up FA into 5 sections and tried to review a section per day so I could see everything one more time. Turned out to be overly stressful but I think it helped somewhat.
I read through the book. Then referred back to it as needed when doing UWORLD.
Reviewed subjects as we went through them during second year. Used as reference during UWorld quizzes.
Supplemental information on specific topics, usually related to a UWorld question.
Great for structuring the overall study period. ***Would often combine a First Aid chapter (e.g. cardio) with a selected block of UWorld questions on tutor mode (e.g. also cardio).*** This was definitely worth the money. However, simply reading chapter after chapter, without combining it with note taking and Qbanks, would be unwise.
General Overview.
Master reference of all info I had compiled. ***Broke it into a binder and added pages*** and wrote all over it.
Primary resource. Provides an outline for what needs to be covered during your Step 1 study. Highlights zebras. Still need to do extensive practice questions in order to be able to apply the knowledge.

I used this as ***my primary study tool to organize my time and the material I was covering***. I broke my days up into organ systems largely dictated by First Aid and then would use supplemental materials to reinforce the material I was learning in there. As someone who writes in books a great deal, I appreciated that the company thought about the quality of the pages in the book so that it didn't bleed through too much. I definitely think the resource was worth the money.
Worth it. Great review of almost everything, but ***does leave some gaps that need to be filled*** with more detail. Should be sure to branch out if noticing weaknesses on Qbank questions.
I compiled all my notes from UWorld, Rapid Review, and Pathoma into my First Aid book. My first aid book held all the information I needed for Step 1.
Loved it. Totally critical to studying. It was my bible. I ***unbound it*** and I put all notes and annotations from all other resources into First Aid.
Great, ***only a bare bones set of notes***, need more thorough understanding for it to click.
Important but pretty dense. I'd go through this twice but do the first pass well ahead of your dedicated study time and use the second pass to focus on sections you are struggling with.
Used notability to annotate it electronically so I could always have it with me. I annotated all other resources into First Aid
Read twice, made flash cards
Read 2x prior to dedicated study (low yield, don't really recommend) and read at the end of dedicated with all my UWorld annotations (more useful).
Outline.
I read through First Aid TWICE. VERY IMPORTANT RESOURCE.
Used with courses to make sure I was hitting on high yield points as I studied
Loved it, worth the money.
Great resource to ***use in conjunction with Pathoma***
Used it as the skeleton for my studying, just learning the basics, for reference.
Not much to say, it has its reputation for a reason.
Used it with the Rx videos that walked you through the book which I founds super helpful. I also annotated the book based off UWorld so it was basically like my bible of everything I knew/was studying. Work it.
Took notes from DIT videos in first aid and read through it 2-3x before exam
Read it, concise.
Worth it for organization.
Refer to it while going over UWorld questions.
I used this as the main focus of my studying. ***I would cover one subject every 2-3 days*** and made flashcards by hand for all the topics.
For general information/organization and introduction to each subject, a place to annotate, and for ***rapid review at the end***.
Annotated Pathoma in it. Go through each organ system, made sure I understood everything, tried to memorize what I didn't know. Used Picmonic for stuff I had trouble memorizing without it. Used Sketchy Medical/Picmonic for the pharm section in FA. Skipped FA micro chapter and only did sketchy micro.
I had an **electronic copy of First Aid** which I used alongside my organ system courses in MS2 to figure out which points that we were learning were important to remember for step 1, which points we were not learning that were important for step 1 (i.e. I should try to learn these on my own as we

go), and which points I may need to know for my block exam but could forget afterward (i.e. I would not put them in my step 1 Anki deck). I also used First Aid this as a reference for reviewing missed Qbank questions. **I also used the diagrams and figures on the backs of my Anki cards as appropriate**. I did NOT ever try to make a complete pass through first aid or read it like a textbook. In fact, my paper copy of First Aid got more use as a step stool or a block to elevate my computer monitor than as a textbook. ***The searchable pdf was used far more frequently***.
Wrote notes from DIT videos in the margins and cross-referenced. I used this because it was the #1 recommended resource, but ***I actually didn't like it very much; it was too "bare bones"*** for me, ***difficult to get through without some form of guidance*** (which is why I used DIT videos).
Read the entire thing once, highlighting as I went, good for reference.
Barely used at all, I hated the format.
Notes, review, talking through it with classmates or myself.
Reference during studying; not primary study tool.
Useful and worth the money. ***Not good for primary studying.*** Good as a final review before test.
Main book/resource I used.
Great.
Unbound, annotated every page and inserted my own notes; ***loved it as a study guideline***, but was not as detailed as necessary.
Some pathology review.
Good for tables and condensing all the information into one place. ***However, not good for learning material.***
I couldn't memorize from this format, so it was ***useful to use it as reference***
Most important resource has all the information but needs to be supplemented with a question bank. Great for content review.
Went through it twice, memorized it cover to cover.
Liked it for some diagrams and quick facts but found it hard to read as a stand alone due to how abbreviated the text was.
Made an outline from the book that I reviewed. Definitely worth the $$$.
Must use.
Definitely better to try and use as needed, when you get something wrong in UWorld, etc. and need a quick reference. Not as great if you just try to read through it.
Read it with each block. Read it again during dedicated study period. Read it again with 1 week to go before test. Took all my UWorld notes in it.
Read through it with DIT and then separately (with notes from DIT). Worth the money. Love the illustrations. Nothing that I don't like about it.
Excellent.
Reference.

Doctors in Training (Full Review Course):

Fewer students used the full DIT review course, compared to just the DIT videos alone. Those that did, however, liked the structure and how thorough the course

was. Drawbacks include cost and length of time it takes to complete the course. For more DIT information, please see DIT videos only summary.

The videos were solid and engaging. Definitely **helped me with structuring my study plan** and making sure I got through "all" the material. I used this resource pretty heavily in the 6 weeks leading up to the test. It also references FA throughout the review book/videos, so it's not an entirely "separate resource" in that regard. **The drawback is that DIT takes a lot of time**. I would spent about 6 hours during the day getting through the DIT videos on average, which left me with 2-4 hours of time for U World before I burned out. I think in hindsight I probably spent too much time on DIT and not enough time on U World questions and practice tests during the last 4 to 6 weeks of study time. ***If you are the kind of person that needs structure, DIT may be for you***. DIT **will almost certainly get you a solid score** (230s to low 240s; I think the average DIT user gets around a 235), but if you really want to excel, you need more time on practice questions. If you are going to do DIT, I would recommend rationing a couple of extra weeks either prior to or during the "study weeks" during which you use U World heavily and exclusively.
LOVE IT! This got me through my studying.
Very time consuming. It didn't feel worth it to me.
Very helpful, kept me on track and reviewed First Aid in more detailed; I personally thought it was **worth the money because I liked having the schedule and the interactive study options** not just reading
Learning material in a compact way.
I advise against.

Doctors in Training (Videos Only):
Students really liked this resource because of its structure and organization. This resource seemed best suited to audio/visual learners as well. Students also liked to use the resource selectively to get a better understanding of a certain subject such as biochem or metabolism. Students disliked this resource for the length of time it took to get through the videos and for the price; however, many students pirated the videos so this resource was not cost prohibitive.

Watched each day. I pirated them, so it was not cost prohibitive.
I used it to listen while running/driving/working out etc. I had pirated version, so yes worth the money.
It was **helpful at explaining physiological concepts**, but I would not have paid full price for it.
I used this to **do structured "in-depth" review** prior to the exam
This was a **key resource for me because I would get too board only reading**. It did seem silly at first needing someone to basically walk you through first aid but this was **such a nice way to break up the day and study in a different way.** I also loved their little quizzes at the start and end of the videos. I thought they also had super **helpful charts/graphs and mnemonics not offered in first aid** that were clutch on my test day - especially the p450 inducers and inhibitors and bone tumors. **HIGHLY RECOMMEND**!

I used this resource primarily for studying for Biochem (which is not taught at UCSD). **I found the repetition and question/answer format in each video extremely helpful.** Paired with Brosencephalon Anki questions, I felt like this was a **good method of quickly learning things as an audiovisual learner.**
I would watch these as I was studying a chapter of first aid, because they basically explain first aid to you. Not sure how helpful this was - it is super time consuming.
Pretty good. Not worth $$$.
Mostly helpful in pacing yourself early on. Doesn't contain too much information that first-aid doesn't but it **helps break up your day** from just reading all day long to chunks of **more active listening** and taking notes. **Used videos to guide my first pass of first-aid to keep me on track**.
Watched downloaded videos for topics I struggled to grasp.
Expensive, but **very thorough and well-organized** set of videos. I used it at the start of studying and it gave me a solid foundation. I think it's worth it if you can **split the cost among a few people**.
Study aid when I needed structure.
Expensive, but worth the money. **Far and away the best single resource**.
I watch all of the videos and annotated first aid.
I watched all of these videos and annotated First Aid the first time through.
Used at the end for particularly tough **subjects like Biochem**.
I felt I counted on these videos to teach me what I needed to know but it was more passive rather than active learning **and took a lot of time** that I think may have better spent on other resources. Overall **not worth the money**. Some useful mnemonics!
Watched some, good teachers.
Used to go over videos sometimes.
I watched less than 5 of these videos on specific concepts of metabolism where I felt like I needed a refresher. They were ok.
Lots of good mnemonics and helped in getting through First Aid. They also **included topics that were not covered in FA**. If I had to redo that torturous period of my life, I don't think I would use these again, or rather, **I would choose to use them for a few topics** that I really struggled with (i.e. biochem).
Good for physiology review.
I used them for free, hence worth the money. **I liked that it forced me to get through a section of First Aid** though I'm not sure how effective it was for me to actually retain the material. I took notes from DIT onto first aid. I think it took a lot of time that in retrospect would have better served me on a 2nd pass through UWorld.

UWorld Qbank:

Students feel that UWorld Qbank is unanimously the best Qbank available and also the single best resource. Some students wished they had started doing UWorld questions earlier in the year or just more overall. Students were in agreement that this resource is worth the cost. Many students emphasized that it is important to read all of the answer explanations. *Please see the UWorld section for more in depth UWorld information.

Must have
Did blocks of questions each day. **Probably my most important studying**. Worth every penny.
My main source of studying. I would just sit down and do a couple hundred questions a day and review things I wasn't clear on.
I did all questions, **starting at 40 a day and then up to 200 a day** the week or two prior to my exam. **Reviewing the questions is extremely important, as is repeating questions you got wrong**. I went through the entire question bank about 1.5 times
Best way for me to learn because of Q&A.
Used this as **my main study source**.
Worth the money for the whole year.
I wish I had done this way more.
Went through subjects on timed mode during the block we were studying, and reviewed all incorrect responses as well. Then reset the Qbank and went through them all randomly and did all incorrect as well. Sometimes did subject focused if still having problems in that area.
UWorld comprised 3/4 of my study day.
Completely worth it.
Most helpful resource.
Another way to learn concepts; best way to practice test taking
Best resource. Highly recommend.
Did all of it and then repeated incorrect. Critical.
Fantastic resource, keeps you active, teaches you why things are and aren't correct. **Wish I had allocated more time to using UW over other resources.**
This is so important. Buy the 6-month subscription (so basically around the holidays). **This will allow you to reset it if you want** (I didn't but it is nice to know you can). Start during the year with a few, and I mean only a few, questions at week just to get familiar with how the questions are asked and what is important for the boards rather than the block exam. Take one practice test a week or two before your test and then take the second one right before your test (2-3 days prior) because the UWORLD tends to be more accurate/overestimate your score slightly compared to NBE, from my understanding, and I felt that it was nice to have a slight confidence boost going into test day.
This was **the foundation of much of my studying**; since screenshots are not allowed on UWorld, I would literally draw out all the figures on PowerPoint, which served two purposes: 1) it forced me to look at each figure carefully/attentively and pay attention to how each piece of the puzzle fits and 2) allowed me to study the figures without having to open UWorld in my free time.
Excellent. Use heavily. If I could do it over, **I would have used it more heavily in the fall and early winter.** Review questions that you get wrong.
Extremely useful, well-made questions.
Best resource. Needed.
Took subject specific questions at the end of each day correlating the subject I had studied that day. Once I made the first pass through I switched to random and answered all the questions again. I then repeated specific subjects that I struggled with (i.e. Biochem) a third time.
Excellent**. Invaluable**.
Best resource, just like Step 1 questions.

Golden resource. **Reading all answer choices regardless of getting the question right or wrong** was very useful. Used it as more of study tool than diagnostic tool until 1-2 weeks prior to the test.
Necessary.
Very similar to the actual test.
Did 4, 44 question tests each day of my 6 week-dedicated study time.
I would try to focus on picking one thing to learn from every question. Either write it down or make an Anki card, and try to review those quick points at the end of the week.
Best resource.
Went through relevant subject questions during relevant block second year and repeated with a mix of subjects at the end of the year.
Loved it, **worth every penny**. This was my primary study source.
Mainly test myself and then spot study ones I got wrong.
Most thorough resource and fairly close to actual test questions. **I would recommend going through multiple passes of the entire Q bank, or at least repeating all of the questions you got incorrect the first time around**. The explanations are fantastic, and **it is important to read the explanations for every single question choice - not just the correct one -** because each might add to understanding of a topic.
This is the main question bank I used, and I definitely believe it is a necessity for studying for Step 1. UWORLD was **very helpful in understanding the style of questions** I would be facing on Step 1, and I appreciated that it was broken up into sections for organ systems or particular topics (such as statistics, etc.). I didn't find the "timed-tutor" function particularly helpful. However, I did appreciate that much of the information in the explanations for the questions was presented in chart or graph format in addition to paragraphs.
Great resource. Worth repeating, but be sure not to get overconfident as your scores go up taking the questions for a second time.
UWORLD Qbank gave the more detailed version of all the information we would need for Step 1. First Aid was more of a skeleton and UWORLD filled in all the blanks.
Absolutely critical. **Worth the cost**. I went through every question twice and didn't use any other question bank.
Critical.
Did as many questions as I could on the topics I had "completed"/"reviewed"
2 passes plus wrong answers again.
Essential! Getting through 100% of UW was the most important thing I did during the dedicated study period.
Went through UWorld once completely, writing down things I didn't know. Then did about 50% of the incorrect questions again.
Used with course blocks, by subject as studied and to time myself.
Worth it.
My most used resource for step studying.
This was the core of my studying, **made flashcards from the answers and explanations**
My #1 resource - more so as a learning tool than for "testing myself." The explanations are very thorough and usually well written.

Although the questions are not exactly like the test, the patterns and repetition are great for studying. I felt it was very helpful to review ALL the answers and know why things were right/wrong. Well worth it.
Amazing! **Try to do more than once if possible.**
Like real test.
Used a lot, worth every penny.
I would do about 90 questions/day.
Very important. I went through as much as possible starting in January by subject and annotated first aid. Before the dedicated time, I reset my Qbank and went through 80 questions per day in timed mode with random questions.
Very important resource, I wish I had taken more timed tests and used the "Notes" feature. Not important to do well on each UWorld quiz you make but rather to learn from each one - mark questions you want to get right the second time.
Random, untimed, 40 question blocks
The foundation of my studying. I would start with questions, and then turn to the books to understand the questions.
Best resource. **In retrospect, I wish I had made this my main resource, rather than First Aid**. I would start doing questions from the very beginning of second year whether or not I had learned about the particular topics the tests covered and used the explanations to study. I would use FA as a reference, but I would make UW 80% of my focus.
Great for practice and getting used to test taking.
Used UWORLD extensively. Was my main resource for Step 1.
Best resource for synthesizing/applying information learned
High yield.
Used every single day, best resource since most like the actual exam.
The best resource. Questions were very similar in style and explanations were very clearly written and removed all the unnecessary details.
I did not realize how important this resource was. I wish I had incorporated it more into my study plan.
Best Qbank out there. It is worth going through multiple times and saving for the end of the review.
Went through it 1.5 times, used as a learning (not assessment) tool.
Excellent. Questions were challenging and hard very thorough explanations.
Wrote answers in separate word document that I reviewed. Single most valuable resource.
You must use this.
Start early, even if you're not seriously starting your Step 1 studying. Use with each block during 2nd year.
Did it twice and all my missed/marked from the second pass.
Went through it once and then some incorrect questions. Worth the money. **Would not purchase it before 2nd year, but instead at the beginning of 2nd year** for a yearlong. I liked that there are a vast variety of questions and that the explanations are good and thorough.
Great, however I should have started using the Qbank at the start of 2nd year, as it was a **huge time investment.**

Kaplan Qbank:
Students had mixed opinions regarding the Kaplan Qbank; however, most students were in agreement that this Qbank is an inferior resource compared to UWorld. Students had mixed opinions on weather this resource was worth the cost. Kaplan Qbank seems to best be used either during second year only or as a supplement if wanting access to more questions in addition to UWORLD.

I went through this Qbank to **help me study for 2nd year blocks**.
Along with videos worth the money.
Went through subjects on timed mode during the block we were studying, and reviewed all incorrect responses as well. Then reset the Qbank and went through them all randomly and did all incorrect as well. Sometimes did subject focused if still having problems in that area.
I completed ~95% of this question bank. **I thought it was really good and a good preparation for the actual test questions.**
Purchased but in retrospect **it would have been better to focus on UWorld**. I would not recommend.
Purchased early on in second year but only completed ~20-30% of questions. **Not really necessary in my opinion.**
Tried this for a while but **did not find it helpful.**
Used it to supplement MS2 classes, as most blocks did not have a sufficient number of questions with which to study. In general **I found the UWORLD questions to be superior**.
Not as good as UWORLD, too much extra stuff.
Waste of money.
Okay, but not like real test.
I got 3 months of access to the Kaplan Qbank from a lunch talk. The questions were hard and I did short 5-20 question blocks of them early in the year for some supplemental learning. Once I understood the concepts behind my missed questions, I made Anki cards to reinforce those concepts.
Helpful.

USMLE Rx (First Aid Qbank):
Students had overall positive reviews of the USMLE-Rx Qbank; however, students were in agreement that UWorld has more complex, test-like questions with better learning. Most students who used this resource were looking to access more questions without going through the UWorld questions too many times (to avoid memorization). This resource seems best utilized during second year.

I used it when I felt like I wanted to not put as much effort in to doing the questions. (Skim read instead of thoroughly study).
I did this Qbank during courses my 2nd year. It was useful for the brute memorization that is required, but not as indicative as the real test at UWORLD. **Having done this Qbank before UWORLD was very useful though.**

Used as bank for more questions if I wanted to randomly test myself
Used before the designated study period. Then UWORLD during the designated study period.
Source of additional practice questions, since practice questions are my preferred learning method
I tend to memorize questions very easily, so even after 1 pass through UWorld, I found myself answering questions correctly simply from recollection rather than understanding; **to increase my pool of questions, I invested in this resource as well**. It's clearly **not nearly as good as UWorld**, but it works in a pinch.
Easier questions than UWORLD, but **does help with memorizing**. Good for doing rapid questions for subjects that I was stuck on.
I did this Q bank first and it was a good overview of the extent of topics that would need to be studied for Step 1. **The question/explanation quality is not as good as UWorld but it offers 2000+ additional questions and is definitely worth the effort/cost.**
I used this as an additional question bank, and I though it was **moderately helpful**. It is a little outdated, and some the answers to the questions are incorrect in the back of the book. I thought it was useful to get a different set of question, however, and I liked that it was also broken up by organ system. **I think that it was a good compromise for an additional question bank rather than purchasing Kaplan Qbank**, etc., which I think, would have been too expensive in addition to UWORLD. I think it was worth the money.
Do not use. Just do more UWorld.
Used it in the beginning of second year before UWorld to get into the habit of doing questions
Really helpful pre-dedicated to practice doing questions **without using up UWorld** on learning low hanging fruit. Highly recommend doing 1 other Qbank in addition to UW, **not sure if there is a meaningful difference between USMLE-RX and Kaplan Qbank** outcomes wise.
Used this as a **supplement to UWorld**.
I loved the videos and the flashcards. Great for clarifying and organizing information.
Not sure if it was worth it.
Purchased before UWorld, Used by organ chapter.
Bought this during dedicated study period because I wanted some extra rapid-fire questions to scoop up some facts/low-hanging fruit. **The questions are much simpler than UWorld** and don't take as long to review. You thus don't get as much out of each one learning-wise, but you can roll through a bunch even when your brain is tired. Probably translated into a couple extra points on my exam.
Really disappointing Qbank.
Helpful.
Decent Qbank for testing knowledge of First Aid but not nearly as representative of the real test as the UWorld Qbank.
Good for learning FA.
Not as good as UWorld, but a good way to review first aid without just reading the book.

Pathoma:

Students had overall very positive feedback regarding Pathoma. This resource was mainly used during second year to study for block exams, but some students also

used it again during the dedicated study period. This resource is thought to be worth the cost.

Critical for spaced repetition throughout MS2.
I **used this alongside regular class studying**. It was useful while running on treadmill.
Extremely useful. I started using this during Heme/Onc in 1st year, and would listen/read each chapter prior to starting that block. I then re-watched all the videos in the month prior to UWORLD. I added key notes from Pathoma to First Aid.
Great for Heme/Onc. Good explanations.
I did this for each block starting with Heme in 1st year then didn't go back to it. It was great for broad strokes introduction but I don't recommend using during the dedicated study period unless you need the 15,000 feet view point of a topic again.
Used during courses and study period, concise and nice way to sit back and "relax" from being actively engaged in studying while still studying.
Good for classes, not sure it was great for Step 1 studying.
Used during 2nd year.
Very helpful for breaking down complex ideas into basic concepts.
Very helpful during the year to study for blocks. **I would watch these at the very start of each block** and I wrote my Pathoma notes into first aid during the year to have everything (aka all key info and charts) together. This was nice to break up study time during the intense period as well.
An awesome resource in general, but it is not entirely comprehensive (high yield only). Dr. Sattar does an excellent job walking you through concepts and drawing out ideas (which is awesome if you're an audiovisual learner). Did not use the companion book at all; just watched the videos and actively annotated FA.
Meh. Not as hot on this one as other folks.
Excellent **adjunct to 2nd year coursework**.
This is amazing!!! Not just for step but also for understanding pathophysiology in general, I think this info will help me for life.
Did not watch the videos (although I wish I did). Read the subjects and annotated in FA.
Essential.
I used this as my first study tool near the end of school/very beginning of my study period and annotated First Aid with any information I gained from Pathoma that was not in First Aid. Then used only as a reference for difficult subjects that weren't quite sticking.
Best resource I used for step 1 prep.
Very important, watched a chunk every day and went subject by subject. Clear and succinct, right to the point. **Used this during second year classes** and at the end of 1st year.
Good for certain high-yield topics (e.g. Renal).
Great resource. Highly recommend.
Helpful during courses but less helpful for step 1 studying.
Great resource.
Listened to sections of Pathoma concurrently with the blocks and then **re-listened to entirety of book and videos during dedicated study period.**

I watched these throughout the year during corresponding blocks, but then watched them all again in the couple weeks before the test. **Very useful, and has a few specific high yield points that don't seem to come up in other resources.**
Important for **Heme, oncology, and mechanisms.**
Went through topics as we went through them second year
Went through the videos in order then went back to specific videos for review as needed based on UWorld questions.
Loved this "high yield" study guide. Would watch it over dinner, on a topic corresponding to the First Aid Chapter I was also studying during that week.
Refresher material
Used during second year and found videos very helpful for concepts I always found harder
This resource goes hand-in-hand with First Aid. **The videos were absolutely amazing**, and gave a much better understanding of disease processes through his careful explanations. As someone who prefers to write directly in books, I also very much appreciated the high quality of the paper in the book. I am someone who takes a lot of notes, so I generally listened to the videos at 1x speed, but during review of the videos I appreciated having the ability to increase the speed of narration. I went through the material in Pathoma at least 3 times, and found that this resource covered much of the material on my Step 1 exam that was not covered in First Aid**. It was definitely worth the money.**
Great review of common catch phrases for many diseases. Totally worth it.
Pathoma was a great tool to use during 2nd year. **I would begin each block my watching the Pathoma videos for that block**. It gave me a quick overview of what was important to pay particular attention to. Great resource to reinforce/repeat information.
Pathoma is good for holistic concepts that you struggle with. I would return to Pathoma if I was consistently getting questions on a specific topic incorrect.
Very helpful.
Used during blocks and for particular concepts.
Watched once.
Great! Watched with courses and then again during dedicated
Yessssss.
Watched all of Pathoma twice.
Used with blocks and re-watched before step.
Dr. Sattar is a God.
Incredibly helpful for people that can't just learn from a textbook - I wished I had gone through more passes of the videos before the exam.
Watched to "flesh" out things I had learned either from First Aid or UWorld, **great for reinforcing understanding.**
Great teacher, this was the only resource I really actively used during the second year blocks and it helped a lot with those as well as step 1 studying.
Would use as needed during the course- had bought it during second year which was great
Used throughout the year with second year courses.
Amazing!
Worth it.
Very helpful. **I liked doing Pathoma at the start of each subject (cardio, psych etc.)** before going through First Aid.

Awesome review resource I used as an overview to annotate notes into First Aid with as I started reviewing each subject.
Used during second year, and then during dedicated at the beginning of going through each organ system with FA. **Annotated into FA.**
I went through Pathoma concurrently with each block during MS1 and MS2 and took detailed notes in Evernote that combined Pathoma with extra info from our courses. Pathoma was the only resource that I then repeated during dedicated study days. Since I did it so thoroughly the first time, I was able to make my second pass at 1.7x speed. As I came across things that I had forgotten, I paused the video to make one or more Anki cards.
If I had the time, I would've done a second pass on this. Only used it during first year, but didn't have the time to re-watch these prior to Step 1.
Supplement to First Aid.
More beneficial for MS2 year, okay for step 1.
Excellent, worth the money. Still use as a resource.
Great explanations/really enhances understanding of pathophys and disease processes.
Helpful.
I used this more during the blocks during second year. Not so much during my Step 1 study period.
I used this as a reference.
Great for pathology review. Explanations are excellent.
Listened to a chapter per day
Watched videos and wrote notes. Felt like I was gaining a deeper sense of understanding of the material, though unsure how much this actually helped on the exam.
Must use.
Videos and reading are perfect to use throughout second year.
Went through it with blocks, again during dedicated study time.
Used it throughout 2nd year. Went through the videos alongside book once during the study period. **Worth the money.**
Outstanding resource all med students should use.

Sketchy Micro / Medical:

The overwhelming majority of students felt this resource to be invaluable for learning microbiology. Students also remarked that good retention of the microbiology material, recalling the information during the third and fourth years of medical school as well. Not many students commented on Sketchy Pharm, but those that did, found the videos to be less valuable, as they were too dense. Sketchy Micro is thought to be well worth the cost.

The only reason I got ANY micro questions right. Starts during micro block of MS1 and continued to review during MS2 and dedicated step time.
I used this alongside regular class studying. Useful adjunct to studying and very entertaining.

I found this the most useful for memorizing micro. I watched the videos during first year micro block and then re-watched the month prior to the exam (at increased speed) and added notes from the videos to First Aid.
Amazing resource, really helped me learn micro.
Absolutely necessary for micro during 1st year and went back to this if I needed refresher during 2nd year. Remember it well to this day.
The only way I remembered micro then and now.
Really helpful for all things micro.
Very helpful. **It made learning Micro much easier and interesting.**
Fantastic resource. Learned so much about bacteriology in about a day, and call back to Sketchy Micro on the wards all the time.
So important!!!! This will make you a micro boss! **Use it as much as you can. So helpful for the wards as well.** It really sticks with you.
Originally, I hated this during microbiology, but coming back to it as a second year**, this was gold.** I watched these videos alongside each block (e.g. when I was in Pulm II, I used this to review infections that affect the lungs, or when in GI II, I used it to study the various bugs that cause diarrhea, etc.). Sketchy pharm is also very good, but it was incomplete when I studied for Step 1, and takes a lot longer to absorb.
Great last minute review because microbes and antibiotics are impossible to commit to long-term memory. I tried to power through a lot of these this during the last week before the test and I think it got me an extra couple points on the exam.
A GREAT way to study micro.
The only microbiology I really did.
Tried in second year, did not use for step 1. I thought it was an inefficient way of learning the information.
Excellent and **invaluable**.
Very helpful, there is no other way I would be able to memorize microbiology. But, remember that it must be used in addition to first aid, because the sketches are not complete.
THE BEST WAY TO LEARN MICRO! I still remember the pictures and use them daily on the wards. **After using the videos I did not need to review that section of first aid at all.**
I still remember micro stuff solely because of sketchy.
Watched all available cartoons once through; found these to be very effective.
Great for the visual learner! Now has an abundance of topics.
Essential for me to remember microbiology.
Went through the videos in order then went back to specific videos for review as needed based on UWorld questions.
Loved it, **worth every penny**.
Such an innovative way to learn, and something that made learning microbiology and antibiotics (something that does not come naturally to me) much easier. If not for this resource, I don't think I would have done nearly as well on Step 1. I also find that reviewing the information later on in my medical school career, going back to the pictures in my head, got me through a lot of difficult pimping sessions on Medicine. **DEFINITELY worth the money, and a MUST study tool**.
Sketchy Micro saved my butt in Micro first year, so I used my notes from first year to review micro for Step 1.

No other way to do bugs and antibiotics.
Incredible for memorizing micro.
Must have + pharm.
Used during Micro block and as a memory tool (there is more to Step1 than what is in Sketchy!).
Watched over and over in evenings.
Super useful- even **found some of the pharm videos useful despite them being longer**/more dense (i.e. antiarrhythmics, heparin, etc.- gold).
Yesssssss.
Reviewed a few per day, reviewed with blocks as ID came up.
Thought it was dumb at first and ended up using it a lot.
High quality videos, very helpful for learning micro well. I think I would have done much better on pharm if sketchy pharm was available before my exam.
Was so important to me for micro and pharm! Heavily relied on this for the "random" stuff.
Absolutely mandatory. I don't know how anyone remembers anything micro related without it. Even now in third year I only know micro things that are in sketchy.
Loved it, best thing for micro (started using it before step studying for the micro course).
Ended up being super useful. I binged on it during my dedicated study time.
Amazing! **Watched the videos as my "breaks" from studying throughout the day.**
Great way to memorize.
Worth it.
I liked to use Sketchy at the end of the day to review micro and antibiotics. I did not use sketchy pharm.
Awesome tool to use in your down time when you are sick of studying - watch a few videos every night and you won't forget micro stuff on the exam (this was my main form of studying for micro).
Took screenshots, put into Anki, memorized the pictures by talking through what is on them.
I mainly used this for microbes, not pharm which I found to be a bit over-inclusive. I did all of sketchy during MS1, and then reviewed the bugs as they came up in MS2. I did not try to make another pass through sketchy at any point during dedicated study days as I found my notes & annotated screen shots of the sketches to be sufficient. **I also put the sketches on the back of my Anki cards as appropriate.**
Watched these at 1.5-2x speed for a second time (first time being during first year's micro block) before Step 1- very helpful, especially with the addition of viruses, fungi, and parasites. I did find that the micro on the actual test was harder and often mentioned microbes that weren't necessarily depicted in Sketchy.
Great value for bacteria but it has changed too much for me to recommend at this point.
This was my "fun break".
Beneficial for MS2 year and step 1.
Absolutely fantastic and my favorite study tool. Made a huge difference in micro course and really helped for memorizing micro stuff. Also, I like micro....
Better to use during the school year, hard to cram all the videos at the end when trying to memorize everything.
Helpful.
Used this for bacteria/virus review- Worth the money.

Saved my life. The best. I didn't bother using any other resources (not even First Aid). I just watched each video about 2-4 times and it worked like a charm.
I couldn't afford it at the time, but it looks like it would have been helpful.
Great for microbiology if you are a visual learner.
Did 5 videos each morning, went through it 2x.
Amazing resource. I still remember facts to this day solely due to the videos.
If you haven't used this during ID second year, use it for step 1 studying. **It is GOLD!**
Used it throughout 2nd year. Went through some videos during study period. **SAVED me on micro. Highly highly recommend.**
Micro is outstanding; pharm not so much.

Picmonic:
Fewer students used Picmonic, but those that did found it only helpful for memorizing inborn errors in metabolism (glycogen and lysosomal storage disorders), rare genetic conditions, and biochemistry.

I used this to help differentiate similar things (drugs, diseases, etc.).
Useful for some weird diseases like the glycogen storage disorders, etc. biochem stuff that is just impossible to remember otherwise.
Only used this resource for **pharmacology and the rare genetic conditions** (such as lysosomal storage disorders etc.).
Used occasionally for topics I had trouble remembering.
I didn't use Picmonic for much besides **lysosomal storage disorders and biochem**, but it was helpful for things that require rote memorization.
Pharm was useful, however, pictures are pretty random, so only **used it selectively**
For things that required lots of memorization and some meds. **Especially lysosomal storage diseases, glycogen storage diseases, vitamins,** and bunch of other stuff.
Not great, but cheap. Helpful for drugs, although the actual pictures kind of suck and fall out of your head.
Helpful for **biochem/genetics**
Tried to get through it, helpful, but there was too much.

BRS (Board Review Series):
Few students used BRS to study for Step 1. Those that did used it for reference only.

Good to go back to if needed in-depth review.
Only used for reference although rarely.

Goljan Audio Series (Podcasts):
Many students used this audio series to supplement their studying in moments of downtime, such as while doing laundry or working out. Some students thought that it offered a different perspective on material, which was funny and refreshing. Not many comments were made regarding the direct usefulness of the resource.

Used this to go running/work out.
Listened to these while in the car or running. Extremely helpful for high yield topics and step 1 favorite topics. Beware it is offensive.
Listened through the whole series in my car.
Used to sit back and "relax" from being actively engaged in studying while still studying, not as nice as Pathoma but could use in the car.
Nice to listen to while exercising or walking to class or doing laundry. Not a vital resource but I was entertained and felt them to be helpful- **he does a great job of clearly outlining things and pointing out key differences to pay attention to on the tests.**
Good to listen to while working out.
Listened to multiple times as another way to study while still performing life tasks like laundry and driving.
Listened while doing chores or driving. I would recommend since it's free and allows you to study even while doing other things.
Fun to listen to on the side and helped reiterate things in a different way than Pathoma.
Was great to listen to throughout the day.
Listened to him on walks to school and on car rides.
I listened to all of these while I would jog. It helped me not feel guilty about exercise, and I felt overall better by doing these. On the test day I remember thinking I got 3 questions right because I listened to these.
Downtime review.
This was a good resource - I came to it too late and didn't get through everything. **I would listen to the podcasts while on walks.**
Listed to this during my breaks working out or playing basketball.
Thought these were super helpful. I just listened to them in my car.
Kind of worth it.
I often listened to these while driving to the gym or going for a run. **In addition to doing a good job explaining concepts, he's pretty funny and the jokes helped me to remember** what he was talking about. It was nice to get another angle on some of the concepts where I felt a little weak. He also does a good job of elucidating what is going on inside the question writer's head. I think it definitely brought my score up a bit.
Listened to these as much as I could when I was driving. His voice can be grating, but I found him hilarious. And his explanations were clear.
Listening in the car while driving to the library.
Good for workout, a few nice questions.
Just listened when doing chores/gym.

Very good for learning. I didn't prioritize this, but **it was helpful to have when I'm going on a run** or driving to school, etc.
Good review of path concepts.

Goljan Rapid Review of Pathology:
Fewer students used this resource. Those that did found it to be very dense, but that it did provide a good review of pathology concepts if they were looking to improve on a certain area. Another student solely used the images in the text for reference, as it is thought that some of these images have been on or will be on the real Step 1 exams.

Useful if you want more detail on certain topics you find difficult or where First Aid is lacking explanation, but a bit dense.
Excellent textbook source in **outline format** that was all the info I needed with UWorld.
Don't read this but **use the pictures!!!** Apparently some are IDENTICAL to those on the real test. I had the pdf version and would take screenshots of the path/images to put into my electronic Anki deck notes. Would read the notes in the margins and look at the pictures only, otherwise too dense.
Good review for weak subject areas.
Used as reference when first aid did not make sense to me. Non-essential, maybe I would slightly recommend.
Different representation of material, I used it to complement Pathoma.
Got the book but didn't like it.
The book is amazing with small notes in the margins for high-yield information and more details in the body of the book if you needed to read more. More focused on pathology with some review of physiology.
Used as an outline, fill in gaps.
I found this text **way too dense**, but if I were shooting for 260-70s, I think I would've forced myself to suffer through this.
Good review of path concepts.

Anki Flashcards / Decks:
Anki Flashcard Decks were used by many students. Students found them most useful for memorizing pharmacology, microbiology, and biochemistry. Many downloaded premade Step 1 review decks (one of which is named 'brosencephalon'). Others made their own decks or used Anki as an electronic note system, housing all the valuable graphs, images and tables they would come across. The downside to this resource is that when nearing the end of the study period, the shear volume of cards to get through each day becomes overwhelming.

Used throughout MS1/2. Downloaded premade Step1 decks that I used during MS2 and dedicated study.
Useful for memorizing **pharmacology**.
Absolutely useful. Used these to test myself on concepts I got wrong on UWorld questions.
Used **brosencephalon deck**, available online.
Used for **drugs and bugs**.
I used these throughout first and second year and so had gotten into a habit of using them. I found them **very useful but I'm not totally sure they were indispensable**.
I tried to do the spaced repetition thing but quickly realized this was not realistic- it was just TOO MANY CARDS- too time consuming (if you're to be successful at this, be selective with the cards!) At first I was sad this strategy failed for me but I soon after realized that my work wasn't for nothing -- because I had spent so much time creating these amazing cards, I had created a deck full of amazing comprehensive notes on everything. I was tired of sifting through my paper first aid, which wasted so much time, so **I made Anki into my electronic note system**. THIS WAS SO AMAZING! **I was able to search the deck to find the images or mnemonic I was trying to remember within seconds**. I added to this throughout studying and would input notes from doctors in training videos, first aid images, tables and key notes, and relevant Google images, Pathoma and anatomy and Goljan Path images, and UWorld pictures I took on my phone. I am a very audio/visual person and this was so clutch. **I also made sketchy micro notes on Anki cards** and still use these to look up all the details, even on the wards... so great!
Brosencephalon decks were a rehash of FA for every topic EXCEPT pharmacology (where it was honestly overkill). This was great for people who hated reading FA (like me), and worked really well to kill time on the bus/etc. I paired it with DIT, since DIT tended to cover FA topics in order, and **Brosencephalon is basically a Q&A version of FA**.
Used the brocephalon deck. Created custom decks from within that to study.
Made my own (small) Anki deck. **Did not find pre-made decks useful.**
Find a First Aid Anki deck online or from a friend, and start flipping through this early in the year. It's the one thing I wish I had started earlier.
Used this a ton. Had some premade flashcards and added my own. In retrospect **I should have moved through these at a better clip and just accepted the ones I couldn't get right**
I love Anki flashcards. I learn through repetition and this allowed me to utilize spaced repetition as I saw fit. **I liked being able to do rapid-fire flashcards while waiting in line** or between patients at ACA.
So important. I started using these a little late too and wish I had used them from the beginning of studying.
Used sporadically, didn't work for me.
This was useful for making flashcards from first aid info
Anki is key! There is just no way to remember so much material without having space repetition.
I only used Anki to review wrong answers for UWorld.
Share other people's Anki decks (like brosencephalon on reddit) so you don't have to spend too much time making flashcards if you don't want to. Do them with a classmate on car rides or while bored in class.
Used for blocks in M1, M2 and during dedicated **used more for note taking**.
Foundational for me. I made Anki cards throughout MS2 to help study for my block exams and I put a "step1" tag on the ones that I wanted to continue remember even after the block exam. After each

test, I moved the "step1" tagged cards to a separate USMLE deck and I continued to review that up until the test. In addition, anytime something came up (even in a casual conversation with a classmate) where I thought "shoot, I knew that once, but I forgot. I need to know that for step though," **I would look it up, and then I would make it into an Anki card.** My goal was to only have to re-learn things once. It wasn't that hard to stay on top of the due cards in my step 1 deck during the first 3/4 of MS2 year and I found it an incredibly helpful and efficient way to learn. Once I started doing UWorld, **I also made Anki cards about the concepts that I missed questions about**. Towards the end, it got a little harder to stay on top of my deck because I was adding a lot of cards to it each day. However, even when I had to stray from the spaced repetition schedule in the last month or so and just do cram mode with my new cards, **my deck was still hugely helpful as a searchable reference of key concepts, explained in my own words, with screen-shotted images from First Aid, UWorld*, or class notes.** Overall, Anki was HUGE for me. It really cut down on the amount that I had to re-learn from MS2 and made me so much more efficient. *Yes, UWorld will close if you try to take a screenshot from your computer. My workaround was to use the iOS app on my iPad to review UWorld questions and then to **snap a picture of their figures with my phone**'s Evernote app. **If you have Evernote premium, text within pictures is searchable and you will have a searchable index of all the UWorld figures**.
Made my own cards as I studied.
I used this to make sure that I remembered the answers from UWorld and for quick repetition of facts.
Used to learn FA biochem chapter.
Good for remembering straight facts.
The most important thing I used.
Outstanding resource for memorizing difficulty to remember facts/info.

Firecracker:

Overall students felt that Firecracker was not all that it was cracked up to be. A few students did seem to like this resource, but they used it religiously and started very early, either in first or second year. Students also felt that this resource took too much time during the day to be helpful, especially as Step 1 grew nearer.

Useless! Used it first year and then gave up on it.
I started doing this during first year but found it to be **too time consuming** during 2nd year and not as effective as additional time spent on first aid, Pathoma, and UWorld
Waste of money, not user friendly and redundant if you use Anki as your main mode of spaced repetitions studying.
Used throughout whole year (and MS3), really helpful, wish I had started at the beginning of 2nd year. Also really helped me during "pimping" on the wards.
Did the free trial for a short time. **Too much time in addition to other things I did**.
Didn't find it to be very useful.
Tried to use this for pharm review. **Do not recommend overall**, given how good the other resources like FA and U World are. Probably did not impact my score
Tried firecracker in second year and was unimpressed.

I've heard this has gotten much better
Used it religiously, ~200-300 questions a day during MS2 and gave me a huge leg up.
Not sure it's worth it
During M2, stopped during dedicated cause it took **too much time and tested too many minute details.**
Bought it, regretted it, never ended up using it. The format was stressful and overwhelming for me personally.
Used extensively throughout first and second year, which I think was a mistake. **The explanations are really forgettable and the questions don't really approximate board style thinking very well.**
I recommend it. I did not use it since I didn't know it existed, but I think it would have helped.
Quite overrated in my opinion. Good for repetition, but I felt the content was extremely disorganized and poorly displayed, and **often times went into detail in ways that were not helpful for the exam**. **Maybe a good resource for 2nd year studying, but not a good focused review source for Step 1, in my opinion**. Could have gotten better since I used it and I know many classmates swore by it.
Didn't use it for Step 1, but honestly wish I did. Quick, high yield, easily repetitive facts.
Not worth the money. Didn't really use it very much....

Osmosis:
Very few students used this resource, as many were not aware of its existence. Not a key resource, but Osmosis may be helpful as a mobile phone Qbank for on-the-go studying.

Liked it as a supplementary Qbank to do when I have a minute of down time while out and about.

Cram Fighter:
Cram Fighter is an online schedule generator. Students found this resource very useful, but not necessary, though many highly recommended it.

Kept me on track. Definitely worth the money for my dedicated period.
Liked the idea of this but I found it extremely hard to actually stick to the schedule I created. If you do use this, or even if you don't, **schedule in 'catch-up' study days**!
Best choice, especially to scare me into realizing how much I had to do and how little time to do it.
Great exam schedule generator, **would recommend**.
REALLY helpful for me to figure out how to schedule in so many different resources as well as how to account for differing amounts of study time depending on other commitments (i.e. block exam etc.)
HIGHLY RECOMMEND THIS to anyone, regardless of study habits. **Only way to get everything done and stay on track.**

GREAT for procrastinators like me- told me exactly what to do every day.
Very helpful! Helps you see if you are trying to cram in too many resources.
I ended up using this to schedule out my 2nd pass through Pathoma and the number of Qbank questions I had left. It wasn't that critical for me, but **saved me a little bit of time and only cost ~$50**. It also **felt good to cross things off in their system**. I'd probably use it again.
Useful, but not necessary. Helpful if using a bunch of different resources.
Relied on this heavily to make my daily study task list.

Lange Pharmacology Flash Cards:
Very few students used these premade flashcards. Those that did seemed to like them, but these flashcards do not seem necessary. Recommended for students who feel weak in pharmacology.

Used a little, not a super high yield resource.
Really loved these. Would do 5-10 per night, and **would correlate with the material I studied that day.** Got through the deck about twice. This was super helpful. Pharm is tough and not covered well by anything (maybe the new sketchy pharm is good? but this wasn't released yet so these were clutch).
Purchased since I struggle with pharmacology but only got to use near the end of my study period. Might have been helpful to have at the beginning of the school year to **use more consistently throughout the year** since drug names are hard to cram at the last minute.
Made my own flash cards from these

Course Materials:
Students rarely used their prior course materials to study for Step 1, with the exception of the Mind, Brain and Behavior course book, which was used mainly for reference and neuroanatomy.

Used as reference for more detailed explanations that First Aid couldn't provide me.
Used some for reference
MBB definitely. More useful than neuro section of first aid.
Great for courses, but really not that good for step 1. Too much faculty research/nontestable content. Good for real world practice, but not good to rely on for Step 1, despite what most of the course directors will tell you.
Well, I mean, I used MBB syllabus in order to study for MBB I and II, and MBB II is very similar to step 1, but I don't think I specifically referred to MBB syllabus (or any other course material) to study for Step 1. **Honestly, the way these books are written are great for studying topics in general (e.g. in prep for 3rd year), but it's not as helpful for learning how to beat the exam** (e.g. word associations, etc.).

I'm old school, but still think going to lecture and doing well in class is the best prep overall. If you don't learn this stuff well the first time around it will be much harder to cram in the weeks leading up to the exam.
With the exception of a few review sheets like antibiotics and pharmacology consequences of certain drugs, the course materials were not formatted for review and were not efficient study aids.
MBB book is great.
Good to have around just in case something "stuck" better from when you saw it in the Cards EKG book or MBB syllabus but not necessary.
Helpful to refer back to.
Occasionally used MBB book as a reference.
Very rarely used these, and usually **only when a course provided a particularly well-organized chart, image, or other specific reference material**.
Used MBB book a whole lot. Certain block I made review sheets with all pertinent info on them. Used those/
MBB book is an awesome resource.
MBB book was helpful, other course material not so much.
Use just for the courses.
Use course materials if you want to jog your memory on how you first learned a particular topic to place it back in a familiar context.
Rarely helpful for step.
I used it as reference.
MBB was helpful for remembering some neuroanatomy and pathways.

Other Study Resources / Strategies:

Several students used group study sessions for peer 'pimping' (question asking). A few students wrote or kept notes by using a sticky-note matrix on the wall, with colored markers or paper coordination. Others used a whiteboard or a window to take notes. This method allowed for rapid access to previously studied or frequently referenced materials.

A few **group pimp sessions** were a fun way to meet up with friends and see how you were doing with your studying compared to colleagues
Kaplan Course.
It helps to write out your study guides instead of typing them.
Start Pathoma at the beginning of 2nd year. Seriously. This is the single best piece of advice I can give to anyone studying for Step 1. Do it as you go through your classes and everything will make sense despite lecturers jamming through 120 slides in 50 minutes.
I had decided early that during my studying, **whenever I didn't know the answer to something I would pause what I was doing and find it** (as compared to some moments during first and second year when I would tell myself, 'okay... I'll look that up later'. Well there is no 'later' for step 1 studying so if I didn't know something I would write it down on a stick note and place on my wall at my desk.

This morphed into an **amazing subject-based matrix where at any moment, if I needed to quickly look up information I could reference my, admittedly, crazy wall**. This was key for me as I remember things more visually- **I could picture things on my wall during the test and help jog my memory.** I also **put up question sticky notes in my bathroom on certain things that I would miss time and time again** and would only take it down once I knew it cold. I also hung up anatomy posters and helpful charts or lists or mnemonics that you need to know or are helpful (such as side by side characteristics of Crohns vs. ulcerative colitis).
Sticky note matrix on the wall for the win!
I had access to an enormous **white board** and used this to draw charts, tables, etc. to help them stick. Works great for visual learners!
Google as needed.
Found studying in groups for Step 1/2 to be both unhelpful and needlessly anxiety producing.
I planned out my entire study period with exactly how many videos, questions, and pages of first aid to cover per day.
Having friends to study with is so important! A friend and I tried to teach each other things we learned from the day at the end of the day.
Try to get a study buddy who can at least study silently with you and try to get out of your apartment and explore SD coffee shops as much as possible. When you might be reviewing your notes at the end of the study day, take some time to **pimp each other on important topics** but don't be concerned if they know answers that you don't know yet!
For Step 2, sticky notes on the wall with colored markers for material. Wish I did it during Step 1.
I had a lot of **pimping sessions** with my roommate during our Step 1 study period. I thought it was a good study break (even though we were still studying).
Used **windows in my house as whiteboards** to take notes!

Practice Exams

Roughly one-quarter of students took the practice Step 1 exam offered at the Prometric testing center (*Figure 10*). Most students took 3 practice exams prior to Step 1 (*Figure 11)*. The campus practice exam, UWorld practice exam, and the NBME exams, and the Prometric testing center exam were all moderately to very helpful (*Figure 12*). The average helpfulness rating, in order of less helpful to more helpful, was 3.12 for the Prometric Center practice exam, 3.89 for the campus practice exam, 4.02 for the UWorld practice exams, and 4.19 for the NBME multi-block practice exams (*Table 1*).

> **A word on the Prometric testing center exam** - The Prometric testing center exam is an exam you can take for a fee at the testing center to familiarize yourself with the testing process and environment. Many students recommend doing this practice test to familiarize themselves with the testing center (see Test Day Advice and Tips, pg 85). This is not offered at all testing centers, but is offered at the testing center in San Diego. It is important to note that the same 'free' example questions offered online on the NBME website (approximately 96 questions) are the same questions on the practice test at the testing center. If you plan to take this practice exam at the testing center, do not take these practice questions prior to doing so or you will be wasting your precious time.

Fifty-three students reported the final practice score they had received prior to taking Step 1; 1 answer was eliminated as an outlier. Of the remaining 52 students, the USMLE Step 1 exam score average was 241.3, which is just over 3 points higher than the average pre-test final practice exam score of 238.2 (*Figure 13)*.

Many students felt that the NBME full-length practice tests were unnecessarily anxiety provoking because they had scored much lower on their NBME practice exams compared to their future Step 1 score; the NBME practice exams are thought to underestimate Step 1 scores, (*Figure 14*). This in comparison to UWorld practice exams, which are thought to be better score predictors (*Figure 15)*. Average number of NBME practice exams purchased was 2.83, with most students purchasing 2-3 practice exams (*Figure 16)*.

Students overall felt that taking NBME practice exams were helpful to gauge progress, but not to study. They liked that it more closely mimics real testing conditions, because the exams are old exam questions. Taking 1-3 tests seems useful for practicing timing; yet, since there are no answers provided, thus taking additional tests may be only marginally beneficial.

Figure 10.

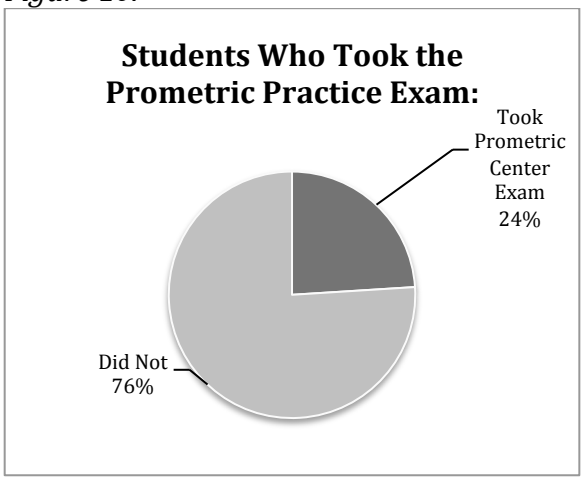


Figure 11.

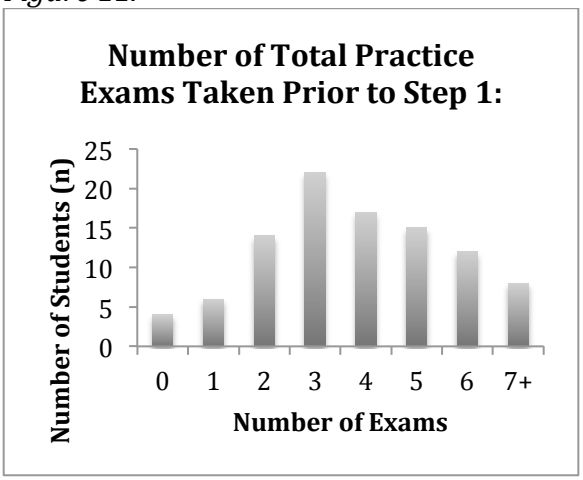


Figure 12.

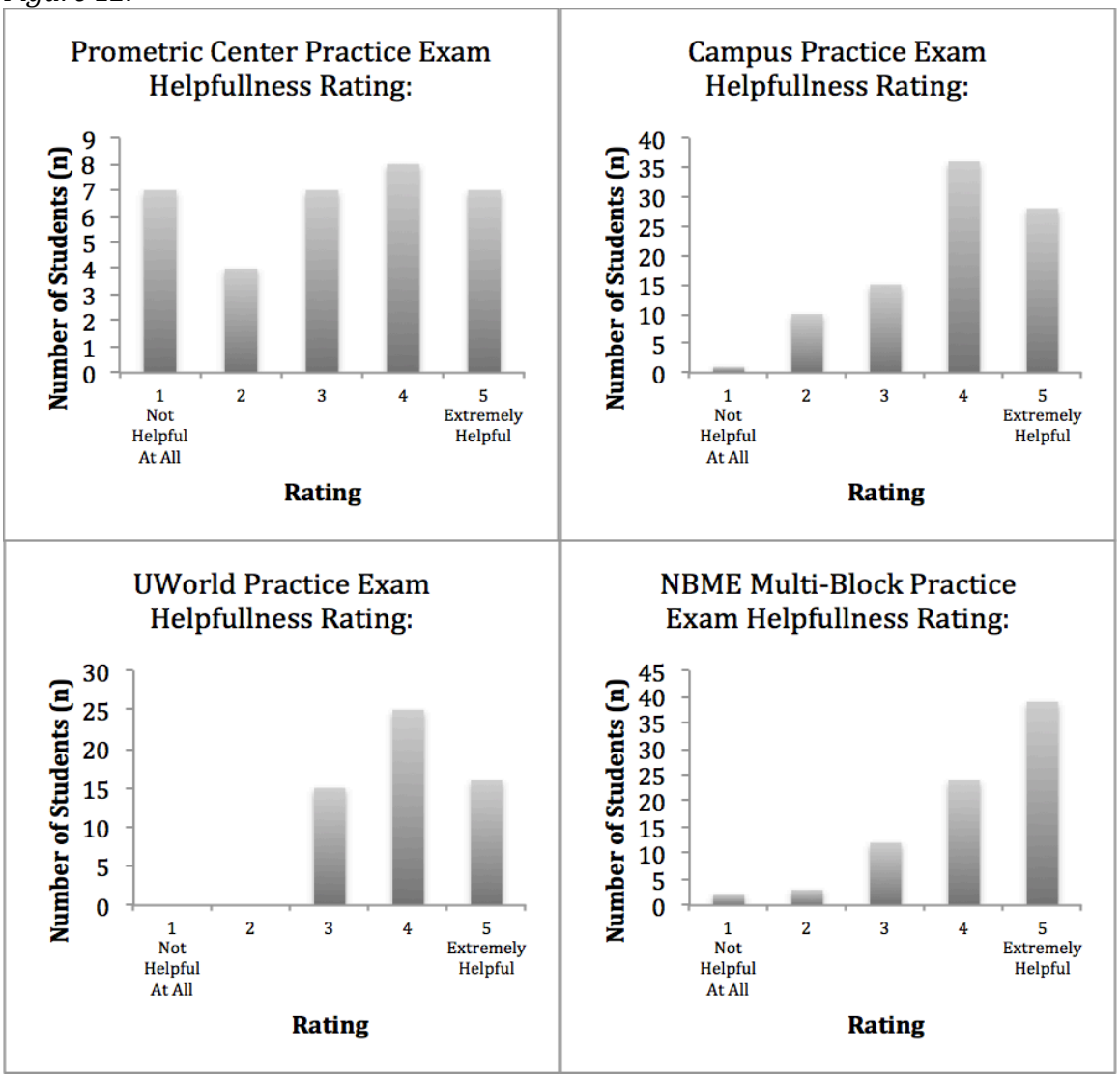
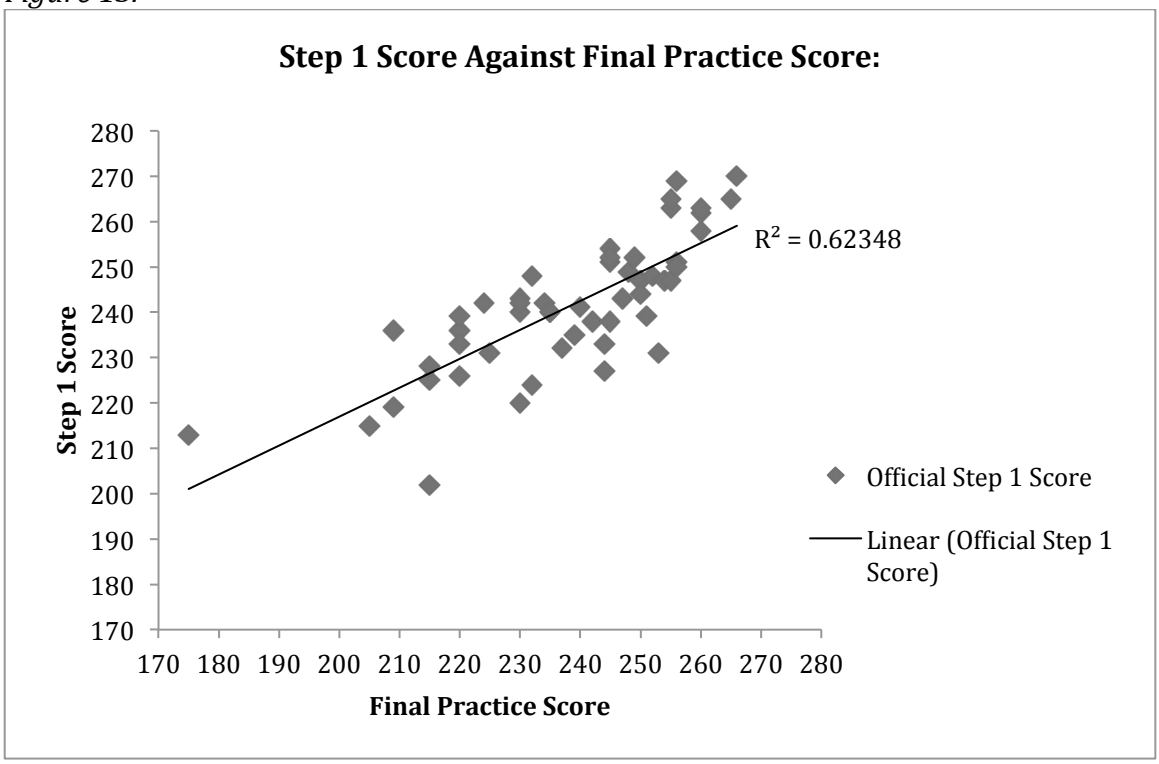


Table 1.

Examination	Helpfulness Average Rating
Campus Practice Exam	3.89
Prometric Center Practice Exam	3.12
UWorld Practice Exam	4.02
NBME Multi-Block Practice Exam	4.19

Figure 13.



Student responses to:
NBME Full Practice Exams

Good for assessing my progress.
I used it to assess my progress weekly. I **did some "group tests" with friends so we could talk each other through things.**
I did 4 practice exams. On one day I did 2 back-to-back to mimic the length of the real test day. My practice scores were within 5-10 points of my actual score.
Great resource because **mimicked real testing conditions**. Exhausting though so only did it twice.
I bought 5 of them and spread them out, one prior to the school-provided one then periodically up until one week before the exam. I had some questions word for word appear on Step 1, which was nice for timing and confidence boosting. **I don't recommend taking these just before your test because your brain needs rest and you might get psyched out.**
Took a couple of these before the real exam to **build up my test-taking stamina**.

Used 1 full practice exam to assess performance 2 weeks (I think) prior to real exam, underestimated final score
Helpful for endurance/practice of timing. Not so great for review.
Did two half-length and one full-length exams on the Saturdays leading up to the exam at the same time I would be taking the actual exam with my same snacks and food I'd have for the actual exam.
Used weekly.
A way to **simulate test day conditions**.
Kind of good for practicing the pace and estimating where you are if you took the test today, but unless you're going to delay testing because of how you performed on the practice exam, not worth doing or spending money on. **Don't teach you much, more of a benchmark**.
These are helpful but annoying in that you aren't given the answers. Pay the money and get the expanded feedback to at least know what questions you missed. My strategy was to actually write a very brief note on each questions during the test and what I answered (which seems like it would've taken too long but I had plenty of time to complete the blocks-I wrote max 10 words on small line), which helped with the expanded feedback to know which ones I kind of guessed on and which I got correct. NBME tends to underestimate your score! These are super hard! Also **I wasted a whole day trying to search the Internet to figure out the answers to my missed questions - this may work but ultimately I regretted this**. I should have just moved did a brief SDN answer search (side note--this is illegal to post the test answers, FYI) and then just give up on the rest as it was not an efficient use of my time to find answers to these crazy complicated questions. I took 2 tests, 1 test 2.5 weeks out and 1 test 1 week out. Allow a few hours for review.
I hated these with burning passion. I started off scoring relatively well, and saw my score drop with each practice test. Worse yet, I couldn't use them to check my answers/identify my weaknesses. Eventually, I just stopped using them.
Good for gauging your progress, but **not good for learning**. I only bought one of these (in addition to the free on that the school offers). Maybe would have done more, but you get very little from these other than practice with timing and an indicator of what you may score. The NBME test that I did 2 weeks prior to step 1 overestimated my real score by 4 points.
Really good for simulating the real test in terms of the difficulty of the questions.
Mostly useful for formatting. **Questions were not representative of actual step questions** and lack of review mode made them practically useless as a study aid.
I did 3 of these during the 3-4 weeks prior to Step. My actual step score fell within a 10-point range of what I got on the practice tests, so it's a **good way to estimate what score you'll be near**.
Best to gauge your real performance.
I **used these for tracking progress**, but not a very good learning tool since there is no answer key or explanation. I would recommend, but not essential.
Moderately helpful but because the exam does not provide an answer key or let you review the questions you were guessing on but got correct it is less of a powerful study guide. **I would suggest collecting wrong answers in a classwide-Google-doc like our class did in order to collect the majority of test questions**, even the ones you got right
Only took the school administered one, which set a good baseline for me.
Good way to assess your progress. **Taking more than 2-3 tests brings you to a point of diminishing returns, as you are not actually learning anything from the test** since it does not have explanations of wrong answer choices. Very useful to take on at the beginning for baseline, one in the middle to assess progress and then a week prior to test date to find deficiencies. **Taking closer to the exam is just anxiety provoking** and doesn't give you enough time to address any issues.

Not helpful.
Good to gage progress, but waste of time if you do too many and not helpful for studying purposes...
Did 2 full-length practice exams.
It's tempting to take the NBME practice tests to see how you're progressing with your studying, but don't do it too frequently. I took 2 – once about 2 months before the test and one about 2-3 weeks before. I saw people taking them every 1-2 weeks and you not only lose a lot of study time but it can also be demoralizing if your score isn't jumping up (which it might not after only a week or two).
Useful to boost confidence and have experience on the day of the exam.
Important part of prep, Stamina, knowing format etc. I wish I had done one more (I did two plus the school's)
Test my readiness for the actual exam.
Closest question style to the actual test. The more recent practice exams are the most accurate predictors of test performance. Buy the expanded feedback to see which questions you got wrong.
I took 3 total of these exams, including the one that was administered on campus by the university. I think that it was a good idea to take them so that I understood how to time myself for extending exam taking, and it gave me a gauge of how my over-all knowledge was coming together during the study period. I think that, as they are not "required" (I suppose none of these resources are, but you could argue that First Aid, Pathoma, Sketchy Micro, and UWORLD are) they are worth the money to those who choose to do them.
These exams were used to see where my knowledge gaps lay and my test-taking abilities were. I used them to improve my approach to questions and improve my test-taking abilities.
Very good practice for the real thing. I did all of the ones offered.
Useful, but **can be emotionally taxing.**
Did one during the designated study period.
Double-edged sword- **saw a lot of people get really thrown off/stressed out by NBME results**. Not a great learning tool because not great explanations, recommend only taking them if they would change your management (i.e. if you are considering moving up or bumping back your test date!)
Assessment of preparedness.
Took 3 total- one at the beginning, one in the middle of study period, and one a week before the actual exam.
Helpful toward the end to get familiar with the actual exam, **but not always a great marker for actual performance**. Helped to scare me straight, but **my practice scores were nearly 20 points lower than my actual score.**
Used it for gauging where I was at.
Useful just to get a sense of the format, **supposedly repeat questions sometimes show up on the real exams** from these exams but I didn't get any.
Very expensive- sort of gave me a sense of where I was at but **I ended up performing better on the real deal.**
Probably useful but need to have a source for answers otherwise not an efficient use of time.
I put too much weight in these practice exams when I did poorly and not enough weight when I did well. **Overall not very useful in my opinion**.
Not like the real test.
Worth it.

Did a few just to practice.
I did two tests (three if you include the school one). I think it's a **good strategy to see how you are progressing** and to get comfortable with how the questions are asked, as they are different from UWorld.
Did 2 of these - first one was very rough, second one I got the hang of it. A good exercise in timing and somewhat helpful to predict score on exam **but don't read too much into it if you get a bad score**. Also the format of the real exam looks much more like UWorld than it looks like these practice exams.
Did 2 interspersed in dedicated study time.
Really dented my confidence unnecessarily. I was never able to reach my goal score on NBME practice exams despite doing well on UWORLD self assessments. I spent a lot of time stressing over NBME practice exam scores, changing my study strategies afterward, etc. Ultimately my step 1 score ended up being way higher than it had ever been on an NBME practice exam- do NOT give those tests too much weight!
Important for my test taking skills/building stamina, and assessing your progress/modifying my study schedule as appropriate. **I did NOT find them efficient as learning tools because you have to troll through the Internet to find explanations for each question**. I think I took about 1 per week.
I found these useful to take throughout the study period to gauge where my knowledge was.
Good to gauge where you're at.
Helpful in the 3 months before test to gauge study efficiency.
Good for assessing improvement over the study period
Very useful, took 4-5 of them as practice exams and wrote down what I put for answers and which ones I got wrong so that I knew what all the answers were.
Used to assess my progress.
Thought this was the best representation of my actual score. I took one every week to track my progress. It was very accurate in my opinion. However, **wouldn't use it as a learning tool** because they don't give you an answer key or even tell you what the right answer is to questions you got wrong.
I hate that they charge money for these (and charge extra for the answers), but there's really no choice but to purchase them.
Purchased and completed 3 tests (did not take the one offered by the school). Used as an assessment tool primarily. Took notes on new topics and looked them up after the test
Good for getting a sense of where I was at in my studying. Didn't like that I couldn't see the answers.
Did about 3 exams, good for figuring out deficits in knowledge.
Did 1 to track progress.
Great practice for timing; probably only do these during the dedicated study time and closer to your test date.
Took several.
They were great practice for the endurance needed during the exam and a mental preparation for how well I will do on the exam (my actual score was ~10 points higher than my last NBME which I took 1 week prior to exam). I did not like that **they caused anxiety and stress in some of my classmates (when they didn't get the score they anticipated**).
Excellent practice in question format, difficulty and timing.
Used for self-assessment.

Figure 14.

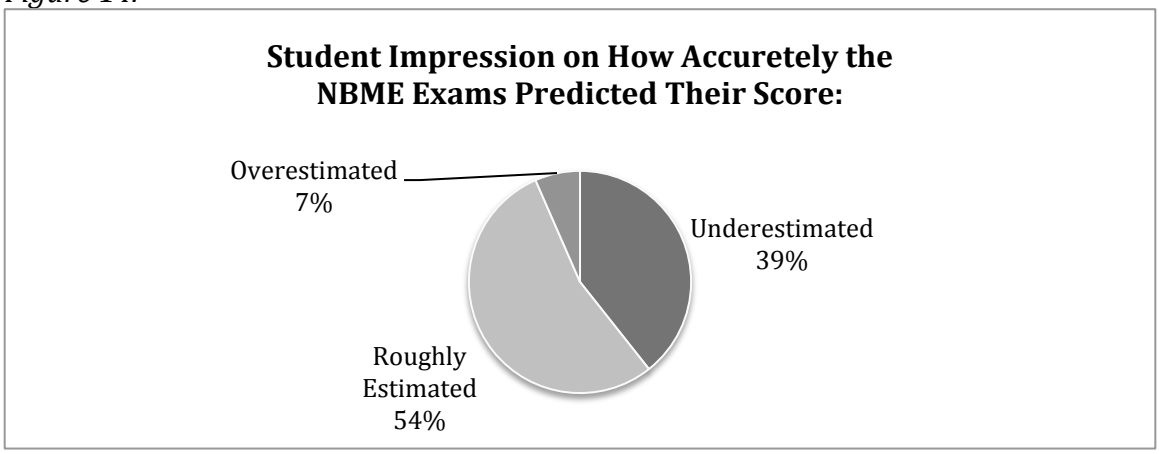


Figure 15.

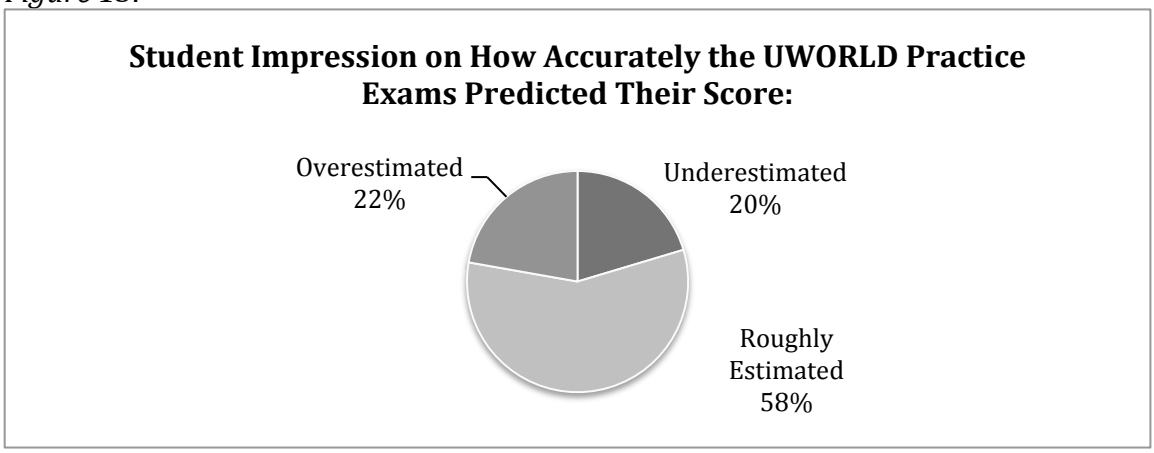
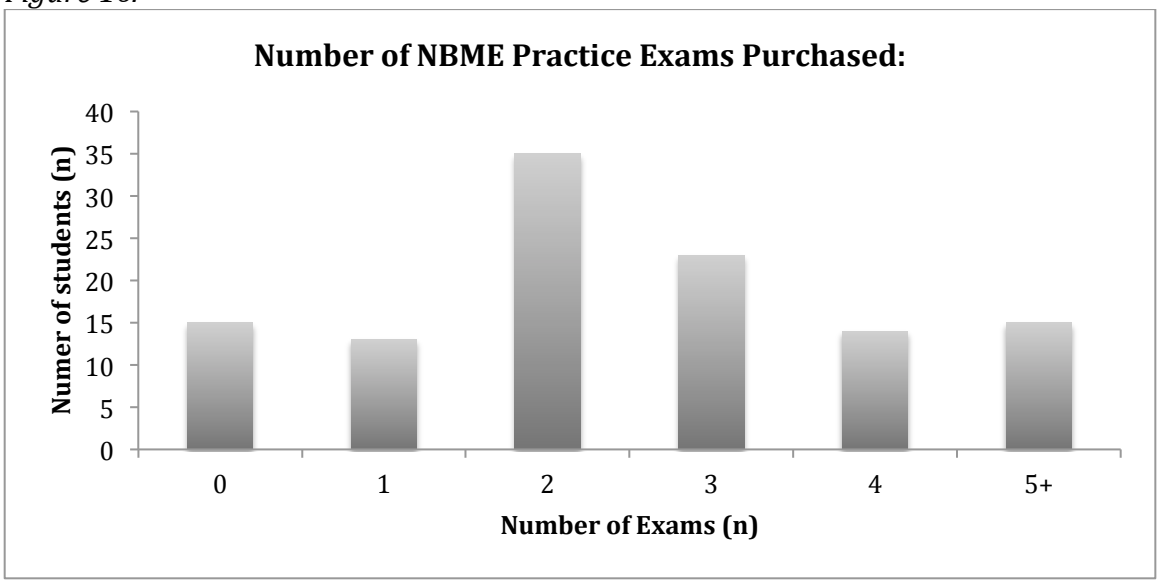


Figure 16.



UWORLD, In-Depth

A remarkable 99% of the students surveyed used UWorld Qbank to prepare for Step 1. Most students purchased UWorld either during second year (55%) or at the start of second year (33%), (*Figure 17*). Only 3 out of 100 students purchased UWorld at the start of the designated study period (*Figure 17*). Of the students surveyed, 47% and 48% of students purchased the 6 and 12-month Qbank subscriptions, respectively (*Figure 18*).

UWorld self-assessment exams (4-block practice exams) were only purchased by 69% of students (*Figure 19*). Students felt that the UWorld Practice exams were a good estimate of their real Step 1 scores, (*Figure 15*, pg 42), especially in comparison to NBME practice exams, which appeared to underestimate scores (*Figure 14,* pg 41).

The majority of students were able to fully complete the UWorld Qbank prior to taking Step 1 (*Figure 20*). Notably, 16% of students only completed about 75% of the questions (*Figure 20*). There was a weakly positive correlation between the percentage of UWorld Qbank questions completed and a higher Step 1 score (R^2 = 0.084, *Figure 21*). The amount of 'incorrect' Qbank questions completed was variable (*Figure 22*), but the same weakly positive correlation with a higher Step 1 score was seen (R^2 = 0.084, *Figure 23*). Most students were able to complete 1 pass through UWorld (44%) and many even completed 2 passes (37%), (Figure 24). It was rare for a student to complete 3 passes (1%), (*Figure 24*). There was a weakly positive correlation with the number of passes and step 1 score (R^2 = 0.064, *Figure 25*). Roughly 50% of students reset their Qbank and 50% did not.

Most students were averaging 70-89% on UWorld questions just prior to taking Step 1 (*Figure 26*). There was a moderately positive correlation with UWorld Qbank pre-test average scores and Step 1 scores (R^2 = 0.27, *Figure 27*).

Students had many opinions regarding test mode strategy. Several students expressed that the best initial strategy is to use subject-based, timed-tutor mode and then later during the study period to start doing timed, random mode. Subject-based timed-tutor is best suited for learning, while timed, random blocks are best for gauging progress, practicing pacing, and for revisiting subjects.

Students were in agreement that the most important part of going over UWorld questions is reading each explanation for every answer, no matter if it is the correct or incorrect answer. This is where the key learning would go on for many students. Some students took as many as 4 hours to review 1 full UWorld block of questions, while others took as little as 40 minutes. The time for review typically halves as the study period progresses.

Figure 17.

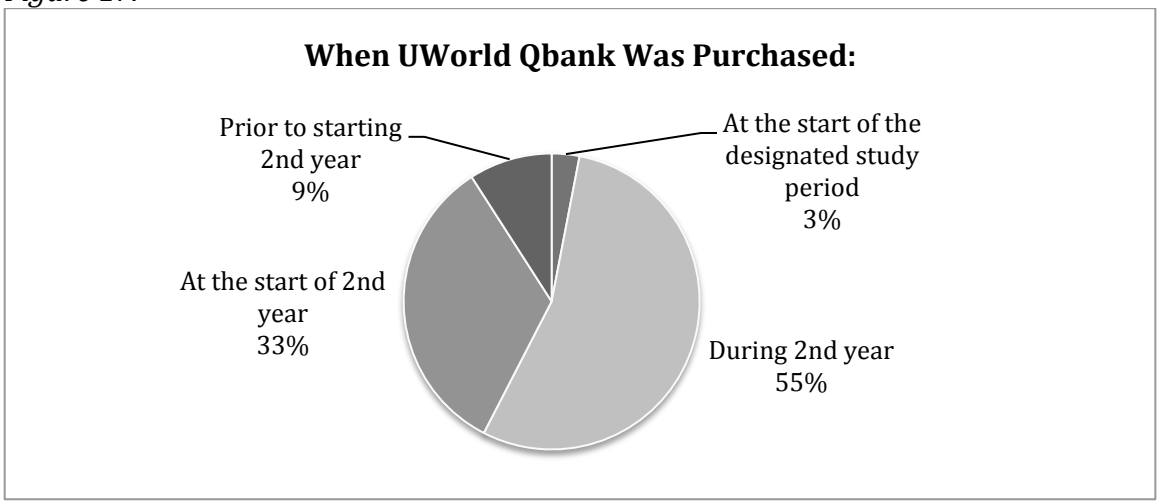


Figure 18.

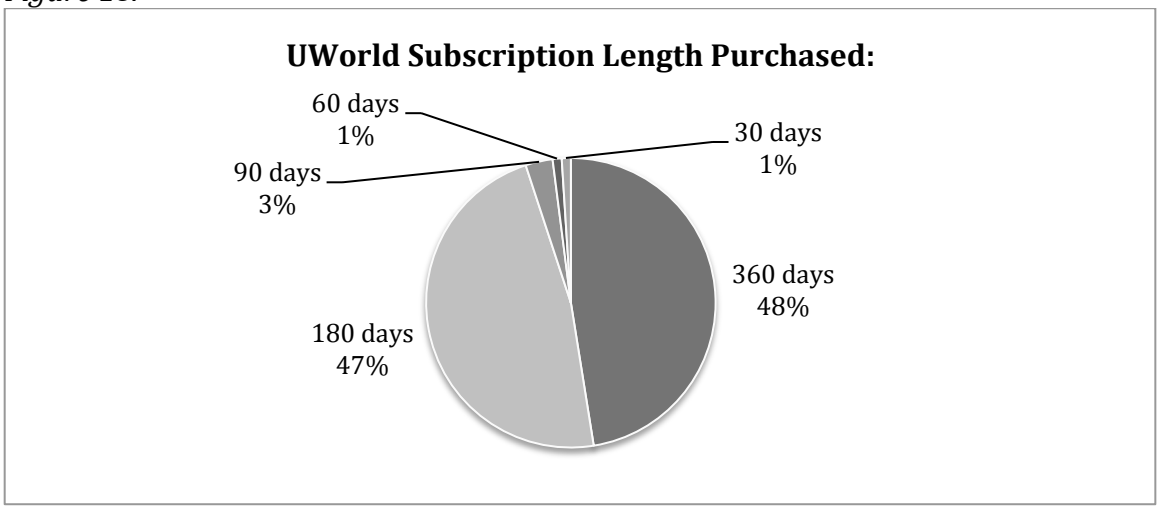


Figure 19.

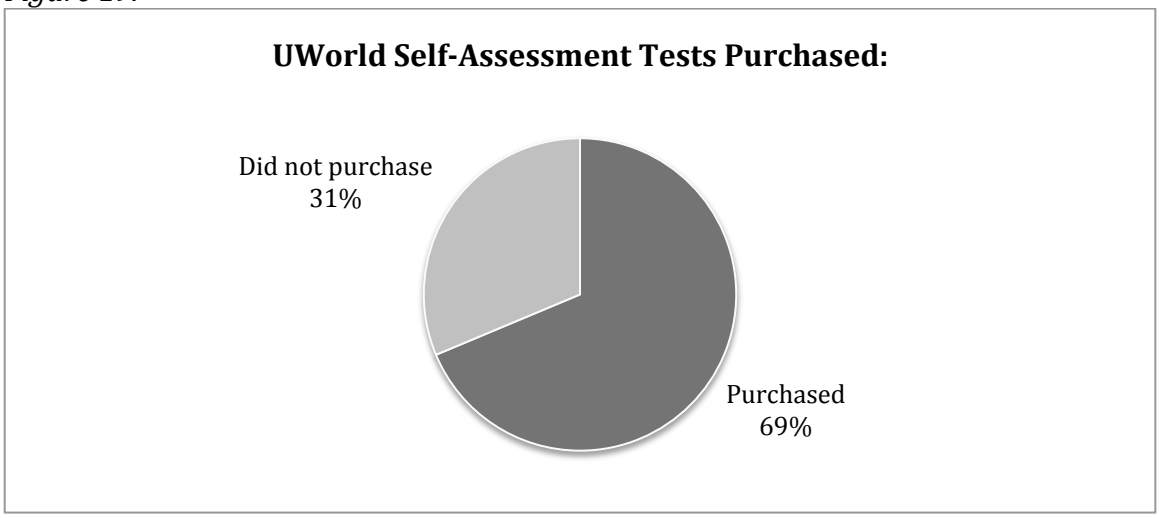


Figure 20:

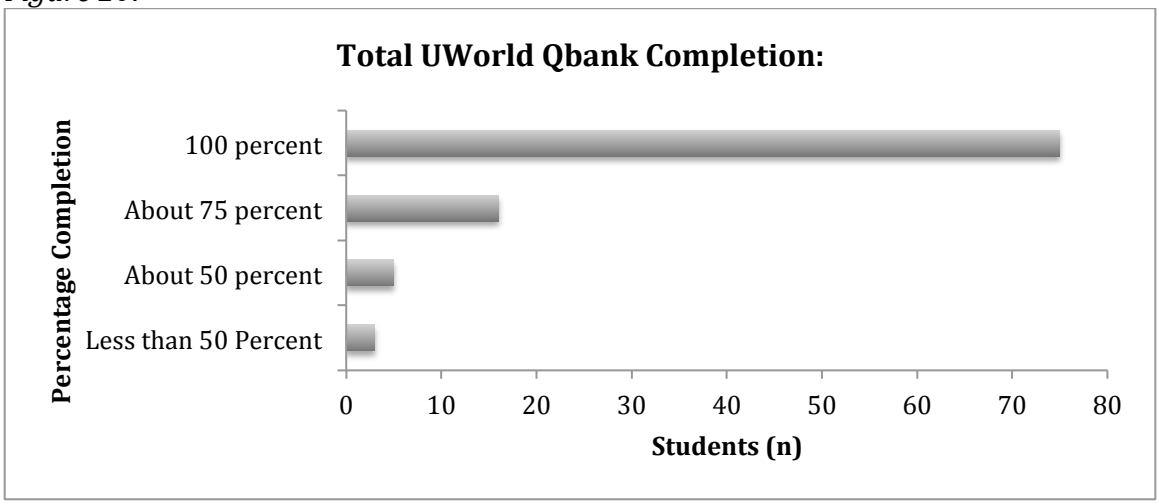


Figure 21.

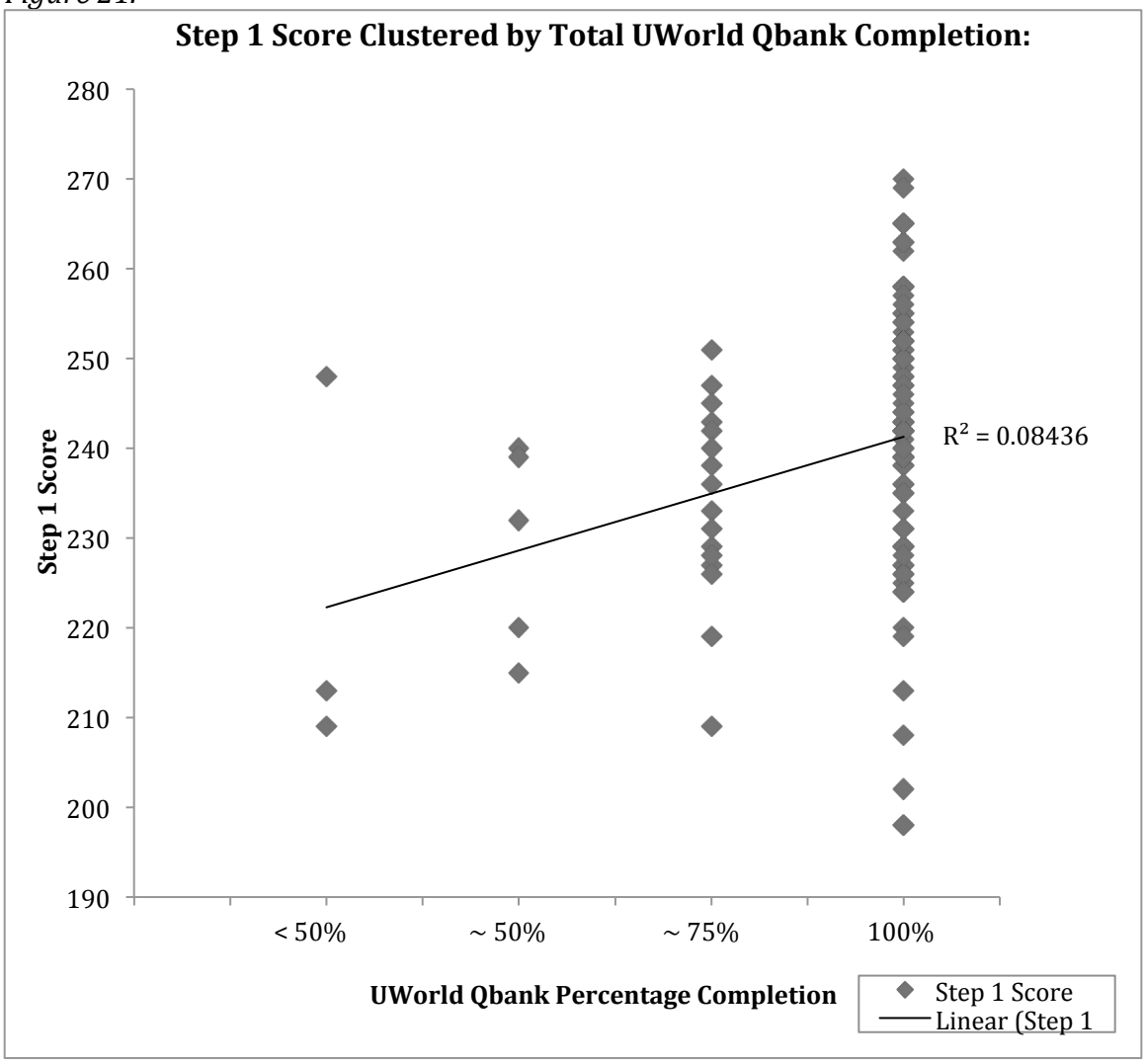
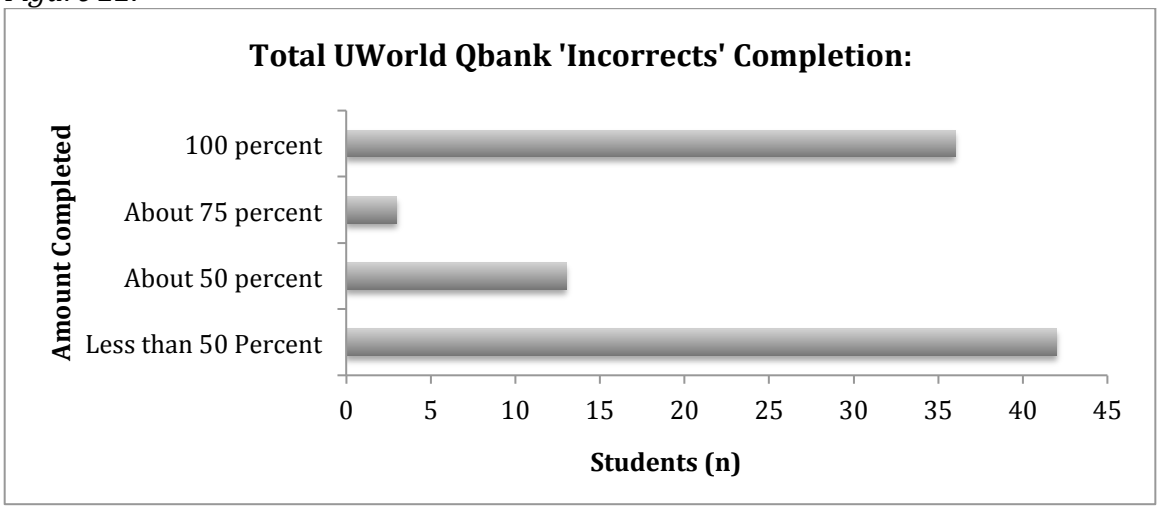


Figure 22.



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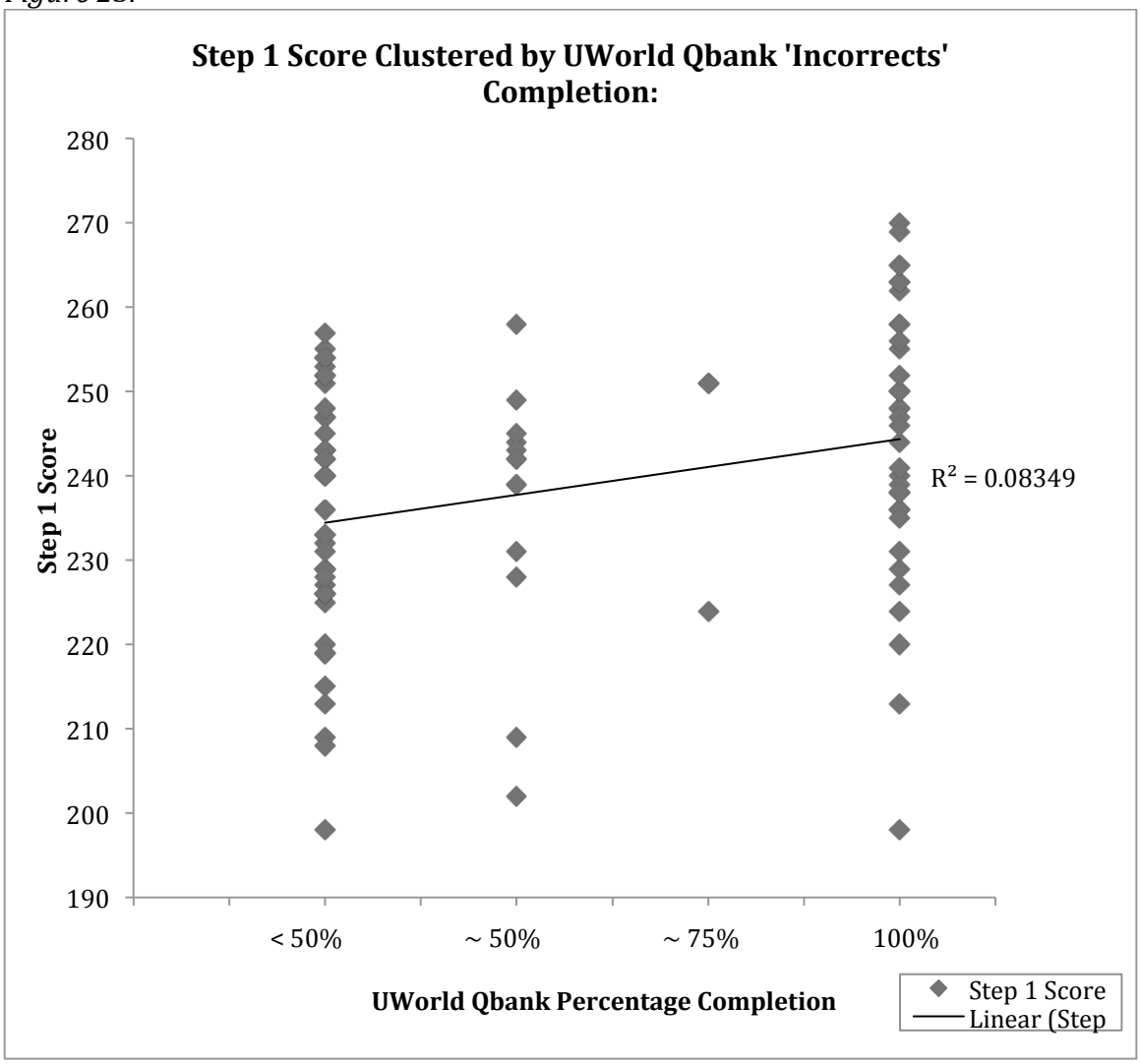


Figure 24.

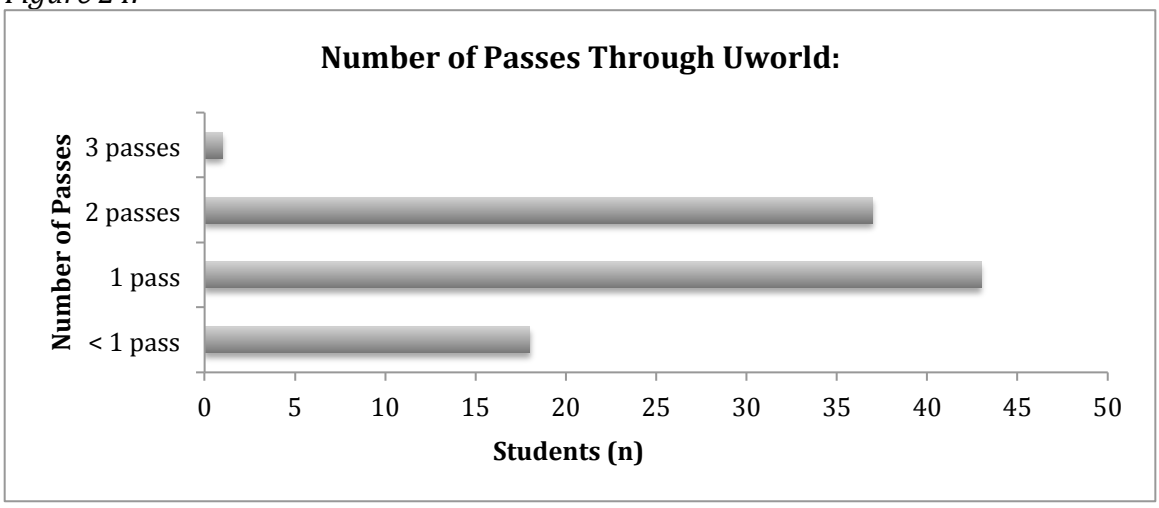


Figure 25.

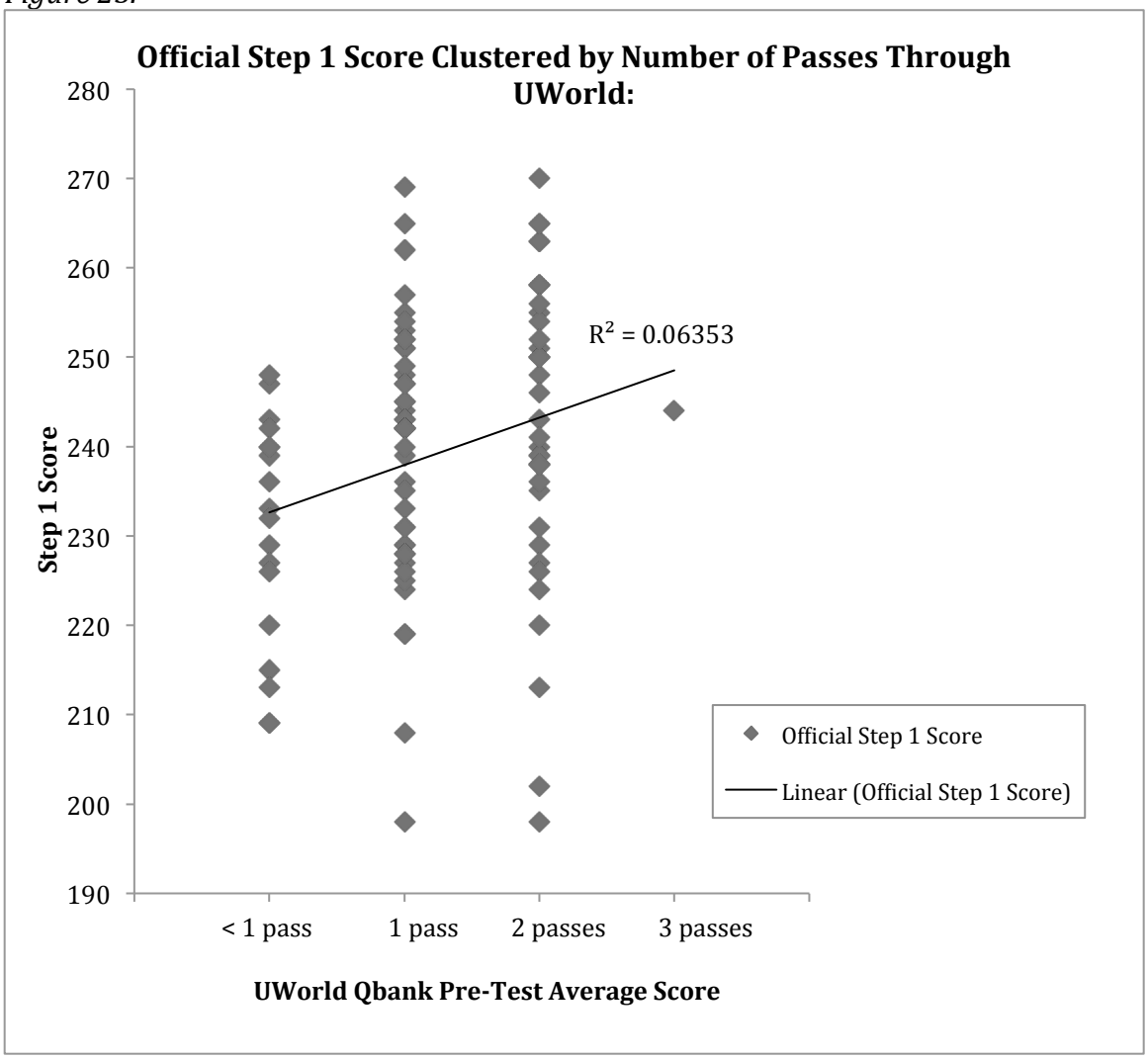


Figure 26.

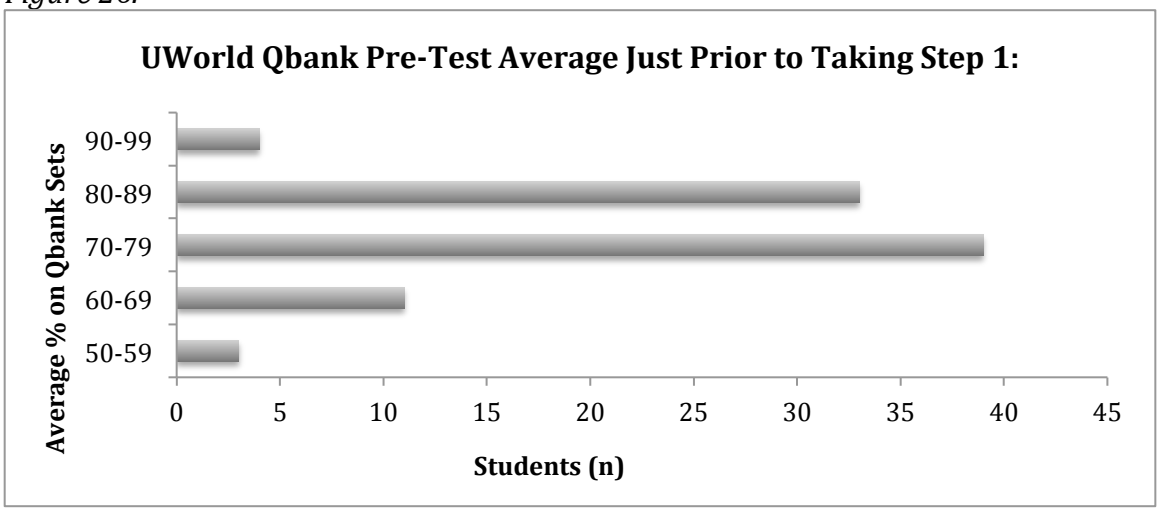
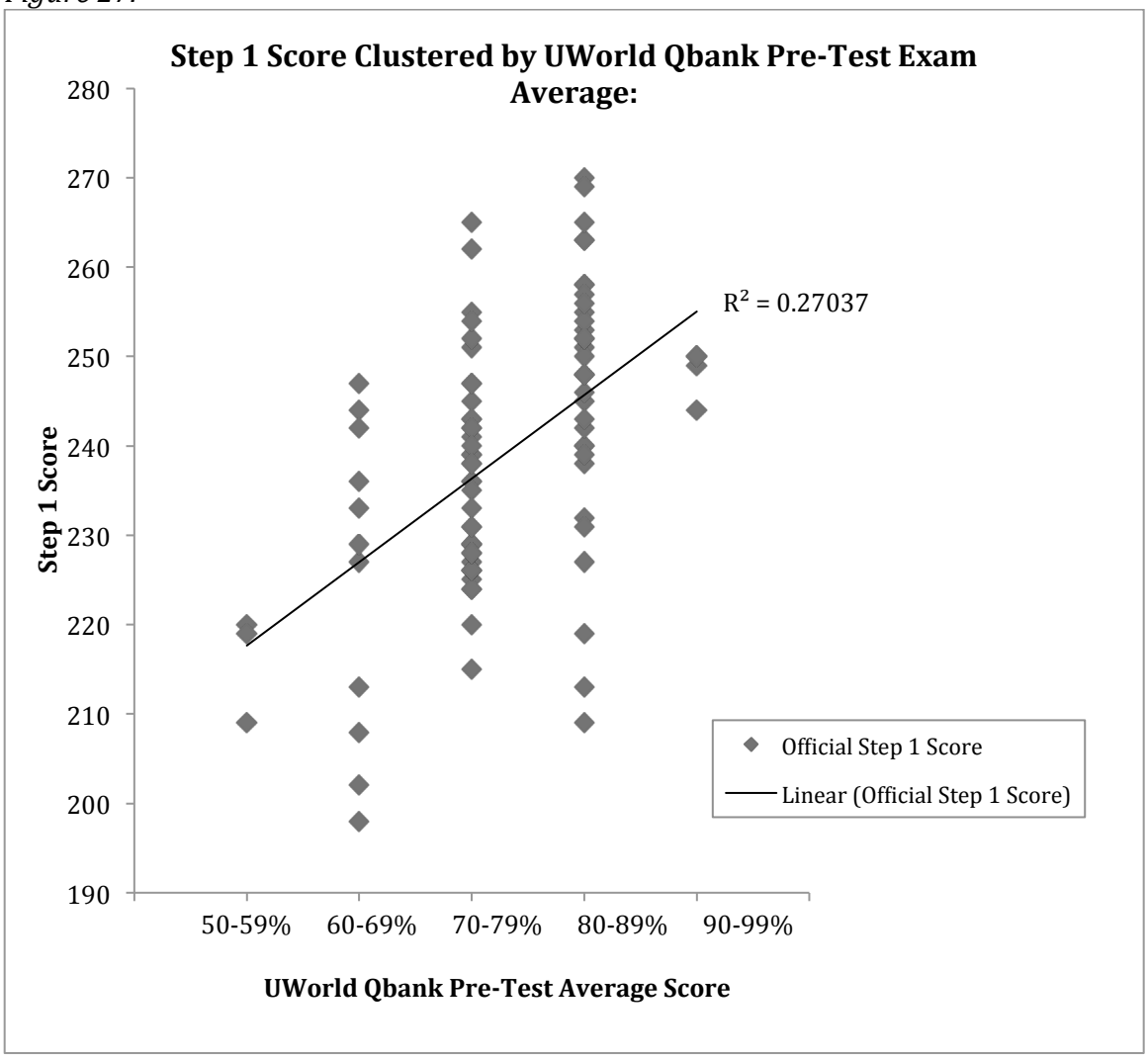


Figure 27.



Student oppinions regarding different study modes on UWorld (timed-tutor, tutor, or untimed mode; Random vs. subject-based):

I use untimed tutor almost exclusively.
I did virtually all regular questions in untimed tutor mode with random subjects because that's how it worked best for me. Towards the end of studying I'd do certain subjects to reinforce those weak areas.
Random is much more representative of the real exam and forces you to jump from subject to subject which prepares you better. I tried to do most sections timed, especially closer to the test date.
I always used tutor mode.
Tutor mode from start on random was great for going at my own pace but getting used to how the real test randomly jumps between topics. Occasionally I did timed non-tutor random to simulate. I never did subject base because I could automatically eliminate answer choices that didn't fit the subject (e.g. pick CHF for a GI subject). I would strongly advise against timed tutor because the answer pops up automatically and gets distracting.
I mostly used random questions on tutor mode.
Tutored and subject-based modules for learning the material, timed and random modules for simulation.
I did mainly timed tests.
Subject-based, untimed to learn, then random untimed/timed to study.
Timed is best. Need to know how long you have to respond and how to direct your attention. I went through all initially by subject to find shortcomings and then as second time randomly for real experience.
All timed and random!
I preferred using timed tutor so I could read each explanation immediately after I answered, but was still kept to a time limit so I could practice how to manage my time wisely
Timed best for practicing test taking; tutor was what I used to learn material
Timed tutor is especially helpful. Sometimes helps to do timed tests to evaluate pacing.
Absolutely always use timed mode, and do them in maximum-sized blocks. Better to do totally random, but subject-based is OK too.
Great for learning, especially subject based, random timed was great for learning the right pace.
I preferred timed-tutor mode by subject. I preferred this because after trying timed mode, I was frustrated with the time that was wasted rereading and trying to understand each question instead of having it fresh in my mind. It was vital for me to get instant feedback on something if it was right or wrong or else I wouldn't get that reassurance and solidify my knowledge. I think it is important to still have it timed but I think the tutor mode is key. I used this up until my test. I felt it very important to go by subject because you could start to build the full picture of that organ/subject, maximizing UWorld as a learning tool, allowing for you to compare diseases to highlight key test-differences.
When first starting UWorld, I used subject based, untimed tutor modes. As the exam approached, I switched to random, untimed, tutor mode. In the last couple of weeks leading up, I switched to random timed non-tutor mode and did 7 blocks of 44 questions at a time to simulate exams.
Used mostly tutor mode.

Timed, random-based question blocks are the best to prepare for the "real conditions" on the test. But when I was starting out, I focused on doing timed, subject-based question blocks to boost my confidence.
Tutor is a nice way to start, but definitely start timing yourself during designated study period because it makes things a lot harder!
Tutor and subject-based are good for when learning. Timed and random better when closer to test date.
Timed-tutor was most helpful, b/c it forced me to answer questions faster and then I could use my time to review answers as needed. Timed mode was best for getting through large quantities of questions and building endurance. Tutor-only mode wastes time unless you're studying somewhere with frequent interruptions and you don't want to keep pausing your test.
I used all of them at various times. Tutor and subject based to begin and then time-tutor or timed and random on the second pass.
During year 2 I used subject based untimed tutor. During devoted study time I used random untimed tutor and random timed non-tutor.
I would start with untimed modules but to really prepare yourself for the pace of the exam, try timed exams (I prefer timed and then review afterwards) as early as you feel comfortable. The pace is the most important thing to get used to as this can make or break your exam performance on exam day. I would also recommend random question mixes unless you are particularly poor in a certain subject material.
I did two sets a day. The first set would be tutor or timed based on the subject I studied that day and the second set would be a mixed set of all the subjects I covered so far. This worked the best for me because it allowed me to focus and learn well the subject that I working on that day and then ensure I wasn't forgetting stuff that I had already went over.
Random untimed was good for going through questions, but closer to the test timed tutor was best.
Only used tutor-mode. UWorld questions take longer than typical Step questions.
Always have to use random instead of subject based for best prep as knowing the subject of a question gives an unfair advantage on knowing the type of answer that is correct. Simulating the real test is the most important. Tutor mode is very useful in learning on the spot and not forgetting question stems by the time answers come up. However, it is best suited for early stages of studying when there is a bigger knowledge deficit. Later on timed mode is necessary to learn to read and answer quickly given time constraints of the test.
Untimed tutor mode, subject based was a good way to study/focus at the beginning. Timed, random-based was better as step 1 date got closer.
I utilized the random, timed mode then I would review all incorrect answers at the end of the 40-question set.
I typically did a timed block and then reviewed the questions after, to help learn to pace myself. Random also helps, because it is difficult to get to questions a second time- say you started with GI questions at the start of studying, now you may not see GI for several weeks to months before the exam.
Timed tests of 46 questions at a time were my favorite way of studying.
At first I did untimed tutor on system specific subjects- just used the questions to learn. Then closer to the test did time blocks with random subjects.
I used a variety of these modes based on how I wanted to study.

Each are useful in their own right. Smaller sets (~10 questions) of subject-based tutor mode was great for targeted studying of weaknesses; full sets (46 questions) of random questions was useful for exam preparation.
Timed-tutor.
Useful in different ways. Used tutor to learn material at my pace and timed to test my progress.
I always did questions on Random rather than subject-based. I preferred this method of study, as it is how it appears on the actual test. You must be able to frequently switch between topics throughout a question set.
Tutor mode was most helpful because I could review my answers and explanations right away.
I think that time-tutor is a useless setting because the point of it being timed is to go through the questions in a test-like environment. Getting immediate results and then explanations for the answers does not allow for a test-simulated experience. I generally used untimed modes so that I wouldn't think about the answers I had previously gotten wrong while I was working on the next questions, and then used the review function at the end to go through all of the questions together. I used tutor when I was trying to simulate a test environment, but used it much more rarely. I appreciated having the subject-based abilities, and I could see how it would be particularly useful when still in class and studying for UCSD exams. I generally did subject-based questions on a daily basis as I was going through First Aid and Pathoma, which are broken up into organ-system subjects as well. That way I was using all the study modalities for a particular organ on a given day. I began using random during the last 2 weeks of studying as a review of everything.
I liked subject based, realistic testing circumstances. Non-tutor. Then I would slowly include more and more topics per test as time went on.
I only used time-tutor and timed modes. Timed tutor was good when you were trying to learn information, but ideally timed should be used if you generally struggle with time management. I would do questions on subjects that I had studied at that point, so it ended up being random as I added on more subjects.
I go through questions pretty quickly, so I did timed or untimed and it didn't make a big difference. I liked to do non-tutor, so it felt like a real question block.
Tutor!! I did not know about this mode until step 2 and wish I had.
Random and always did the test simulation mode - much better predictor or exam day.
Tutor is nice for when you're first starting but you really need to do the timed mode (not timed-tutor) mode to get a feel for the speed at which you should be answering questions.
Doing questions just on the bus/walking on tutor mode. And trying to do full length time-tutor when you have designated time to sit down and study.
Tutor best.
Random, timed.
Tutor!!
I only did random questions, as I started using UWorld after my med school courses were over. I think the untimed mode is useless. I started off using the tutor mode, and then as I felt more confident I changed to time-tutor, and then timed. It felt like a natural progression.
Timing yourself is very important. Subject based great for reviewing as you read.
Tutor mode is great.
I did time-tutor, subject-based questions that corresponded to the subject I was studying at the time.
Timed mode, random!
Tutor mode, usually subject based.

I started with subject based but felt like I got good quickly at things but wasn't retaining it well so switched to random which I felt like built my knowledge better and more sustainably over the study period. I either would do timed or untimed and then look through the answers.
I think it was important to do questions on tutor by subject first because it gives you a chance to begin to see patterns and get concepts reinforced.
Time tutor is most useful!
Untimed tutor.
Time-tutor is more realistic.
Subject-based with tutor mode first, and then timed with random for the second time. I finished 60% and reset my Qbank.
I used the tutor mode most often but tried to take some timed tests as the exam got closer to get more used to the timing. I did a combination of subject tests and random.
Did random timed, thought it was good.
I preferred to do almost exclusively timed questions (no tutor), even if it meant I was only doing a 5 question block during a break between classes early in the year.
My practice tests for Step 1 were primarily done in tutor mode with random questions; tutor mode cut down my question review time by a lot, so I could get through many more questions in a day than I otherwise would've been able to. However, after having studied for Step 2, I feel that the timed mode is more beneficial because it helps you practice pacing yourself for the real thing.
Tutor, subject > random.
Used all modes at different times.
Tutor subject-based best to begin with, then random timed closer to test day
Random and time tutor were by far the most helpful. Untimed and tutor were useful at first but gave false sense of security.
I liked to use tutor for practice/immediate feedback after doing the questions. I started with subject-based and then transitioned to random, as it got closer to the exam.
Tutor Mode.
Timed - best to replicate the real exam.
Untimed when studying by subject, timed and random when doing test prep.
I did timed-tutor or just timed mode with random questions for each set of 40 questions. However, I think that all the modes are very helpful in different ways, just depends on what your goal is for that session. For instance, if I'm on the go and want to squeeze in a few questions here and there, then timed tutor is awesome. If I was to learn to pace myself, then I used timed mode and then review all the questions when I'm done.
Tutor was the most helpful.
Only used the timed modes, which were very helpful.
Tutor mode provides the most learning, only used tutor mode.
Started with untimed tutor mode and subjects, switched to untimed random later on.
Preferred subject-based tutor mode at the time, though in retrospect wish that I had gone with random untimed (would likely have simulated the true exam environment better, though not with the full time crunch pressure yet).
Tutor and timed were great when you were just learning and in serious stud mode, respectively.
I did timed blocks of 40 until I knew that timing wouldn't be an issue, then I did tutor mode and kept myself to doing each question in 1 minute or less.

I would basically never do tutor or untimed because I think the endurance of the exam is a learned skill. Hence I would always do the exam either timed or time-tutor. I did random for the majority of the time but I don't know if that was a good idea or not.
Tutor to learn, always untimed. Subject based early, random as test date approaches.

Student response to:
How did you review the UWorld answer explanations/answers to study:

I made sure to understand why each response was correct or incorrect.
It was my main source of studying.
These are key to success. I would spend more time reviewing questions than taking them. The explanations are extremely high yield
I read through each explanation/answer thoroughly and took notes on subject material I needed to work on
First read through the entire explanation, then made flashcards based on the content.
I would read the explanations on every question.
Heavily, >90%.
I used them to study for the different blocks and for the test.
Read through them.
Took notes from these explanations in my first aid book.
They were extremely important.
Took notes from UWorld explanations into my First Aid book.
Very heavily as a primary source of knowledge.
The explanations are soooo important, often more important than the actual questions.
Add any information that was unfamiliar and seemed important to my Anki deck and review the flashcards daily.
Kept a list of things to read more about later.
At first I would read through every everything- all answers! This is where the most learning happened for me. Then towards the very end of my period when I was doing incorrects I mainly would read the sentence summary only.
I made PowerPoint figures for literally each concept I didn't have memorized.
Read them, wrote down some key points in notebook.
If there was a question that I was extremely confident that I knew the answer to, I would just skim over their reasoning. But if I got the question wrong or accidentally guessed right, then I would read the answers to ALL of the choices.
Very useful! I read all of them (it takes a long time but UWORLD has really good explanations)
Tried to go through thoroughly then started glossing over cause too time consuming
Read in detail, looked up stuff I didn't know
Read them in depth. Tried to make notes from them, but didn't have enough time. Given more time, I would have done this and correlated with my other study materials.
I almost always read them. If the explanation was especially good I flagged it and reviewed it later again.

Read them carefully and use them as an important study tool
I took brief notes about answer explanations I was not clear on. (Brief 1-2 sentence bullet points)
Used them to figure out what I was doing wrong and then making flashcards based on this.
Reviewed all answers after finishing a block
I would often annotate useful question explanations into my First Aid
Read the right and wrong answer choices even if you got the question right. Most of the learning from UWorld comes from thoroughly reading the answer choices. At times would annotate first-aid with extra info from UWorld
I wrote down the high yield questions that I missed so that I could review them later
Read incorrect answer explanations and took notes in First Aid
I would make flashcards and go back in first aid to the page on the subject I missed. I read every word. Even if it was the second time I missed the question.
Took notes in/on first aid topic based on explanations in UWorld.
I read through all answers/explanations and looked up additional information as needed. If an answer was particularly useful I would flag the question to come back to again later.
Careful reading of each answer choice (not just the correct choice), then note taking when a particularly helpful chart/diagram/picture was presented in the explanation.
Took notes into NoteShelf
Heavily
UWorld explanations + First Aid were my primary study tools.
I made sure that I knew why each answer was correct and I made sure to read each of the wrong explanations to understand why it was wrong. Then I would go through and annotate my First Aid book.
I would go through the explanations and write down things I wanted to remember on sheets of paper designated for each organ system or subject matter (such as epidemiology, statistics, or biochemistry). That way I had compiled the "don't forget" stuff to review at the end of the study period prior to the exam.
Read and took notes
I took meticulous notes on the explanations whether I got it write or wrong. I copied important charts on to scraps of paper and put them up on my wall so that I could look at them often. The explanations were golden.
I annotated First Aid with anything that felt new or that I was having trouble learning.
Thoroughly
Reviewed after 40 question blocks and annotated FA with things I missed. Did not spend more than 40 minutes per 40-question block for review.
I ended up spending a lot of time reading through the answers, which in hindsight wasn't probably the most productive use of my time.
Read through all of the answers and annotated first aid
Just reading them
Annotated into First Aid
To learn not quiz
Read explanations and annotated in first aid

I read through all of the answers regardless of whether I got the question right. I kept one notebook to write down facts in the answer choices for the questions I got right, and another notebook to write down facts from the ones I got wrong. I spent more time going over the facts from the questions I got wrong since I figured those were my weaker subjects.
Took notes and made flashcards.
Made flashcards with that information with Anki
I used the UWorld explanations to annotate my existing notes on each topic
Made flashcards on all the answer choices.
UWorld is the most comprehensive step 1 resource available (even more than first aid). I think many people make the mistake of looking at it as a testing tool - I would look at is a comprehensive study guide that happens to be in question and answer format.
Would do the tests (usually 20-40 questions per session) and then would sit and review the answers and make flash cards/drawing/diagrams for what I didn't know
I read them all, made notes/flashcards from them
Explanations are very important!!! Take notes on the explanations in your own words and review them
Read them and looked things up
I went through every one after each test
Annotated First Aid with my first round (finished 60% subject based) and then I made Anki cards for my wrong answers when I redid my Qbank during the dedicated time.
I tried to read most explanations of the right answer and then would read maybe the top wrong answer choice explanation that I was also considering. I would take notes into my First Aid book. I did not know at the time but the "Notes" feature of UWorld is super helpful for taking brief notes on each question that you can collate and print out later as a study guide, organized by subject.
Make sure you understand right answers and why wrong ones are wrong. Made Anki notes on stuff I didn't know, also marked them so I could do them later, but didn't get to actually go over most of this.
Read through them very carefully and made Anki cards with important info learned
I spent a very long time reviewing my missed UWorld questions (sometimes 4 hours to review a 40 question block) and using first aid/the internet/notes from previous courses to make sure I fully understood the key points of the question and why the incorrect answer choices were wrong. I then made one or more Anki cards to reinforce those points that I had not understood prior to doing the questions and I tried to keep on top of my Anki cards on the spaced repetition schedule. I did not repeat missed UWorld questions because I think it is better to memorize the learning points of the question (which will surely come up again in other questions) than to be able to correctly answer the exact same question (which is unlikely to come up again). I found Anki to be the most efficient way to review missed concepts.
For Step 1, I focused on the key points and skipped over a lot of the explanations. If I could go back, I would have used the UW explanations as a significant study resource, as I did that for Step 2 and did remarkably better.
I just read them once
Made sure I understood all the content. Made flashcards from the other stuff
Took notes in the beginning, made some flashcards, then just read
Read everything when u get wrong or guessed, briefly skim when get right
Went over them extremely carefully, took notes and then studied those notes as well.

Read the explanations and took notes.
Read the one liner
Took 20 question quizzes every morning and read through answers, made Anki flash cards based on answers
I took notes and on material and noted patterns in question types and answers.
I first started making flashcards from key points in their answer explanation, but then that got too tedious so I just kept doing questions and trying my best to retain info after reading it through one time.
I just read through them
Excellent! One of the best explanations out there, and helped with test-taking skills as well.
Read through answers, took notes if needed but did not annotate all of First Aid with UWorld answers
Took notes during tutor mode
Wrote down answers in a separate word document that I reviewed
Read over explanations
Typed notes from each question I didn't understand or got wrong, and compiled those notes
Read each one thoroughly at least twice
I just read through them, and sometimes went back to the page in First Aid that explained that concept if I felt very very shaky about it.
Regularly read through explanations to learn/understand material.
Made flash cards on Quizlet of all the answer choices and important concepts.

Second Year Planning

The majority of students purchased First Aid for the USMLE Step 1 at the beginning of the second year of medical school (*Figure 28*). Most of the remaining students had purchased First Aid prior to that time either near the end of first year or during summer between first and second years (*Figure 28*). Students did a variety of things during the holiday break (*Figure 29*). Twenty-two percent started studying, 41% started planning a rough study schedule, 43% used the time as vacation, 34% started getting their resources together, and 26% started talking to people on how to study (*Figure 30).* During spring term, only 56% of students either 'sometimes' or 'did' attend the multi-organs systems block (*Figure 31*). Of the students who did attend the multi-organ systems block, only 10% found the course to be worthwhile, as where 47% did not; 47% were unsure (*Figure 32*).

Figure 28.

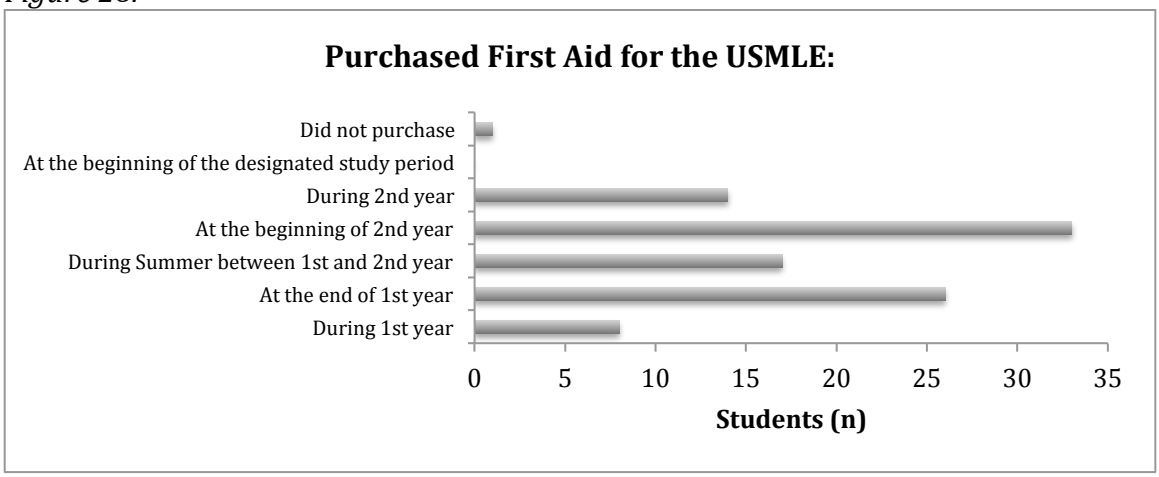


Figure 29.

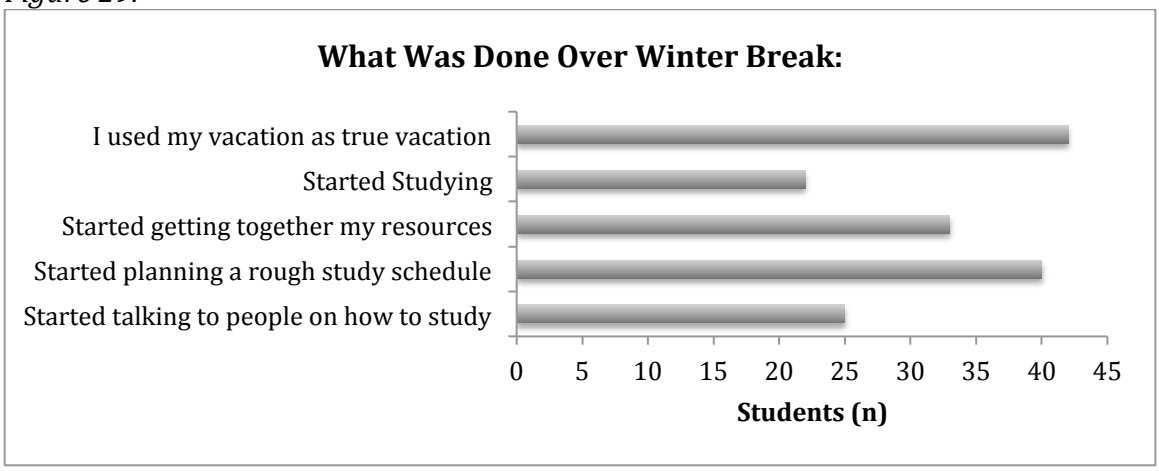


Figure 30. **What Students Did Over Winter Break:**

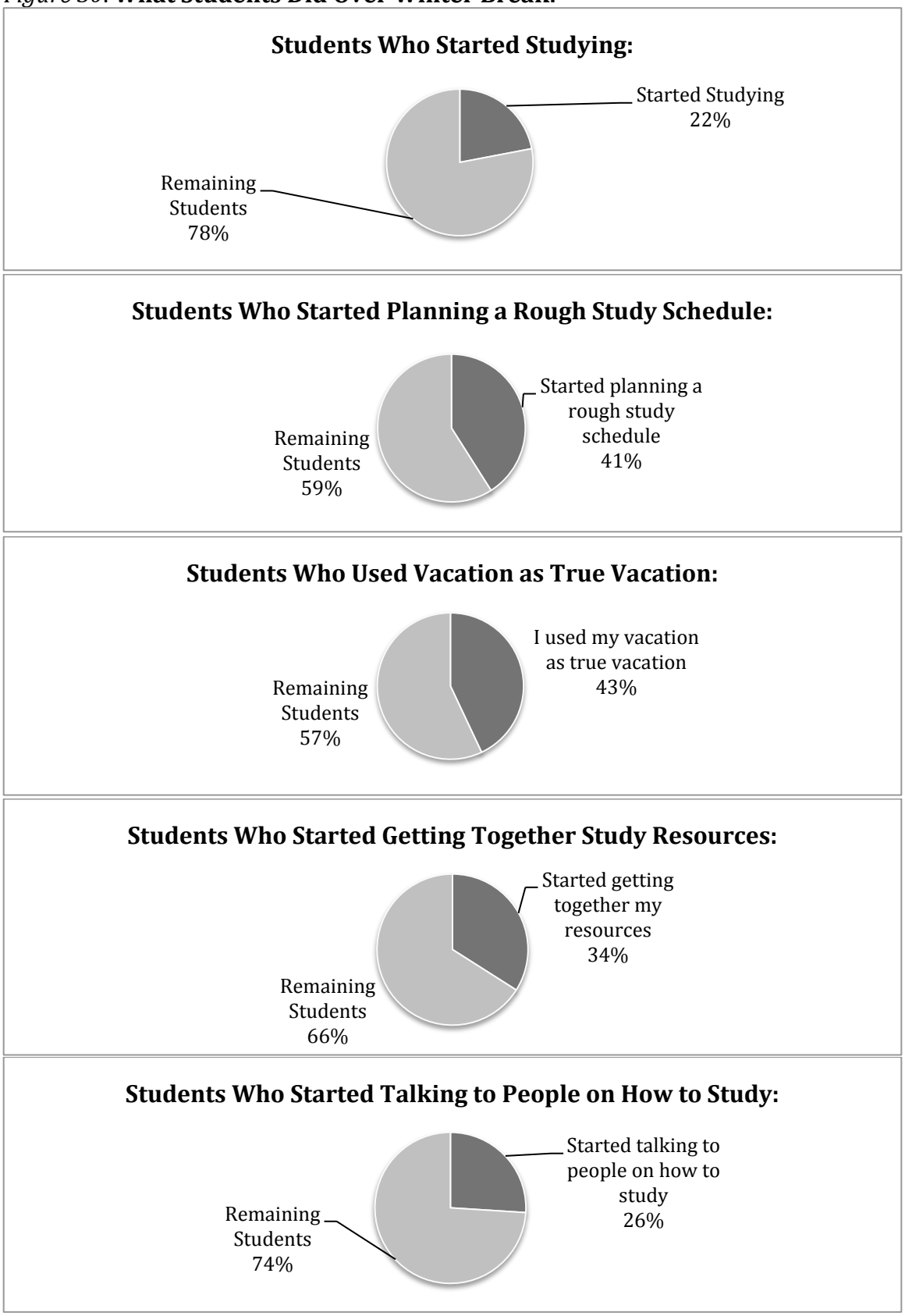


Figure 31.

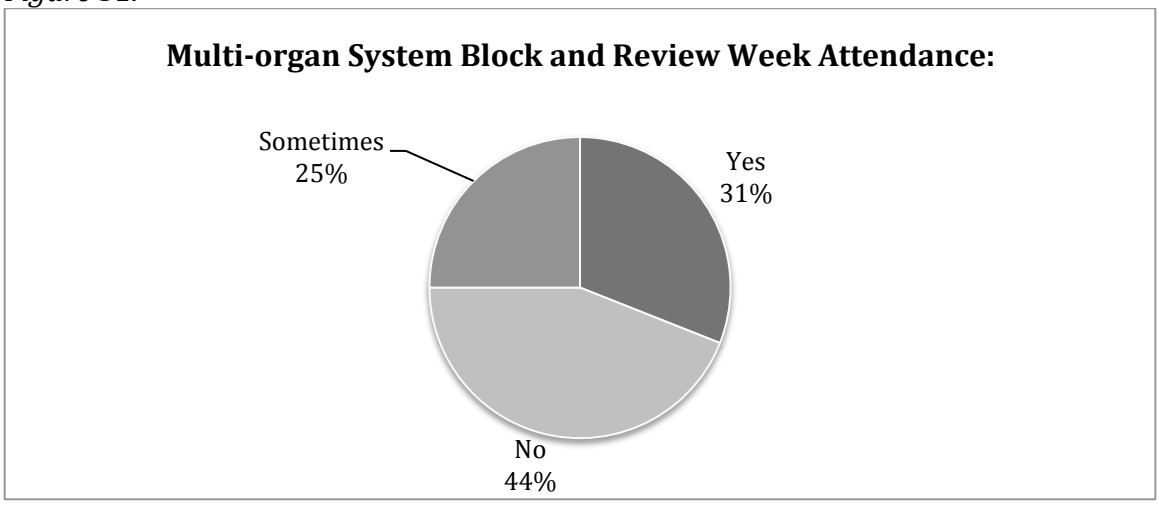
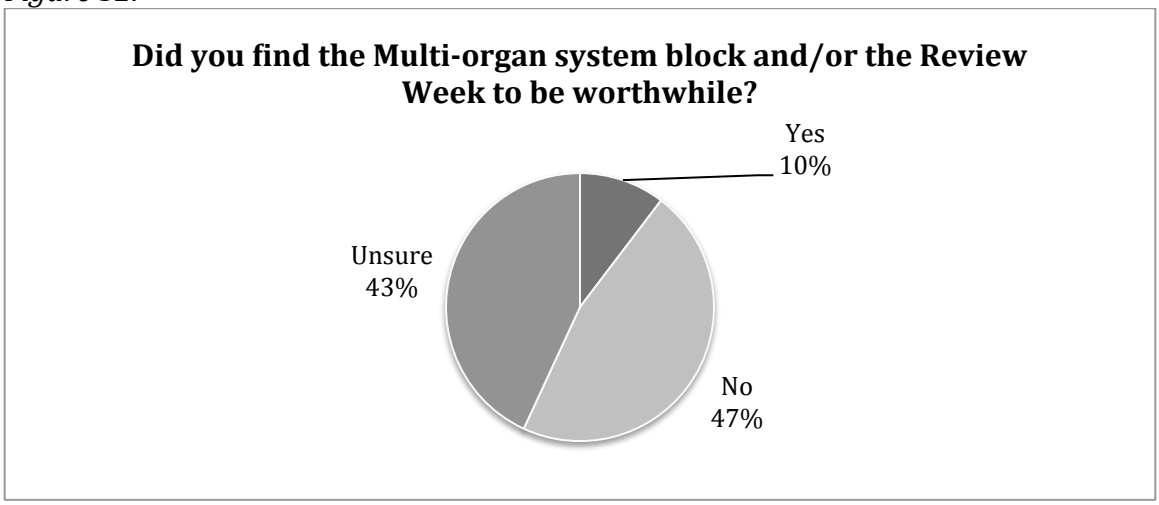


Figure 32.



Student response to:
How did you study for second year exams?

Studying for MS2 consisted of reading FA and Pathoma for the black, reviewing sketchy micro, doing Anki, and then doing u world practice questions toward the end of the block
I would listen to/read Pathoma at the beginning of each block, then read the first aid chapter, and start on Qbank questions for that section. Class materials are useful as well, but if there was a whole 1hr lecture on a topic that wasn't in FA at all then I would not spend much time on it. I used FA to help me determine what was important to know for Step. I did unbind FA and got it hole punched with dividers between each section, which I liked.
I wish I had taken notes in First Aid at the very beginning of 2nd year instead of part way through
Pathoma at the beginning, flashcards based on lecture slides, and sketchy as needed.
Course materials > Anki > UWorld questions > FA (hole punched) >
Took notes in first aid and on slides. Used UWorld questions to study for block exams.

USMLE-RX only
I reviewed the corresponding Pathoma chapter before each MS2 block began and took notes from class into FA. I did not use Qbank until after MS2 ended. I kept FA intact.
Used Qbank questions
Lecture notes just like first year
Anki cards from lectures and cramming memorization from the lectures in the last few days. No Qbank questions for second year exam studying.
Cramming "books" (e.g. MBB syllabus, Lilly's Cardiology, Schmitz's Renal, etc.)
Used Pathoma and took notes in First Aid
Read slides, took a few notes in FA
Only studied course material for exams until pulm and renal which I only used FA.
Sometimes used First Aid but study techniques were mostly the same as they were for first year.
Studied for second year exams with class materials, but would also try to do corresponding Pathoma/First Aid chapters during block with block specific Questions from the Kaplan Qbank.
Studied for exams separately from step 1, though I tried to review the corresponding section in first aid
I went to class every day, took notes in class, did the necessary "homework" and reviewed my notes as necessary, sometimes did UWorld or looked at First Aid. Then on the weekends I would review all my notes
Didn’t change how I studied for second year exams
Definitely used Pathoma and first aid to study for block exams. Biggest piece of advice- don't take lecture notes in first aid! It will become cluttered with mostly useless information by the time you get to the actual step exam.
I did a few hours of UWORLD the week or two before each shelf. I went to class. I didn't use first aid as much- It was not as helpful for step 2 as step 1. I am very glad I waited until January 1st to start studying for step 1. Making a strict study schedule was key to avoid anxiety before the test.
Studied with corresponding chapters in First Aid, used the Kaplan Qbank during blocks (so as not to use up the better UWORLD Qbank too early), and watched corresponding Pathoma videos during dinner.
I did not use Qbank enough. Pathoma used a lot. Unbound FA and added pages in between
This was very course dependent. For most rotations I took notes and/or studied the material from lectures. Occasionally added notes from certain subjects into the margins of my First Aid textbook. Step 1 material is not necessarily the same as that tested on second year exams and so using only Step 1 Q banks to study is probably not enough.
I used first aid for most of my tests in second year. I made sure to look over the lectures once but I used first aid almost exclusive thereafter. I used USMLE Rx and UWorld during second year. I also used Pathoma throughout the year. I had my FA specially bound at Kinkos.
Individual review books for each rotation in addition to UWORLD questions.
I used Qbank, First Aid, and lectures to study for block exams.
I unbound FA, read the chapter before a block exam, and did some of the UWorld questions but not all of them.
Did all corresponding questions in UWorld w each subject
Attended lecture, did firecracker/Pathoma/usmlerx/FA for corresponding block. Focused on step 1 materials with Anki decks of class materials to supplement.

Sketchy was clutch
Same as first year
I studied like I did first year.
Studied the course pdfs of the lectures and went to lectures and studied along with FA from time to time
I studied for step material with Pathoma, first aid, and sketchy when applicable for each block first and then crammed for the block exams toward the end of each block, which I don't recommend. However, I took handwritten notes that pulled together course material and first aid/Pathoma during each block that was helpful for studying at the end.
Took notes on first aid
Anki decks I made, same as first year
Mostly class notes + Pathoma sketchy for micro I did unbind FA and get it whole punched for step studying - I added in several pages of diagrams/notes based off UWorld and other things I found helpful
I tried to watch the corresponding Pathoma videos for each block to at least get familiar with them, with the intent to review them again later. I did not start using UWorld or first aid much before Feb/March. I took Pathoma notes in first aid the second time I watched them - I tried to stay away from cluttering first aid with class notes that may or may not be relevant to Step 1.
Please see my responses under each study resource, particularly Anki and Pathoma.
Used the course material and sometimes referred to FA. Did not use Qbank questions.
Just read lectures
Used course info and Pathoma, never first aid
Focused heavily on boards during second year and tried to ignore the second year exams as much as possible. Cardiology and MBB in particular were very helpful for boards, but otherwise, focused on step.
Mainly used 2nd year course material. I did some Qbank questions during the school year, but saved most for the dedicated study period. I did unbind FA and get it hole punched.
I did UWorld questions that were related to the course we were taking along with Pathoma. But I mostly studied for the class itself and didn't focus too much on Step 1 until half way through first year.
I updated another student’s class notes in lecture and crammed the night before. (I think they were "Helen chang's" or something. Some old ISP project or something)
Didn't change from first year - I used the lecture notes and learning objectives. Did not unbind FA, but I wrote a lot of notes in it throughout second year.
Used course materials, listened to Pathoma
Mostly studied course material
FA, Rx, lecture power points. Don't go to lecture
I used sketchy micro, Pathoma, and sometimes first aid to study for second year exams. As well as UWorld. Did not take class notes in FA. Did not take notes in FA from Pathoma or sketchy. Did take notes in FA from DIT.

Vacation, Scheduling Step 1, and When to Start

Most students allowed roughly 1-2 weeks for vacation time, with a few students either having more than 4 weeks of vacation or no vacation at all (*Figure 33).* The large majority of students were happy with the amount of time they had off (77%, *Figure 34*).

Most students started light study for Step 1 during early winter term (Jan-Feb), but many started before this time (*Figure 35*). There was a moderately positive correlation that the earlier a student started lightly studying, the better the Step 1 score would be (R^2 = 0.11, *Figure 36*). Most students started intensive study either early winter term, late winter term or at the start of spring term (*Figure 37*). There was only a very weak positive correlation between when intensive study was started with Step 1 scores (R^2 = 0.056, *Figure 38).* Most students studied intensively for 6 weeks, but the majority of students studied from 5-8 weeks (*Figure 39)*. There was only a very weak positive correlation with the number of weeks of intensive study to higher Step 1 scores (R^2 = .006, *Figure 40*).

Figure 33.

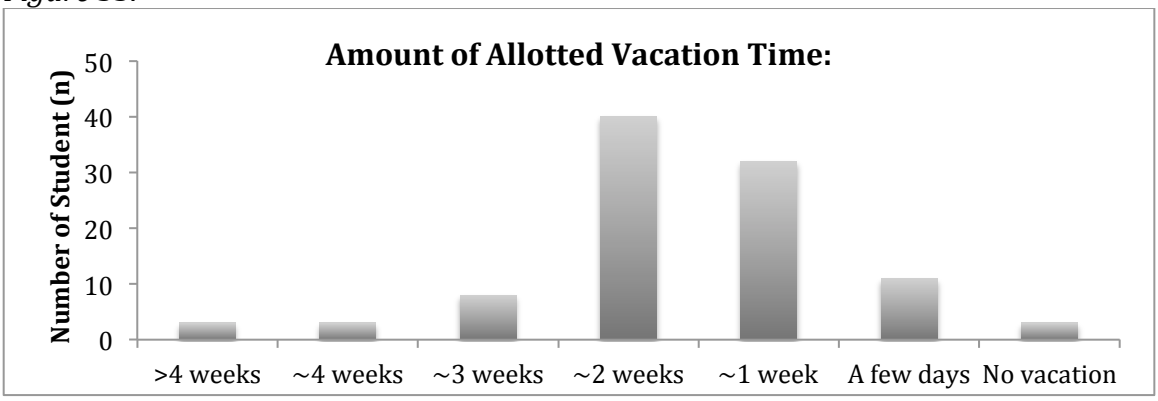


Figure 34.

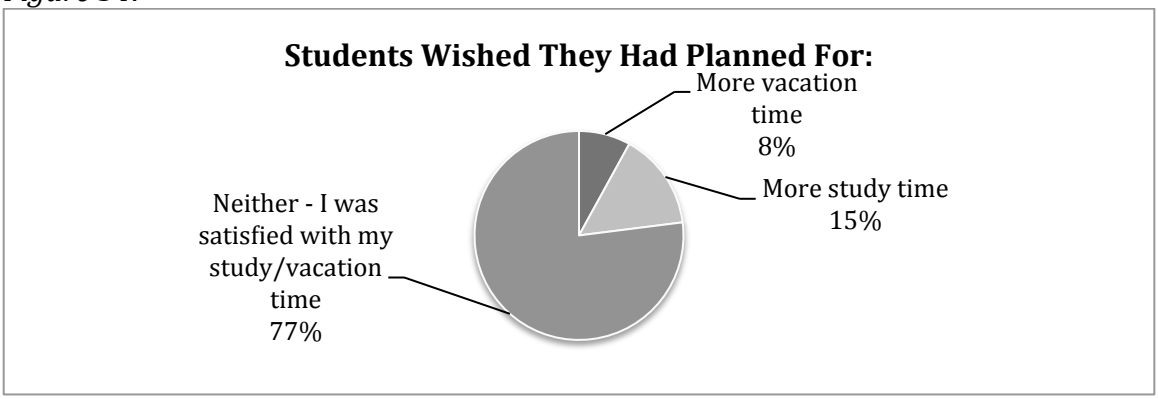
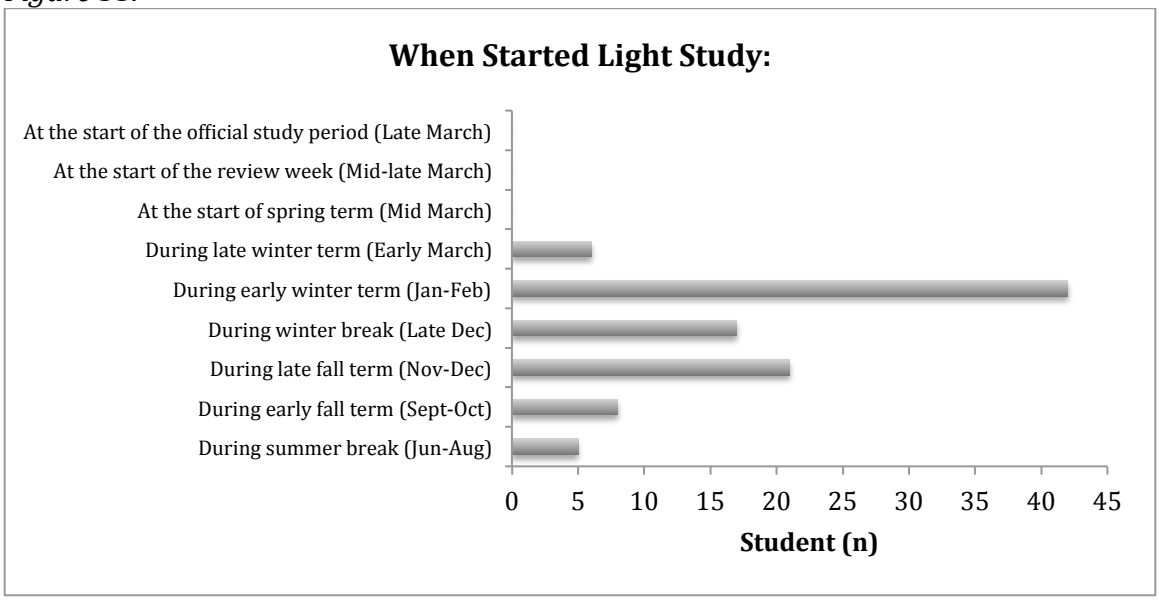


Figure 35.



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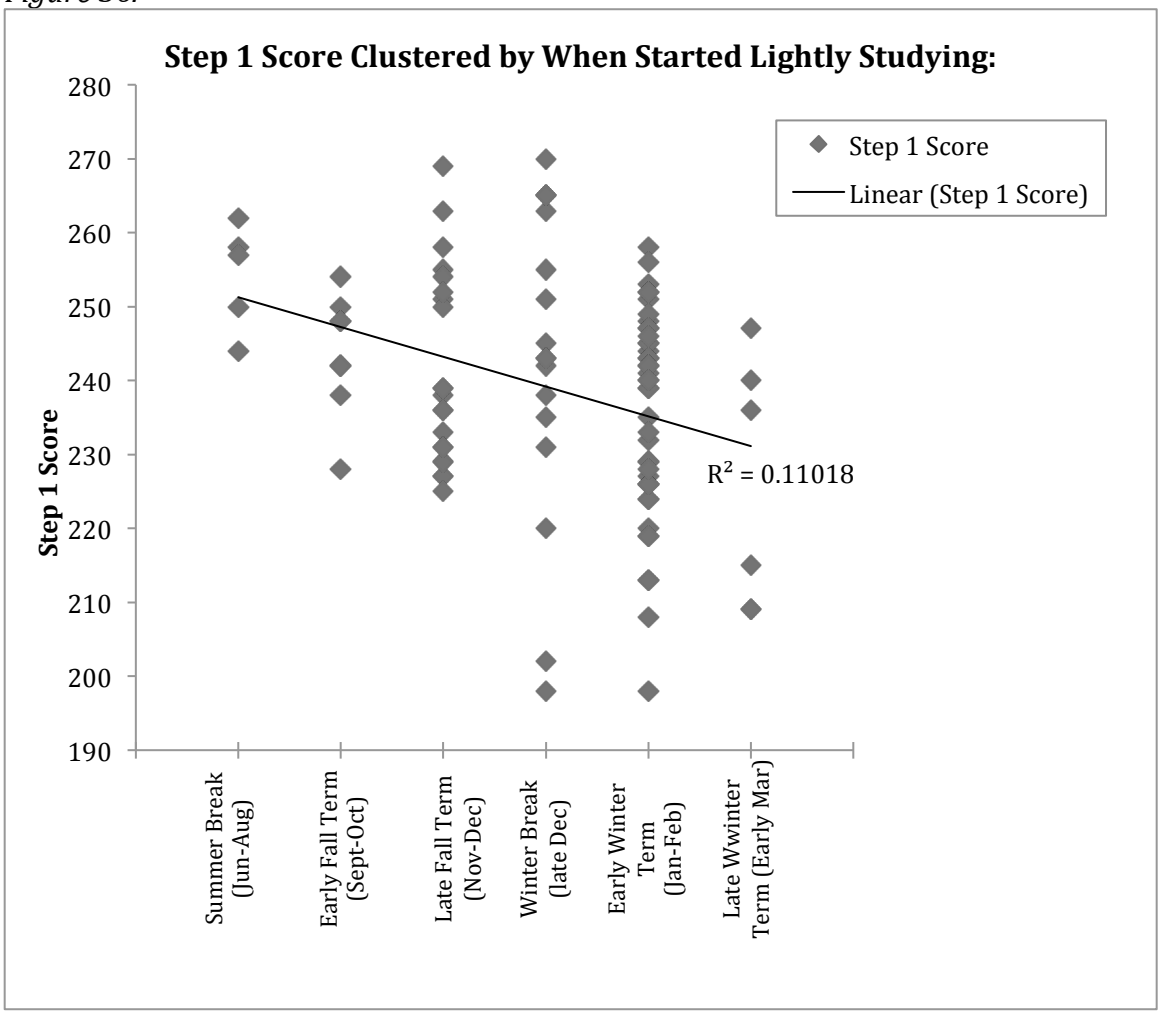


Figure 37.

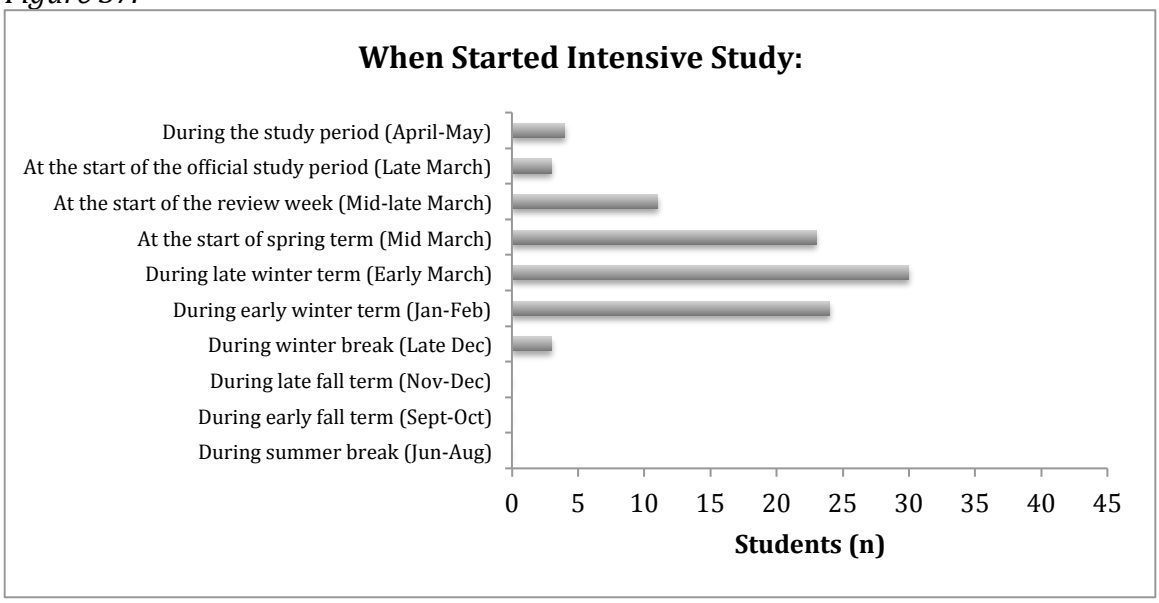


Figure 38.

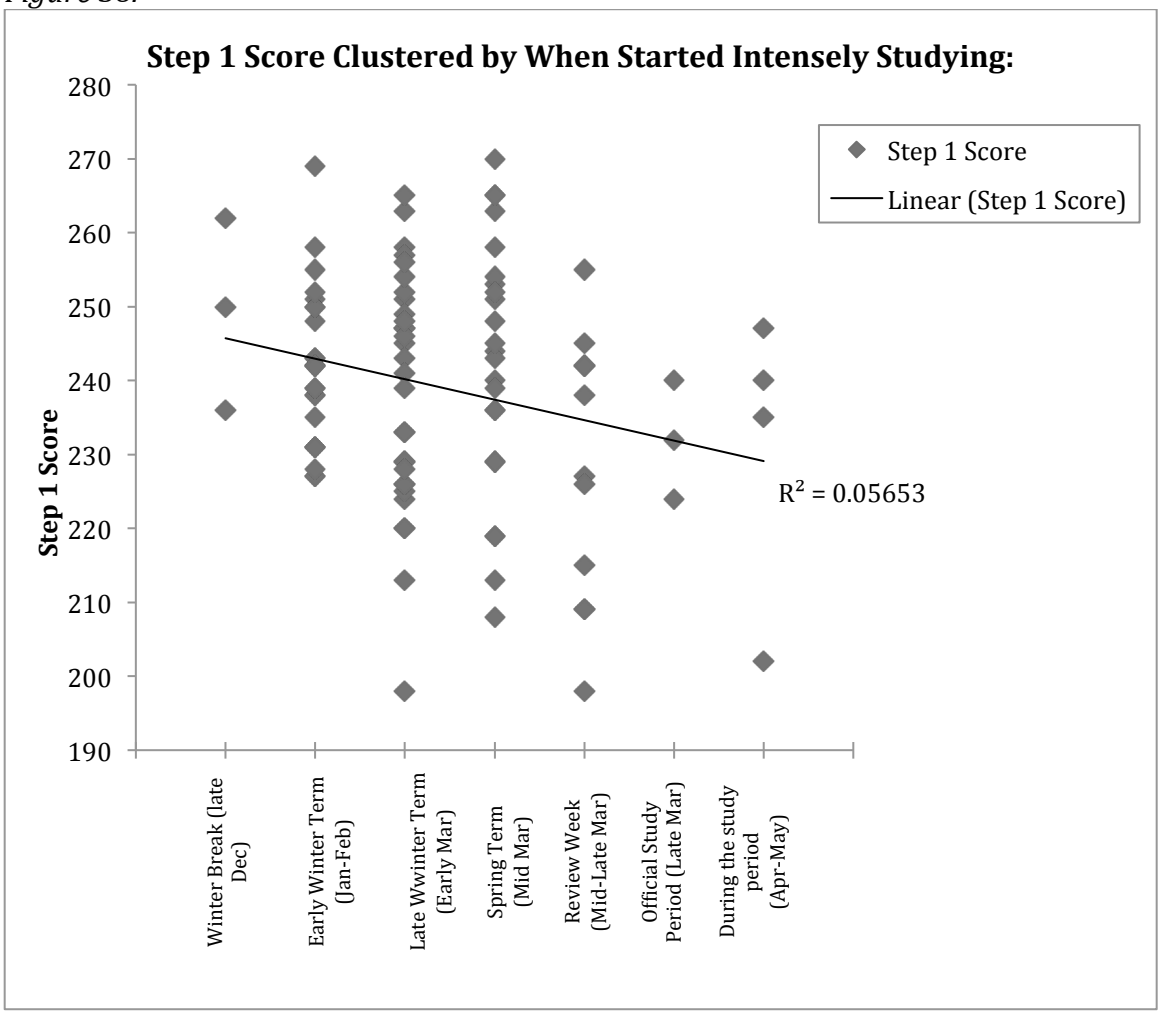


Figure 39.

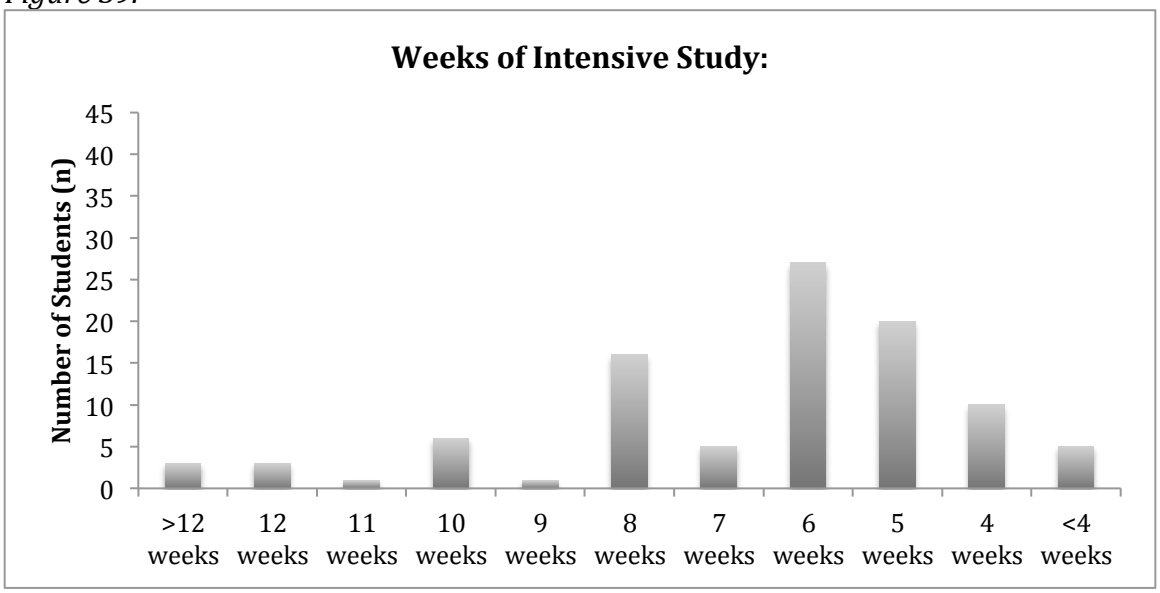
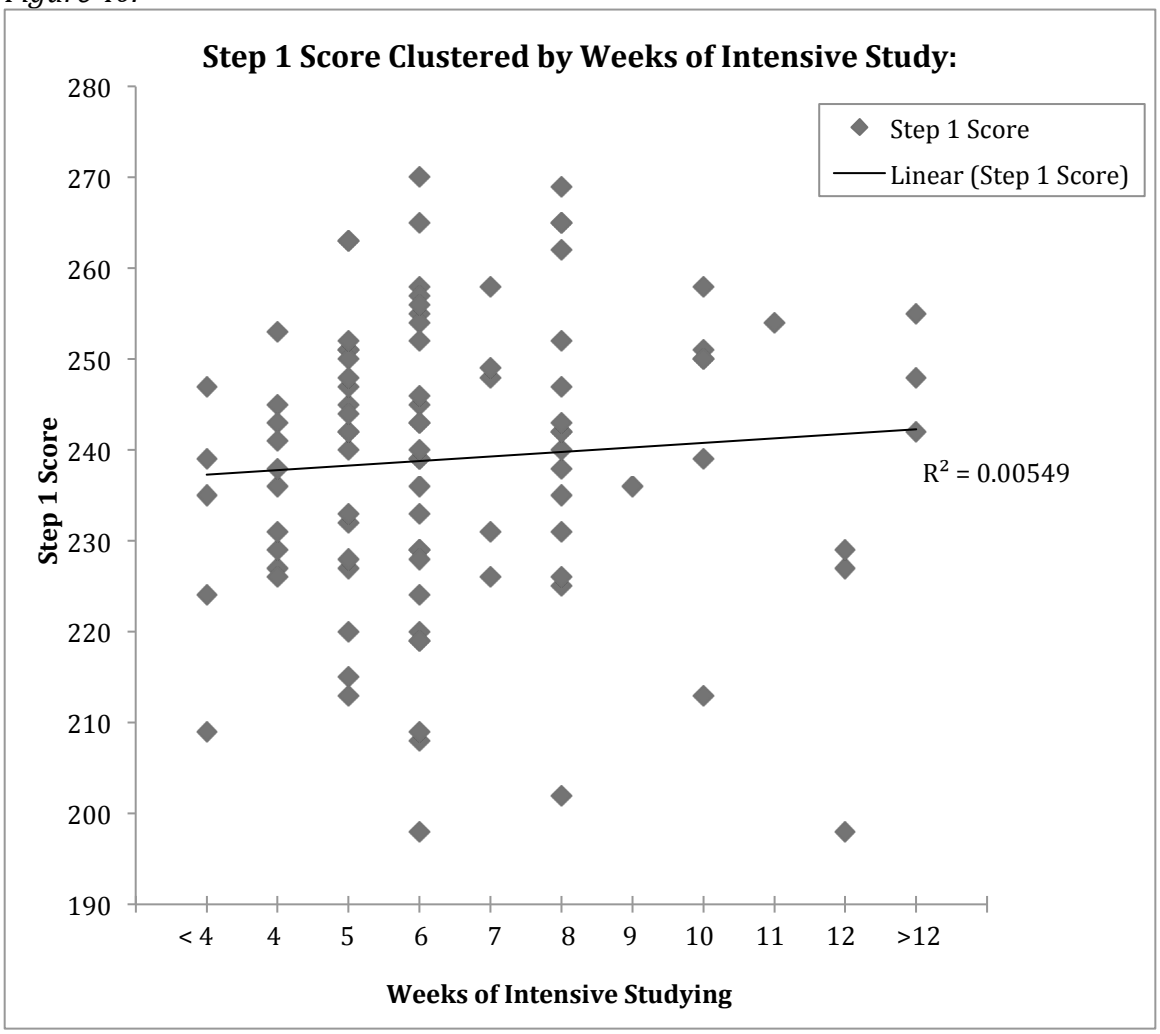


Figure 40.



Study Strategies, Tips, and the Test Day

Thirty-four percent of students changed their study habits and goals based on their anticipated future field (competitive field vs not), while 50% of students did not (*Figure 41*). The most common study location was home or at coffee shops (*Figure 41*). Other notable study locations included the Biomedical Sciences Library the Medical Education and the Telemedicine building (*Figure 35*). Studying alone what the preferred study situation, (*Figure 43*), though a fair number of students did study in alone as well as in groups.

Most students spent 10-11 hours studying per day (*Figure 44*). There did not appear to be any substantial benefit to studying more hours per day when Step 1 scores were plotted against hours of study (R^2 =.012, *Figure 45*).

The majority of students chose the order of topics they studied by the order in First Aid, Doctors in Training, or by proficiency in an area (i.e. weakest subjects first, stronger subjects later, then again revisiting weaker subjects). The most commonly studied subjects studied prior to taking Step 1 were microbiology, biochemisty and pharmacology. Other notable subjects include statistics, metabolic diseases, and hematology/oncology.

Many students provided examples of their daily study schedules. Subjectively, there did not appear to be a trend between daily schedule and Step 1 score.

The day before their exam, the majority of students took the full day off to relax and recharge; however, some students did do light study for a few hours. A small group of students 'tried to study everything', or crammed the entire day, and those that did this commented that they 'strongly recommend against' that approach.

Test day tips include scouting out the location prior to test day, taking the practice exam (Prometric practice exam), bringing a lot of snacks, wearing layers, bringing earplugs, and using all of your break time. Many students also stressed having a regular routine in the morning and also during the test, such as a grounding activity done do prior to starting a question bank.

Figure 41.

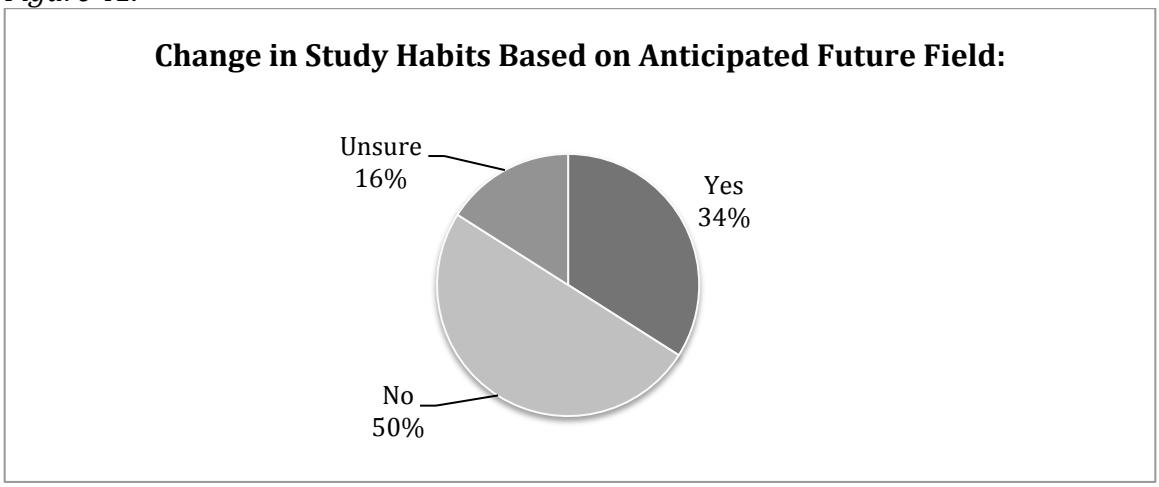


Figure 42.

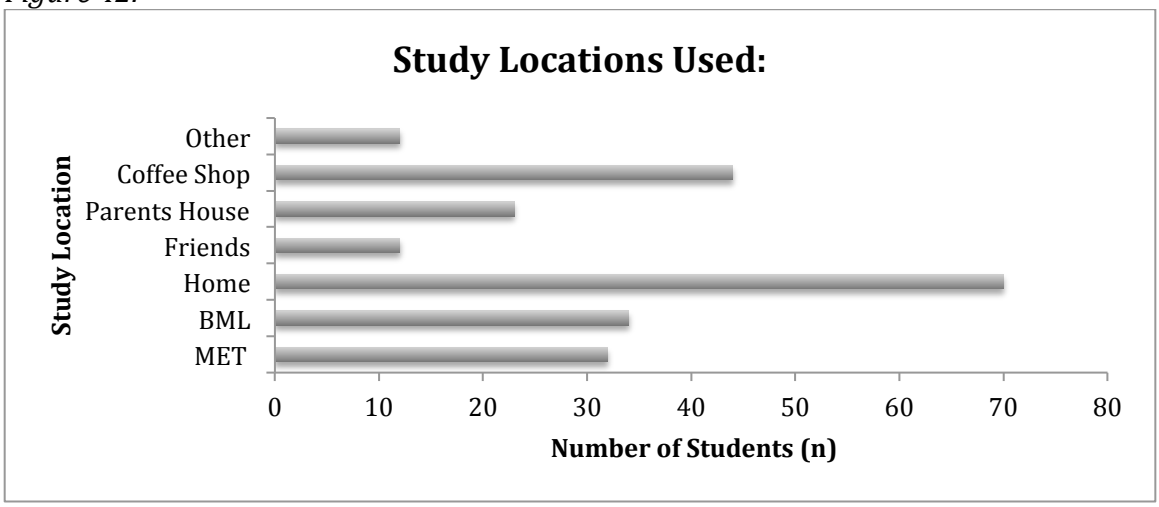


Figure 43.

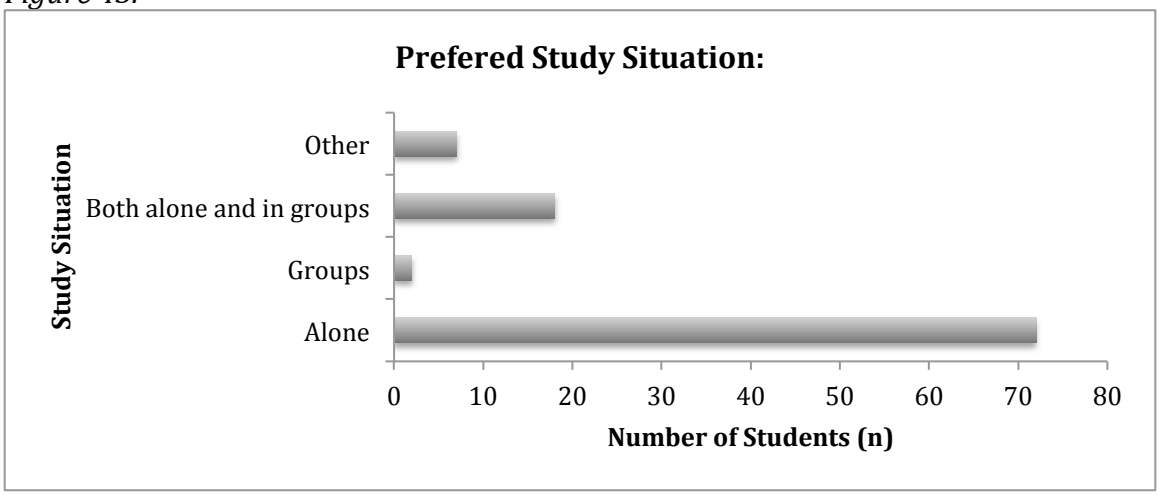


Figure 44.

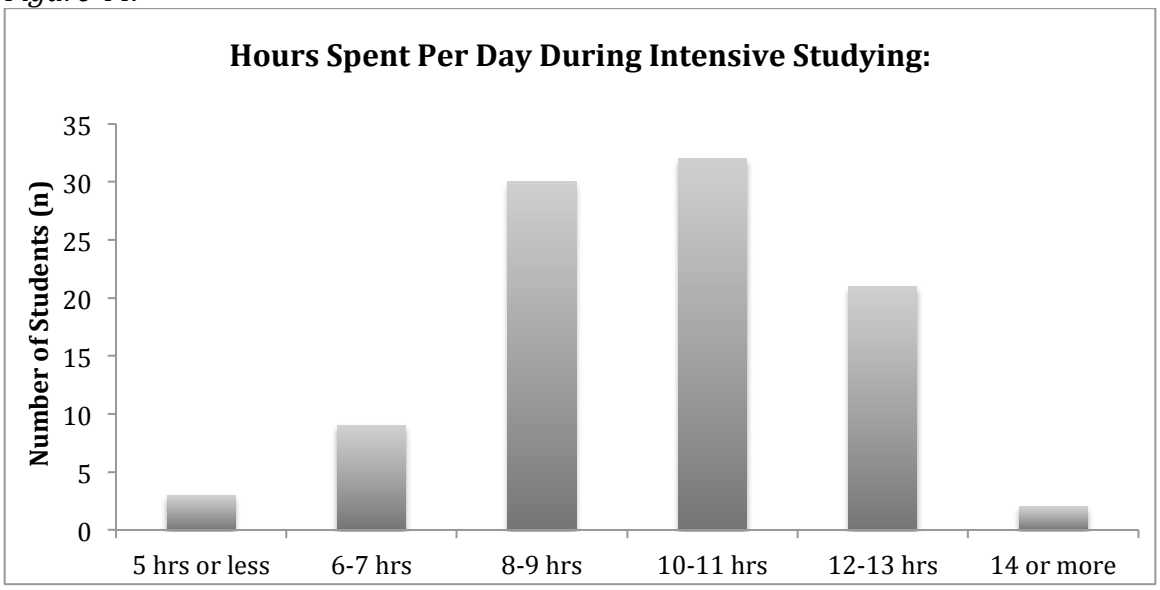
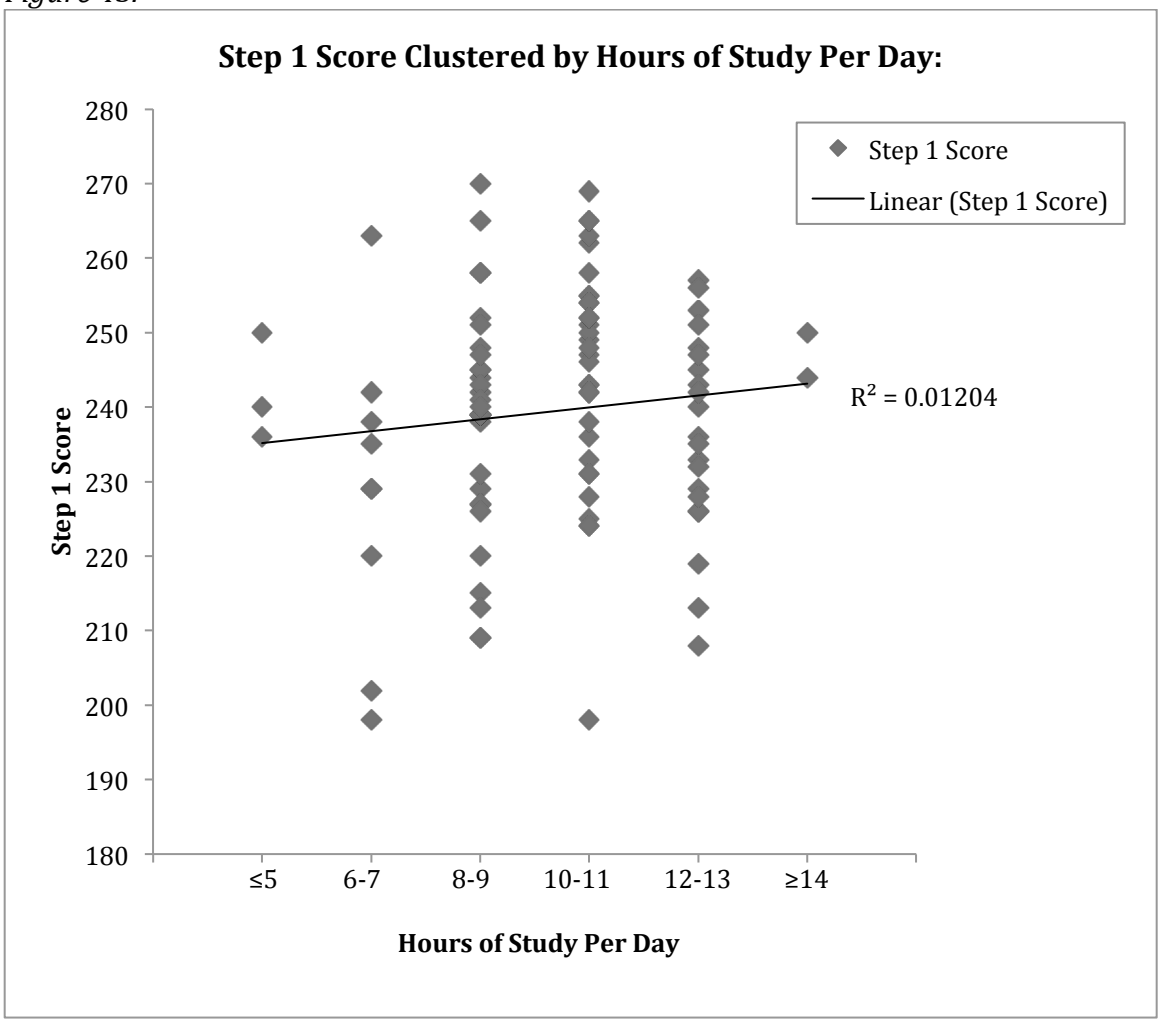


Figure 45.



Student response to:
How did you decide the order of topics to study during your study period?

Based on DIT videos.
I studied randomly based off what areas I felt I was weak on (based on question bank %correct).
Went through biochem first, then a random order after.
Medicine first.
I found weak areas based on how I was doing on UWorld and focused on those periodically. Biochem was a must.
I didn't have any study plan. I just did as many random practice questions as I could whenever time allowed.
Order in First Aid.
I think I went in order of first aid but I can't remember
Order they were in first aid
Started with less sure areas.
FA sequentially
I studied the FA chapters in order, then focused on my weaker areas after my first pass
Talking with classmates
Went in order presented in First aid
Started with ones that were toughest for me
Pretty much randomly.
How they were presented in FA & Pathoma
Based on prior advice and common sense... do the hard, pure memorization stuff last
Randomly. There was some logic to the madness, but it was relatively haphazard.
Used DIT study plan
I honestly can't remember anymore, but I think I just marched chapter by chapter through First Aid.
Weakest to strongest.
Kind of randomly, just by organ system
Don't remember
FA order
Mixed things I liked with things that I didn't like in order to not get bored.
I went in order of first aid, then I re-worked parts where I was weak.
Based on my personal proficiency in each subject (hardest earlier, easiest later, re-reviewed hardest near the end)
Blocks and then prioritized topics that I was weaker on first.
Based on the order of subjects we were being taught during the school year. I started off with topics that I hadn't seen for a while and ended with more recent subjects.
Based on DIT
I followed DIT
Weakest subjects first
By order of blocks

Based on the sections I was doing poorly on in UWORLD
I started with subjects that I felt weaker on.
1) Perceived weaknesses and 2) First Aid organization
Not well. Just studied the things I got wrong and went from there. Lets call it organic (really it was not very organized way to study)
Based on second year schedule
I used the length of the chapters for each individual organ system in First Aid to structure my primary studying, and then used additional resources covering similar topics for the day. The order was loosely based on the order of the organ systems in Pathoma/First Aid. I broke each book resource up by pages and tried to cover the same number of pages each day, and also would do a certain number of UWORLD questions plus Sketchy Micro videos each day.
Difficult ones first
I went along with the block schedule of second year. During winter break, I started studying subjects that wouldn't be covered during second year.
Cramfighter sets it up for you
Used the schedule from Doctors in Training
I used the Doctors in Training calendar, which tells you the order. I finished this about 1 week before Step1 and dedicated the last week to topics I was weak in.
Order in first aid
Order of study materials, didn’t mix it up
Friends
Started with my weakest subjects so I could do them twice.
From what I felt least comfortable with to most comfortable
Stuff I was last comfortable with towards the end (the "cramming style")
I tried to study subjects I was confident in first because I thought they would go more quickly. Not sure if this served me well, because there was always more to learn and I might've been better off getting at least a cursory understanding of all the subjects first
I started with topics I struggled with first
I don't remember really, I think it was pretty random
Studied what I felt like I needed to work on based on intermittent diagnostic tests
Do a mix of all topics in the AM and then spend the evenings focusing on areas of weakness/more organ specific
Things I knew worst
Weakest subjects first
I made a calendar and blocked out time for each subject based on their length in First Aid. I highly recommend going through the pathology and pharmacology sections of First Aid at the very beginning. I went over my weakest subjects first.
Tried to frontload some of the lengthier sections of First Aid, but pretty random.
FA chapters
N/A. My studying was not subject based during dedicated study days. I started with questions and reviewed topics based on my answers of questions.
Followed the chronology of DIT videos.
Random

Randomly based on how I was feeling that day
Did multiple passes, so kind of just made a list and checked the topics off
Looked at UWorld and NBME diagnostics
Based on resources I had available for studying. Started with micro because I liked Sketchy, and it was a large portion of the test. Afterwards Pathoma, then other organ blocks.
Weakest to strongest subjects
First Aid
Went along with first aid and DIT study plan
By length of material in First Aid
It was on a whim. I had unbound my First Aid and Pathoma books and then put each organ system in it's own binder. And I just pulled one system to review at a time without much thought into it.
I followed the doctors in training modules.
Studied core topics first (biochemistry, pharmacology, etc.), then organ systems.
Used order of First Aid
Did my weakest subjects first
First Aid order
First Aid order of subjects
Looked up which systems were more prevalent on the test, and allotted my time accordingly.
Based on my weaknesses after taking a UWorld self-assessment at the beginning of my dedicated study period. Weakest areas first.
Went by DIT's order
I went through them in the order we were going through them in class.

Student response to:
What subjects did you study closest to your test date?

Biochem
Biochem
Biochem
Biochem
Micro, pharmacology
Micro, pharmacology
Biochem
Biochem
Pharmacology
Pharmacology
Micro, I think.
Crammable sections like pharm, biochem
I re-reviewed biochem, micro, things like storage diseases, and flash cards for pharmacology the few days /week before
Reviewed medicine last

Random.
Metabolic diseases
Cardiology, Immuno
Multi-system, ethical stuff.
Cardio and GI
Pharmacology, biochemistry
biochem, micro
Just lots of practice questions and looking up wrong-answer topics
Reviewed high yield facts
Microbiology and hematology, my weakest.
All (mixed review)
Micro, statistics, and biochemistry
Mix of topics I "studied" for during the quarters leading up to the dedicated (e.g. Renal/Pulm)
Micro, Pharm
Endocrine, Micro, Heme
Last 4 days read entirety of first aid one last time.
Biochem, Microbio
Microbiology, pharmacology... things that were more rote memorization
I can't remember.
Biochemistry, pharmacology
Micro, pharm, genetic disorders (subjects with lot of specific details)
Pulmonary, Biostats.
Biochemistry and microbiology
Biochem
Those that I had the most trouble with (I kept a list)
Weak subjects
Most difficult topics for me and those I wanted to review closer to test date
The ones I didn't know as well, and whatever subject I hadn't covered in UWORLD yet.
Biochemistry, microbiology
Flagged questions on UWorld
Microbiology, MSK/Anatomy, Pharmacology, and Missed UWORLD questions
I don’t remember. Maybe renal and micro
Repeated my weakest subjects as determined by UWorld subject scores.
Weakest subjects
Biochemistry and Microbiology
Review of difficult ones
The ones I did worst on in UWorld
Ethics/probability/etc. (because I forget it quick) and microbiology
Hardest ones
Spot studied topics I was bad at
My weakest subjects the second time through.

I reviewed metabolism right before (but this was a second pass)
ERM stuff, Micro and Pharm
Closest to the test date, I studied topics that would require more rote memorization, like pharm and biochem.
Neuro
Biochem!
Things that required most memorization like biochem and micro
The ones I was weakest on
Things I knew worst
Micro/Pharm
Biochem review and biostats. I did biochem, micro and pharm throughout.
Renal and Pulm as I felt I needed the least time with these because they were the last couple blocks of 2nd year.
Rapid Review
N/A. My studying was not subject based during dedicated study days.
Biostats, biochem.
Random
Ob and peds
Easily memorizable things (mnemonics, biochem, etc.)
Higher yield topics
All
Cardio, GI - big sections that were high yield
Micro
Microbio
Organ systems
Ones that were very straight memorization heavy
Weakest subjects: biochem/genetics
ID, cardio, GI, renal
Immunology, biochem, pharm, Heme/Onc
All the subjects

Student response to:
If possible, please provide an example schedule of your study day? (Organized by Step 1 score, which is provided)

Step 1 Score	Example schedules of study days:
270	5am Wake up 5:30 - 7:00 Gym 7:00 - 8:00 breakfast and drive to campus 8:00 - 11:00 Reading for specific organ system (FA, Pathoma, Goljan, sketchy) 11:00 - 12:00 Either more reading or start questions 12:00 - 12:45 Lunch

	12:45 - 5:00 UWORLD question bank
269	During dedicated: Wake up around 7, at coffee shop by 745 or so, lunch break at noon with my boyfriend, home at 530 or so. Dinner with the bf (no study materials at the table!), after dinner lie on couch and do firecracker flashcards or whatever. Most of
265	Usually a UWorld question bank first thing in the morning, then reading first aid and/or Pathoma in the afternoon, then another UWorld question bank before bed. Obviously there was a lot of variation depending on the subject but that was the general outline
265	Wake up, work out, review Quizlet flashcards from previous day, take 2 new blocks of UWorld questions, break for lunch, review both blocks of UW questions and make Quizlet flashcards, review questions I got wrong or was unsure of in First Aid, break for dinner
263	7-8: Flashcards and biochem 8-10: 40 UWorld questions with explanations 10-3: First aid for a subject, Pathoma if it's the first day 3-5: 40 UWorld questions 5-6: break 6-8: Sketchy micro, pharm
258	Went for run and listened to Goljan, then studied 9 to 12, lunch/break, 1-5 studied, break/dinner, 7-10 studied. Studying during the dedicated period was all UWorld, occasionally doing topic based studying with sketchy, Goljan rapid review etc.
258	8-6pm straight through with 2-3 random 30m breaks.
258	7:30 - 8:00 Wake up, eat Breakfast 8:00 - 8:30 Non-random 10-15 tutor questions on subject of the day (e.g. cardio, pulm, etc.) 9:00 - 11:00 Random 46 block questions x 2 11:00 - 11: 45 Lunch Noon - 13:00 Ride exercise bike, begin reviewing morning Random
257	go to library around 9 - 9.30am, 2 blocks of UWorld, quick lunch, Pathoma/FA/Picmonic/Sketchy, home around 11-12pm
255	Wake up at 7am, do some yoga or guided meditation, do 2-3 question blocks and review answers until noon, eat lunch for 30 minutes, review FA or Sketchy or Pathoma, exercise at 2 or 3, do some more questions, dinner at 7 or 8, rest and sleep.
254	8 Wake up 8:30-11:30 UWorld q bank & review answers 11:30-1 Run/Lunch/Shower 1:30-5 Combination of reading First Aid and annotating into it with Pathoma 5-6:30 Dinner 6:30-9:30 More UWorld or finish up any miscellaneous studying 9:30-10 Watch Sketchy vide
254	6:30 wake up (sometimes I woke up at 5:00 to go swim at the gym) 8:30-12:00 random 40-80 question block of questions I alternated days of single block vs. double block) and start to review answers (if a single block day, I usually had questions still to r
253	8am - 10 am 2 blocks of random questions timed, back to back 10-12 Review answers to block 1 12-1 lunch 1-3 Review answers to block 2 3:30 - 6 DIT with first aid 6-7 Dinner 7-10 DIT/ first aid
252	6:30 am wake up 7:00 - 10:00 Anki biochem cards (50), Anki pharm cards (10), 5 Sketchy videos 11:00-12:00 Pathoma 12:00 - 1:00 Lunch 1:00 - 3:00 Finish Pathoma section 3:00 - 6:00 40 question block UWorld 6:00 - 8:00 Exercise, dinner 8:00 - 9:00 Finish UWorld

252	7 am wake up, breakfast, shower, scripture study 8am-12pm start studying -- UWorld in 10-question blocks taking ~30 minutes for each block 12-1pm lunch 1-5pm finish UWorld questions if I didn't finish them before lunch (I did over 100 per day), do readings
251	8:00-10:00am 2 blocks of questions 10am-noon review 1st block 12:00-1:00 lunch 1pm-3pm review 2nd block 3:30-6pm DIT or Pathoma 6-7:30pm gym and dinner 7:30-10:30pm sketchy and Anki
251	Wake up, go to coffee shop, study for a few hours, go to the gym and study there for a few hours, work out intermittently. I usually studied ~8-9 hours/day or so
250	Noon: wake up 1-5PM: 1-2 random 46 block questions and review answers 6PM-7PM: walk/exercise, listen to Goljan during exercise 7PM - midnight: goof off, watch Netflix, etc.
250	Breakfast, 2 46 question UWorld, lunch, exercise, review UWorld + Other resources, Dinner, Flashcards
250	Varied quite a bit day to day
248	07:30 - 12:30 UWorld block, timed-tutor, by subject --> 2 UWorld blocks later 12:30-1:00 make lunch, maybe take small 5 minute walk 1:00-4:30- Doctors in training videos on same subject or Pathoma 4:30 - Workout, maybe listen to Goljan Audio during, call family during workout 5:15 - Shower, dinner 6:30-9:30/10:00 DIT videos on same subject 10-1030 Get ready for bed, 10:30-10:45 10 pharm flashcards 11:00 bed In Sum: 4 hours UWorld, 8 hours DIT, other.
248	Wake up, U world #1, review, lunch, UWorld #2, review, dinner, bed
248	7am->6pm study with brakes for food in between. Exercise breaks (1hr) 3x/week.
247	7: wake up 8-12: random 44 block questions and review answers 12-1: lunch break 1: go to library/coffee shop 1:30-6: study first aid / Pathoma for whatever organ system I was currently on 6-8: dinner break 8-10/11: did either UWORLD or studied more first
247	Schedule changed through the study period. This was my schedule for the last 2 wks. 8 wake up 820 random 40 question untimed tutor. Reviewed first aid as needed. 10 Pathoma 11 random 20 question untimed tutor 1230 break 1 random 40 question untimed t
246	6:30 wake up 7-11 20 UWorld questions 11-2 Lunch/run 12-5:30 DIT with first aid 5:30-6:30 break/run/dinner

	6:30-10 UWorld questions related to the day's topics
245	One hour of timed questions. 2 hours of question review. 1-2 hours surfing and lunch. 1 hour timed questions. 2 hours question review. 2 hours reading. 1 hour dinner with wife. 1 hour timed questions with 2 hour question review or 3hours reading.
245	7 AM - wake up, 8 AM - review study material (First Aid or Pathoma or Sketchy depending on day), 11 AM - UWorld questions, 1 PM - lunch break, 2 PM - UWorld questions (would calculate targeted number of questions with CramFighter), 3:30 PM - break/exercise
244	Qbank all day in tutor mode with referring to First Aid
244	Study all day dude, I had poor life balance.
243	7am- wake up, eat breakfast, watch some sports center or news 8am- start DIT videos with FA 12pm- lunch 1pm- resume DIT videos with FA 3-4pm- finish DIT videos and FA 5-7pm- workout, dinner 7-10pm- U World questions on tutor mode (goal was ~50 per night)
243	8am-10:00am 46 questions in UWORLD, 10-10:15am take a walk, 10:15-12:15 go over answers from that test and look up in First Aid if you don't understand. 12:15-1:15 lunch, 1:15-3:15 46 questions in UWORLD, 3:15-3:30 call a friend, 3:30-5:30 go over answers
243	8-12 first aid, 2 46 question blocks and review 1-5 similar 8-10pm review/catch up
242	Ton of questions all day every day
242	8-9 UWorld Test, pack lunch/drive to public library, 10-12:30 review UWorld test, 12:30-1:00 lunch, 1-5 DIT videos, 5-7: GYM and dinner, 7-10 finish DIT/review if needed. I took one day off per week
241	8-12 read first aid, 12-5 do 46 block questions and review answers for my second pass of UWorld, I did 2 blocks of questions a day and spent about 2 hours each on them
240	I had no real schedule. I would wake up, sleep, and eat at random times. My goal, however, was to complete at least 3 full blocks of UWorld each day then take notes into FA.
240	Wake up, USMLE Q bank in the morning, review topics in the afternoon, another set of questions at night
239	I tried to treat this like a job so I would set goals for the day and be sure to take time to exercise and not to study late into the night.
238	(Last couple weeks of studying) 7:30A: Wake up, 8:00A: 4 blocks of random questions. 12P: Lunch with my mom and spend half an hour in the backyard. 1P: 4 blocks of random questions. 5P-7PM: Go for a run, shower, eat dinner with my mom, watch TV. 7-9P: Rev
238	During 2nd year, went to class, did Qbank during daughters nap and after she went to bed. During intensive study, 8-12 Qbank, 30 min break, 12:30-4 Qbank.

236	6:30 AM Wake up, breakfast, exercise 8-11 AM 2 46 block questions + review 11 AM - 12 PM Lunch 12-4 PM 2 46 block questions + review 4-6 PM Flashcards 6-7 PM Dinner 7-10 PM Random topics that I was struggling with
235	7a wake up 730-830 q block 9-12 study a topic 12-2 lunch + exercise 230-430 review block 5-7 dinner + break 730-930 study a topic
235	Studied when I could and took a break when I had to
233	630-7 meditation 7-8 am yoga 8-9 breakfast 9-12 UWorld 44 questions + review answers 12-1 lunch 1-430 targeted content review, Rx videos + first aid + Pathoma 430- 5 meditation 5-6 dinner 6-10 UWorld 44 questions + review answers
232	Changed too much day to day
231	Wake up. meditate. no specific order or plan but did question blocks, reviewed FA, exercised, jumped in the ocean, studied with friends.
231	7am--wake up/breakfast, 8am-11am--three 1 hr. sessions dedicated to one system, 11-12pm--lunch, 12-2--100 questions, 2-3pm--exercise, 3-6--review the questions quickly, 6-8--family time/dinner, 8-11pm--flashcards
229	I don't remember... I know I took a break in the middle to work out. I took snack and lunch breaks as well
229	DIT videos + FA in the morning, Qbank question sets + review for the rest of the day
228	Mmm, my days varied... But I tried to do at least 2 sets of 46 questions with review. And then I'd either do Sketchy, Pathoma, or FA depending on areas of weakness from my UWorld performance.
228	8AM wake up, 8-12PM First Aid, 1-5PM Pathoma, 6-11PM UWorld
226	7 wake up, 730-930 2 46 block questions, 930-1130 review, 1130-1230 lunch, 1230-5 DIT, 5-6 46 block question, 6-7 review, 7-9 dinner and exercise, 9-10 review

224	Wake up, study with several breaks throughout the day PRN. I really just studied all day and did whatever I wanted whenever I felt like I needed a break.
219	8am arrive at Geisel 8-11am Random 46 block questions and review answers 11-noon Read First Aid 12-1 lunch 1-4 DIT w/ FA vs. Pathoma vs. Sketchy 4-7 Another 46 block questions and review answers 7-9 Exercise and dinner 9-11 Pathoma vs. DIT w/ FA
213	At coffee shop by 7. Start with 20 questions. Then DIT and FA for several hours. Finish with 3 or 4 blocks of 20 questions relevant to the day's material. Go home around 7 then re-read over notes from the day until about 11.
209	Mine was simple. Wake up late and start studying before lunch and keep going until after dinnertime.
202	Just studied all day. Unfortunately, did not have as good of a structure for my study schedule to provide anything useful
198	8-12 46 block and review 12-1 break. 1-5 DIT + questions 5-6:30 Dinner/Run 7-10 block and review

---

Student response to:
What did you do the day before your test?

Nothing
Nothing
Nothing
Study
Study
Relaxed
I watched a lot of YouTube videos on diseases to help me put a face to some things (like genetic/metabolic diseases)
Nothing. Just relax
Relaxed
Went to the testing site to check it out then ran 20 miles listening to Goljan and ate a huge burrito and drank a beer.
Slept in, worked out
Lightly studied until noon, and then relaxed.
Light studying, got some activity, ate well, and went to bed early
Watched TV
Reviewed some topics I felt were bread/butter high yield and pathognomonic stuff for a couple hours. But mostly didn't study much.
Relax and massage
Studied FA high yield, freaked out.

Friends asked me rapid-fire facts on pharm/biochem
Practice questions, then sit around at home and chill
Relax
Nothing.
Rested
Regrettably tried to cram a few more things and stopped studying at 6 pm. watched a movie with parents and prepped for next day
Rapid fire UWorld (did 8 blocks of 44 questions).
Neurotically reviewed some stuff in first aid--- I DO NOT RECOMMEND THIS---I SLEPT POORLY
Read a document online of "high yield" Step 1 tips
Finished reviewing first aid and antibiotics. Went surfing and had a beer.
Tried to review everything, like 30 minutes per organ system. This was totally useless and stressful
Relax
Study, meet up with non-school friends
Studied all day. Lots of questions that I had previously missed.
Reviewed
Review some hand written notes, visited testing center to make sure I knew where it was, where to park, etc. went grocery shopping, made my lunch and snacks for the next day, went to bed early
Went running on sunset cliffs, went to my favorite restaurant, watched a movie I had really been wanting to see.
Nothing, watched TV.
Nothing
Went on a long jog
Reviewed the rapid-fire facts at the end of fist aid till noon. Took the afternoon off and got a massage
Exercised and reviewed very last minute things to memorize
I tried to relax.
Spoke on the phone with friends for motivation and confidence boosting.
Light studying until about noon, then went to exercise, got a good dinner and watched a movie
NO STUDYING. I went on a 6-mile jog and did a 1-hour weight lifting gym class. I did household chores and cooked.
Studied equations and biochem.
Worked out, tried (and failed) to relax, did 2 blocks of questions in the morning and nothing in the afternoon, and planned specifics of the test day like packing snacks, etc.
Light studying (Random Block of 46 questions), then took the rest of the day off.
Exercise. Review big picture notes.
Studied. Had some news from the doctor that distracted me a bit but studied nonetheless.
Relaxed, played Frisbee golf. I think it's really important to take time off.
Rested.
I reviewed some of the study sheets I has written, and generally tried to take it easy.
Time with family, hike, exercise
I did my residual flashcards in the morning and then spent the day exercising, relaxing, and just being outside.

Manicure, walk, yummy dinner.
Study/review ~4/5 hours, lunch, additional ~1-2 hour review before bed
Chill.
Over the study period I had bookmarked pages that had a lot of good info and I just reviewed those pages (lightly) of first aid.
Study.
Surfed, scrubbed into a case with my PI, did 100 firecracker flashcards, scoped out the test center and the AM drive to the test center
Massage and pedicure
Review first aid
I studied, which isn't what a lot of people should do. I decided to keep doing what worked for me, which was studying the day before an exam.
I studied all day and found it to be worthwhile
Work out, nails done, Anki.
A little review but mostly chilled.
Study in the morning any topics I didn't feel comfortable with (I made a list beforehand of things I thought would be good to look at right before the test), relax in the afternoon, talk to friends, read my Bible and spend time praying and meditating, packing things for test day
Did flashcards and went for a run.
I tried to relax but slept horribly anyway.
Shopped, slept, relaxed.
Went to the beach.
Half study, half relax (got a massage).
Nothing, relaxed.
Get supplies ready for test, do some rapid review, light UWorld, glance at some last minute sections of First Aid.
Hung out with boyfriend.
Went for a run and got a massage.
Exercise, good food, pack my lunch, freak out a little bit, meditate.
Jumped in the ocean naked. Felt joy. Meditated. Ate an awesome dinner.
Went over 1 practice exam I took the night before
Hike and a movie
Reviewed high yield topics in the back of the book
Study dude!
Reviewed for one hour in the morning, then relaxed
Half day of card review, watched movies
I went on a long run (9 miles) and then food coma'ed with Costco pizza and a kosher hotdog. I did some FA review tables they had at the end.
Cried :(
Very light review, took naps, watched a movie.
Reviewed topics I was unsure of, did a few 20 question UWorld sets
Relaxed

Reviewed material
Light review until noon, then relax/gym
Reviewed meds in the morning, then just relaxed the rest of the day
Church, relax
I got a massage, then took a bubble bath and just relaxed!
Nada
Flashcards

Student response to:
Test day advice or tips?

Xanax
Don't panic-- your score won't be that different from your practice tests.
Try to remain calm, stick to your routine. If you get thrown off by a question or two don't fret. When you finish a question block just forget about it and move on, don't perseverate on prior questions.
This too shall pass. Deep breaths, and you can do it!
Do the same routine you did every day. Also do like 5 practice questions on UWorld just to warm up.
Keep your Zen. Figure out a way to not be panicked when you are reading your first test question, it's a surreal moment after studying for so long.
Get used to the experience beforehand with full-length practice tests. Get a routine so you at least feel familiar with the process even if you're not familiar with some material.
Get used to waking up early, try your best to sleep well the day before, practice breathing exercises for surges of anxiety during the actual exam
If at all possible try to relax. Otherwise just do what you've prepared so well for.
Practice mindfulness and meditation during breaks. Eat well. Take your breaks! Do not just push through the test without taking your breaks.
Relax, you're prepared and have done these sorts of tests before.
Sleep well, don't drink coffee
Be confident. This is by far and away the most important thing. Get yourself pumped up and treat it like a battle. I took breaks after nearly every block, which I liked to just take a deep breath and reset (so each break about 5 min each). I also would eat little snacks each break instead of 1 giant meal. I walked around and tried to get my blood flowing too each break.
Majority of people (myself included) felt like shit after each block. We felt like shit after the entire exam. Everything felt terrible. But that didn't necessarily translate to a terrible score. Don't let the exam psych you out - yes, it's hard to feel like you're doing ok or even well, but chances are you're not doing as bad as you think.
Relax day before test. Watch a movie or something. Make plans that will tire you out...I studied and was stressed and only slept about 3 hours. I think this lost me a couple of points.
Just trust your gut instinct.
Go pee when you can.
Stay calm!!! It's ridiculous how you rationally know that you shouldn't stress because it won't help you objectively, but you still do anyway. Talk to your family on test day, and do a little meditation to

calm down and relax before the test starts. Then just go for it, and the day goes by fast and you're done!!!!
Visit test site a few days before so you know where it is and the parking situation before test day
Wear something comfortable
I did a practice test at the test center, which I think calmed my nerves in the real test day.
Have a good breakfast, plan out your break times in advance, shorter breaks early on until lunchtime and then 10 minute breaks between every section or every other section near the end - timing and pacing is extremely important! Don't get discouraged if one section seems to go worse than the other, keep your head in the game regardless :)
Bring lots of food and hydration.
You can actually leave the test center after every block. After each section I would take a short mental break of a few minutes. After every two sections I left the test center for a quick 7-minute jog to refresh my mind. I think this gave me a significant advantage.
Deep breath, lots of food, know that you've done everything in your power and it will pay off
Dress in layers, pack snacks, and don’t eat too much at once to avoid the food coma
Compliment yourself and try to get a little pumped up. All the hard work is done! Right before the test starts, close your eyes and center yourself.
Make sure you know where you are going. Have your snacks/paperwork/etc. packed and ready the night before. Use your breaks!
Remember that if you faint from a panic attack, you'll wake up within a minute or so and do fine on the test. Don't be afraid of being afraid- tell yourself your body will do what it will do, and you will still do great on the test!
I was a wreck, so not really. Healthy food!
Wear comfy clothing, take lots of different snacks, and take ALL of your break time.
Pace yourself. Take all available breaks (don't leave the test with extra break time). Bring plenty of food (but only stuff you normally eat). Don't worry about weird questions, just assume they are experimental and won't count toward your grade (whether that is true or not!) Answer short questions first, mark longer questions and return to those later.
Coffee with good snacks for the day. Had a restless night of sleep the night before. Must make the best of the situation.
There’s not a lot of time for breaks so make them literally as fast as possible. Like go to the bathroom, take 30 seconds to take some deep breaths and go back in. Take a very small lunch, eat what you brought and go back in. I ran out of breaks in the end and may have even taken a few minutes out of my test. It is easy to do especially if you include all the BS to get in and out of the room.
Have a plan (meals, snacks, break time) and be prepared with all documentation for the test center to minimize stress.
Relax! You know what you know and you won't know more based on last second cramming. Get a good night's sleep the night before!
Don't push back your date unless you have a REALLY good reason, such as a family death or a pregnancy, etc. You are going to feel unprepared for the test, that is the nature of how medical students are. You are ready. Just take the test. On the day of the test, make sure you have snacks. It's a marathon. I decided to take the first 2 blocks back-to-back -- we are used to taking 2 hour tests all the time, so that was easy for me. After that I took a short break between each block, either going to the restroom, getting some water, or eating. I recommend this so that you don't get stir crazy.
Mindset that you've done all you can, reset mind after each section

Take a deep breath. If you've gotten to test day without moving it, it means that you have given it all you've gotten. Don't psych yourself out on the test - you will be more prepared than you think you are. When you leave, DO NOT look up answers. You will feel like you bombed the test (even though you probably didn't); so don't make yourself feel worse. Go home and celebrate. You're finally done with Step 1.
Everything is about leading up to the day; I did a lot of guided visualization and deep relaxation stuff prior to taking Step 1, which really helped. Don't psych yourself out
Take food/drinks. Plan out the breaks. It is a long test; take a few minute break at least between chunks to not get burnt out.
You will get a scrap paper for calculations. Do the practice test at the test center to get a feel for the location, lockers, procedures for taking a breaks etc.
Bring snacks you like, eat lunch outside in the sun. Wear comfy clothes. I played 2048 on my phone in between blocks to unwind.
You will feel like you failed.
Be confident in your preparation- take your breaks.
Relax as much as possible; don't let hard questions throw you off, plan your breaks before hand (when to go to bathroom, when to eat)
Take the breaks they give you! You can even bring review materials with you and leave them in your locker (I thought it was a crime to bring any study materials even close to the test center)
Have everything you need for test day packed and ready to go the day before, get there early, don't do anything radically different from when you were taking practice tests
Bring snacks! Go outside during your breaks. Fresh air is refreshing!
Good snacks!
Bring food. Go outside during your breaks and sit in the sun. Don't use your phone.
Take frequent breaks. Eat snacks on each break and go to the bathroom on each break.
Try to relax
You will feel like you are doing terribly, you are not.
Take advantage of the break time. Also, make sure that you don't run out of time on an individual block
Timing is everything - mark tricky questions and come back to them. People don't tend to come out of the test feeling successful, as there are always odd topics that each particular test chooses to over-emphasize that you can't prepare for, but just remember that it is all curved!
Stay cool, have food and drink
Eat a good breakfast, pack lightly, and take deep breaths at every break!
Pack plenty of snacks
Bring snacks
Eat good breakfast.
Take lots of snacks, plan your break schedule, and sleep well the prior 2 nights
Breathe
Try to relax as much as possible (listening to music, speaking to good sources of support, etc.)
Bring lots of food
Go on a run before!

The day before you should truly rest. I didn't feel as "loose" as normal and felt I could have done better. Do things that boost your confidence and relax! You can't forget you're amazing.
Take a break every hour. I called my fiancé during half my breaks for emotional support and encouragement. Also a good distraction - I felt refreshed every time I went back to my exam.
Get there early
Be relaxed, trust the process of studying. Take lots of snacks and food. Don’t let previous blocks negatively affect your performance on later blocks.
Relax, get there early, and bring snacks
Relax! Don't drink too much of anything because of the limited bathroom breaks
Pace yourself, bring a healthy lunch. Simulate test conditions a week before
Stay calm! And pack plenty of food and water
Get up early, get to center early, do the paid practice test if you can. Pack lunch night before. Pray/meditate/exercise/do whatever you do to get yourself centered.
Take plenty of snacks and caffeine. DO NOT CHANGE YOUR ANSWERS! Do not obsess over answers being right or wrong. Pretend you're doing UWorld.
Go see the place before; "test run"
Take many snacks with you. I didn't bring food and it was fine. Candy, chocolate, and water are all that you need. Oh and energy drinks, those are great too. Take all your breaks. Every one. Even if you don't need to pee, go outside and walk around in the sunshine. Keep your focus during the last 2 blocks, those are going to be the worst and you'll want to check out and just select anything. Don't do this.

Moving Your Test Date

Nearly a third of students pushed back their Step 1 test-date at some point in time (*Figure 46).* Of those who did move their test date, 63% did not regret moving their test date, while 28% did regret their decision (*Figure 47*). About 50% of students who moved their test thought that their score or performance was improved by moving the test, while 19% thought it hurt their performance and 28% were unsure (*Figure 48*).

The average Step 1 score for students who did not move their test compared to the group of students that did appeared to be different but this was found to not be significant. The average Step 1 score for the students that did not move their test was 241.96 (CI 245.62-238.29), and for those that did move their test, the average was 233.06 (CI 238.08 - 228.05, *Figure 49*).

The main reason students moved their test was that they did not feel prepared. Several students commented that in the end they don't think moving the test made a difference score-wise for them, as most students never feel prepared enough when the test day comes.

Figure 46.

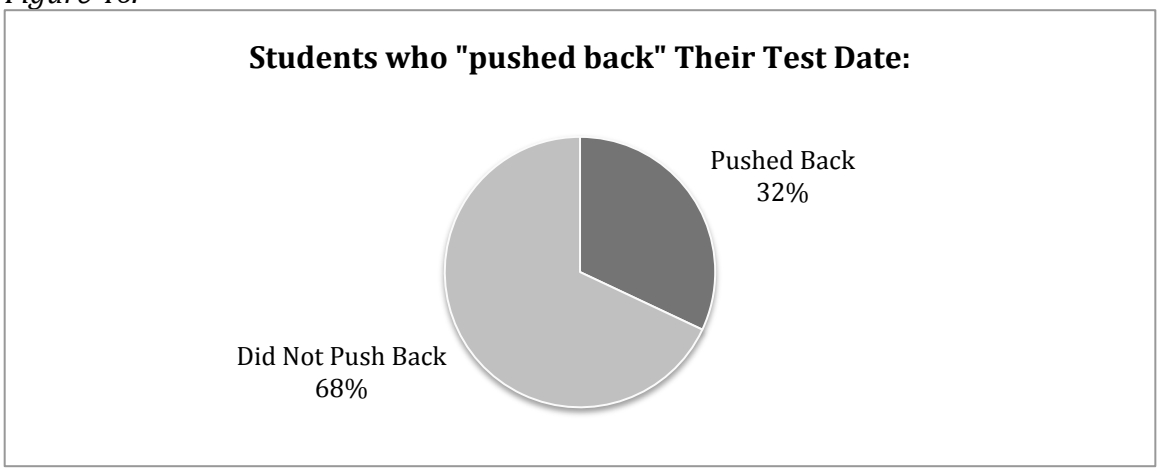


Figure 47.

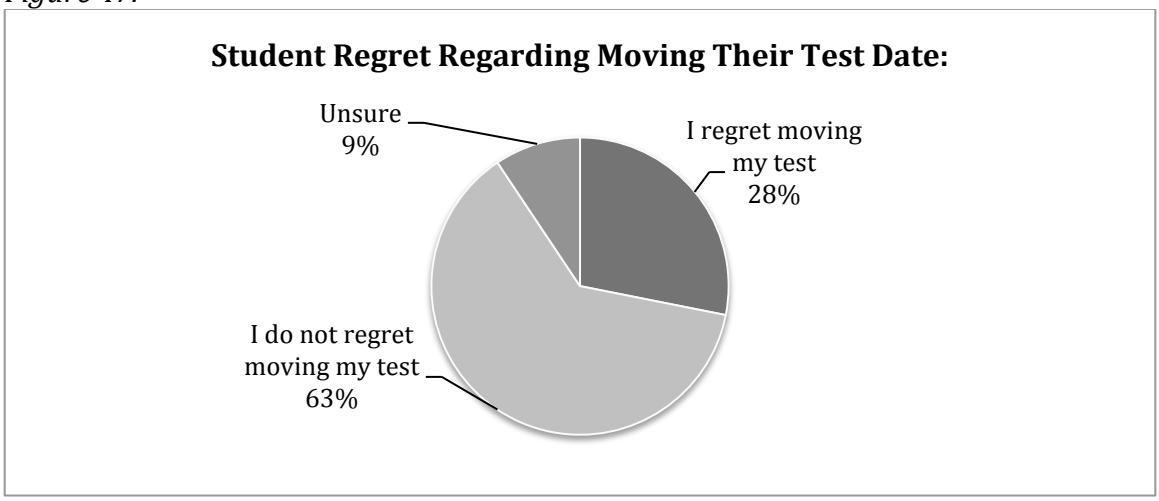


Figure 48.

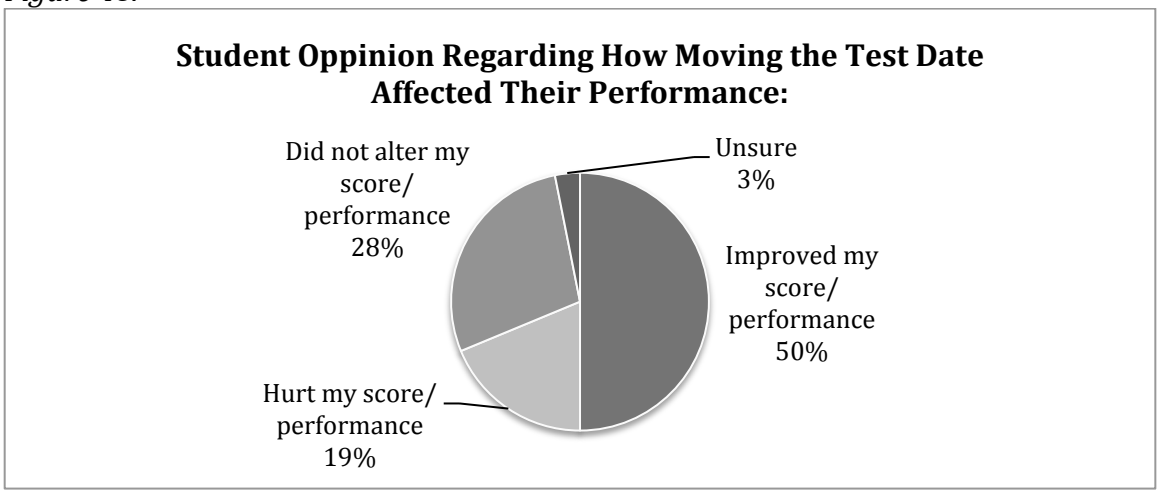
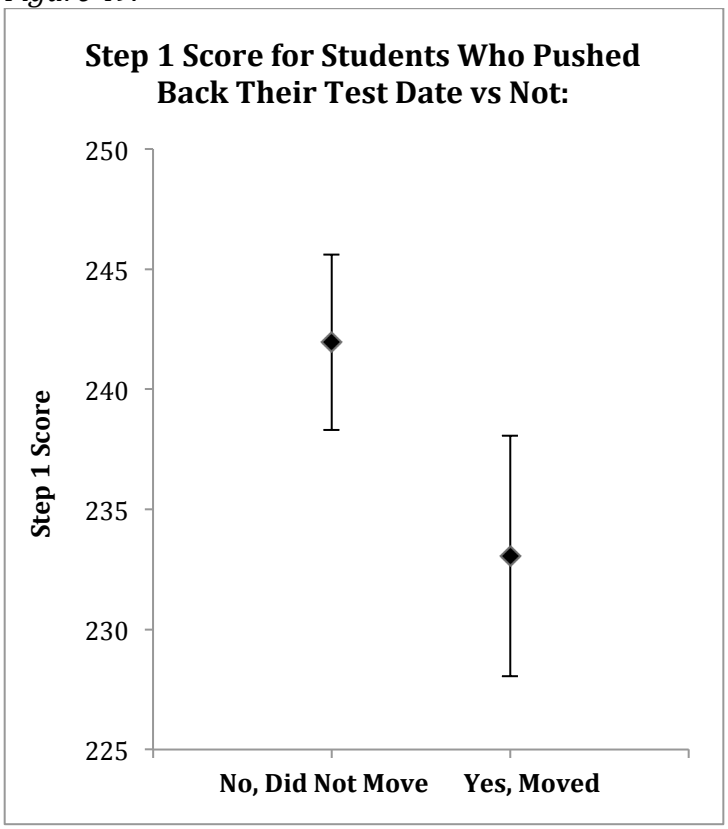


Figure 49.



Student responses to:
What were the circumstances in which you moved your test date?

My brother's wife had a baby the day of my test
I got very sick a few days prior to my originally scheduled test date. I rescheduled it to 1 week later.
I moved my test 1 month out from the anticipated date because once I realized how much I could accomplish in an intense study day, I felt that I needed a few more days to cover all of the topics comfortably. I only moved my test 5 days back but still had about 2 weeks of vacation time (which was super important). I did move my date but ultimately I don't know if it really helped at all. I recommend setting a date and sticking to it because you never feel ready to take the test and there is always something more to study. Schedule a flight after you schedule it and stick to it!
I moved it back about 5 days. I regret this. At 1 week out I was fairly burned out and ready to get the test done. I scored better on my NBME practice exam 2 weeks before the test than on the real thing.
I moved my test date by 6 days, because I was freaking out about 2 weeks before step and did not feel ready. I don't think one can ever feel ready, but I just wouldn't have been able to do everything I wanted to do before the test (review each organ system, etc.). So for me I'm glad I moved the test. I'm not sure I did better than I would have if I didn't move my test, but I got to at least study each organ system. In retrospect, I wish I just started studying intensely earlier so I didn't have to do that!
I moved it about 2 months before
Was not prepared, one week.

I wasn't scoring as high as I wanted to on practice tests. I moved it maybe 2 weeks before original date.
Moved into the 3rd year block. I was not scoring as high as I needed to be scoring and had personal circumstances making studying etc. harder to do.
Didn't think I was prepared
Was sick, 1 week.
Moved it a week.
I initially scheduled my test for 3 weeks into the study period, but 2 weeks in, I did not feel ready, so I moved it back another week, which I do not regret. At the time, I still had a good amount of resources that I had not fully gone through, including UWorld and NBME practice exams. I also wanted to go back and review the material that I had studied earlier in the month or so leading up to the exam. Pushing the test back, I never actually finished everything I wanted to do, but I felt much more ready for the test and I still had plenty of vacation time afterward.
Fell behind on my study schedule
One week before original scheduled test date. Moved because score was going down on practice exams.
Got sick, so I moved it back
Moved my test day out 1 week because I got a bad NBME practice exam score the week before my exam and felt I needed more time. Cancelled part of my vacation to do this- in retrospect I should have just taken the test and gone on vacation!
I moved it about a week because I wanted to review more material.
Moved it early on, 6 weeks out, made more sense for my schedule and felt safer
Nervous that I would be unprepared
Moved it two weeks because I wasn't planning on vacationing after Step 1, and appreciated some extra time.
Moved date by 1 week. Didn't feel prepared enough.
I pushed my exam back 1 week. In hindsight, I think I just need a few more days to mentally prepare myself. A full week was too long and I just wanted to get it over with.
I moved it 1.5 weeks. I didn't realize what an enormous take Step studying was until it was too late.
Pushed it out an extra week, did not feel fully prepared.
Felt unprepared, moved it 1.5 weeks back
Moved 1-2 weeks.
Pushed it 4/5 days to ensure getting through UWorld twice
I moved my test day by 5 days. I was behind my study schedule. In retrospect, I should not have moved my date, as it generally doesn't make a difference.

Well Being and Mental Health

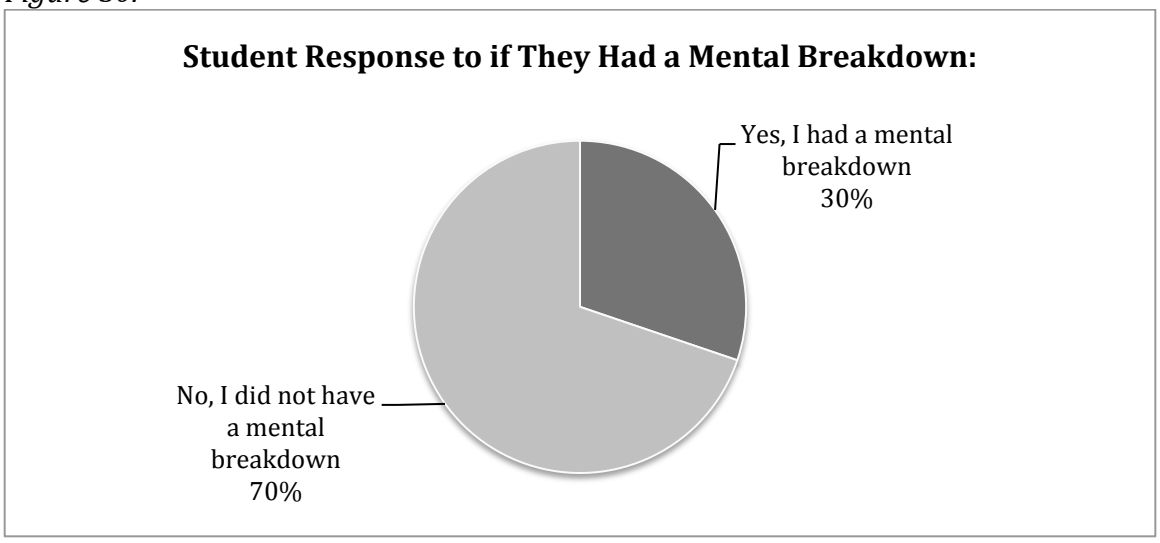
Of the 96 students who responded, approximately 30% of students had a mental breakdown at some point while studying for Step 1 (*Figure 50).* Students used many methods to cope with their mental breakdown and recover. Many strategies involved speaking to mentors, spending time with family or friends, going to therapy, taking time off from studying, using more prayer or meditation, and exercising more.

Student advice in regards to staying 'sane' during the study included many of the same strategies mentioned for recovering from a mental breakdown; however, there was greater emphasis on exercising regularly and scheduling breaks and things to look forward to during the week.

Students tended to be frustrated with their classmates when individuals would share their study schedules, give unsolicited advice, or comments about how many UWorld questions they were doing per day or what their most recent practice scores were. Students appreciated when their peers had supportive comments, shared study tips or resources when prompted, shared their insecurities, or commiserated about 'how far behind' in studying they were.

A highlight of a few other tips and advice mentioned by students include: picking a few resources and sticking to them, making a detailed study schedule, exercising daily, and scheduling a test date and sticking to it. Many students commented on the fact that 'no one ever feels prepared come test day'; do not be shaken by this feeling and move your test, as this feeling will always be there in some capacity.

Figure 50.



Student response to:
How did you recover from your mental breakdown?

Therapy
Just had time allow me to recover
Talking with my mom, boyfriend, and prayer/church.
N/a, but I did have moments of stress surges. I meditated and sought out social support. My advice would me to realize you're only human and nobody is perfect. Don't compare yourself to your classmates.
Mental health provider visits, self-care, prayer
Talked to an upperclassman that had been acting as a mentor for me throughout the study process. He was really reassuring. I also took 2 full days off... really because I had no choice and couldn't study any longer- I had a mental block- but after that I felt much better and was ready to start again.
My parents noticed I was in a bad state from our phone conversations; I know not everyone is as lucky as I am to have supportive parents, but mine literally flew across the country and stayed with me for a couple of days to distract and support me. It seems weird to think that being distracted from studying would benefit me, but the break from the torture was exactly what I needed.
I talked to family and close friends who weren't in med school. It helped a lot!
Prayer
I didn't sleep at all the night before the exam. My heart was racing and the longer I lied in bed, the more anxious I got, so I just never fell asleep. It was terrible.
CAPS, spoke to medical students from classes above me, friends, psych meds
Meditation for quick relief, read blogs/articles online by people who suffer the same problem and it reassures you you're normal.
Plan for a breakdown. Have methods to get back into study mode. Or plan early to avoid a breakdown from happening? Not sure if this is possible
Acceptance of where I was at and that there was nothing I could do to change the outcome. It turned out ok.
I had support from my significant other, who made me get out of the house and away from studying. I am someone who doesn't require a lot of breaks from studying, which is both good and bad. When I started to get particularly frustrated or feeling bogged-down by the process, he was the one to suggest I get away for just 10 minutes, be outside, and get some fresh air. Having people in your corner during this time period is important - whether it is your fellow classmates, family, significant other, friends outside of medical school, etc. Don't underestimate the value of these people.
I talked to my parents, my friends, and just took a break for an evening. It won't kill you to have an evening off. It really helps.
Avoiding anything to do with med school was really helpful.
Yoga
Called parents, talked to friends, took a study break, exercised
Take a break from studying, like an ENTIRE day
I spent time praying and tried to recognize that it wasn't a waste of time to relax and recover from my anxiety if it was keeping me from productive studying anyway. I tried to speak kindly to myself and talked to friends who would encourage me, and asked them to pray for me.

I got married 4 days after taking Step. Advice to future students: do not get married 4 days after taking Step. Honeymoon was awesome though!
Started taking a beta-blocker for test anxiety- SO helpful!! Tried to change my mentality about the significance of the test
Talked with family and friends, took one full day off from studying, and looked at the big picture for a moment.
Go on a run :)
I reached out to friends and got out of the house. It's okay to break schedule if you don't feel well.
I went home for one weekend in the middle of my designated study period and I felt so much better.
I had family around. I eventually came back together with time.
I really prioritized seeing my therapist, and I spoke with partner, and friends who helped me realized my goals and how my projected score will still allow me to achieve my goals.

Student response to:
What helped keep you sane during the study period?

Exercise
Exercise
EtOH
Living with friends
Taking most evenings off to just relax for an hour or two before bed. Having designated days off (about once a week) where there is NO studying done
Doing non-medicine things
Roommates, running, boyfriend
Quality time with my mom, boyfriend, and prayer
Staying active, spending time with both classmates and people outside of medicine
Dogs
Spending time with family.
Wife
Friends, pets
Exercise, meditation, healthy eating, breaks
Having control over my own schedule
Friends and family
Exercise. But I like studying.
Venting
Exercising everyday
Calling home; being with others.
Exercise, date nights, good meals
Exercising and watching Netflix.
Surfing most days. Structured study schedule.
Being around family

My roommates
God
Coffee
Exercise, time with friends
Seeing my boyfriend, talking to friends, cooking or going out to eat, being outside during breaks, exercising
Keeping a schedule and sticking to days off
Watching TV, being with my family, talking to my classmates
Exercise, hanging out with friends
I went on jogs every evening during sunset.
Studying in the vicinity of friends, taking breaks to eat and do something everyday
I went home
Exercise, family
Family and friends
Studying with a close friend, someone who helps de-stress you is key. Unfortunately it's all too easy to start studying with someone and then realize that they actually stress you out a ton.
Exercising most days, taking a break every 2-3 hours, studying at cafes with a friend, spending time every day with spouse, sleeping at least 7 hours every single night, doing one hobby that makes me feel alive but put aside other hobbies to make time to study
Exercise
Exercise, making a specific plan for studying (there is always more to do so setting limits is important), seeing friends and family outside of medicine.
Significant other, treating studying like a job, exercising at least once a day.
Breaking at the end of the day and decompressing with down time like TV or Internet
Having at least 1 day off per week and break time each day.
Friends
I was with my boyfriend, so we would cook dinner together at night and usually watch a little TV. When things got really stressful for me, I would take a walk.
Family, exercise
My parents, exercise, and talking with friends on the phone.
Deep relaxation, regularly getting outdoors, eating well, sleeping regularly
Not sure, still feel like I my mental state hasn't fully recovered.
Taking breaks to play basketball, play video games; talk with significant other and friends
Surfing, hanging out with my significant other, eating food I liked
Exercise, talking to my family
Having friends to study with, exercising, and eating right
Exercise
Prayer, talking to friends, having at least 1 day a week to do social, fun things and try not to think about studying.
Exercise and changing study locations
Exercise, friends and alcohol
Yoga

Don't study too much. Do other things. Studying at the gym was really helpful because I could study for an hour, then do something active, then study again, then do something active. I never studied in the evenings. I would stop studying by 6pm at the latest and have a normal evening like a real adult human.
Friends, exercise
Doing active things
Working out
Spending time with friends
Running, getting some sun, having a study partner, taking frequent breaks, going home for a week.
Not sure, my cool brain can work it
Running, wine
Exercise. Family. Starting to date my now-boyfriend.
My mom and eating
Friend time
I didn't stay sane
Meditation, friends, exercise, nutritious food, massages
Family, friends, and exercise
Friends, dog, exercise, coffee.
Hanging out with family and friends
Being away from most classmates
Running every day
Exercise and going out with friends.
Living with classmates
Family support
Music
Talking to friends
Taking lots of breaks
8hrs of sleep a night, 1.5 hours gym every day (primarily weightlifting), walking on the beach, being at home with family,
Listening to music, hanging out with parents
Going to Philadelphia with family, spending time with wife, kids, other family; leaving SD and getting change of scenery (we went to east coast for 5 weeks); exercise daily. Texting/calling a couple classmates occasionally to check in and share successes and challenges.
Exercising regularly, limiting my exposure to friends who did not stress me out! Seeing my therapist. Eating and sleeping well/enough.
Wife/child
Exercise and friends
I didn't attend any of the group sessions with Christina Lambert, but saw her a couple times for individual counseling during the step 1 period, which was very helpful. She helped me identify weak points in planning/scheduling, helped me make a schedule, and was an important space for honest conversation.

Student response to:
What bothered / annoyed / frustrated you about what your classmates did/said during second year moving closer to the study period?

I knew everyone was smarter than me, and hearing about them studying for step stressed be out because I was just trying to pass the block
Nothing really-- I just hated how people didn't talk about things or would be uncomfortable about it
Everyone studies differently so prefer not comparing methods
Nothing. I just focused on myself.
I know I was bothered, but can't remember a specific reason.
Nothing
Everyone was very anxious/stressed starting around December and I just didn't want to be around them. I particularly didn't like classmates comparing how much studying they had already done.
People were studying for Step 1 since the summer of first year and/or well before the study period but few admitted it.
How high their practice test scores were
How some people were entirely focused on "high yield" learning points during 2nd year PBL, instead of learning the material as it was presented in class.
That they were blowing off class to study for step 1
People talking/bragging about how much they got done that day/week.
My classmates didn't annoy me.
Too many opinions, too many resources to worry about
Nothing.
Complained, even when they were scoring much higher than me. Bragged about there study habits but didn't try to help others.
People talking about how good their scores were. Comparison.
It bothered me when people always tried to force their advice on you about what they were doing to study
Everyone talking about study strategies
People always overestimate how long they study effectively.
Talking about how much they would study or giving exact scores on practice tests. That's bound to make other people feel terrible. Never share scores unnecessarily!!
Everyone was so stressed and anxious and all they could talk about was step 1. They stopped going to class and obsessed over the test. So I spent most of my study time at home in San Diego and then home at my parent's house.
When classmates would get together and share how many extra resources they were using and thus invoked stress among other friends
There will be people who feel compelled to tell you their latest practice exam score, or how many questions they do a day. Don't listen, don't compare.
It bothered m that they would procrastinate until March or April and freak out instead of starting in January with intense studying

Brought study materials to class and only studied during lecture, paid no attention to individual giving lecture. Skipped the entire multi organ system block. Carried around first aid during first year. Anki flashcards non-stop during lecture/POM
Being around a lot of other scared and stressed out people can be hard for me so I tried not to spend too much time on campus. It's easy to compare yourself negatively to everyone else during a time of stress, which is not always healthy,
I generally avoided discussing this with classmates, in order to avoid potential negative emotions.
Firecracker during lecture
I thought it was a lot harder than everyone predicted. I am not the best student but even so when people say it will be all right they do not know that. Really though I had to think about that. Didn't bother me that much.
I think everyone tends to be on edge during this period so even slight mentions of studying would become slightly irritating.
Nothing in particular, it is just the general stress around the exam. People had already studied for Step 1 when I arrived to start my MS2 year, and I was very much taken aback.
Too negative about life during studying
All everyone talked about was Step 1. People start to give each other unsolicited advice and will share their study schedules whether you want them to or not. Everyone's stressed and that's reasonable, but try to step away from classmates if they're stressing you out or overwhelming you. It's okay and doesn't make you a bad person. Don't let the way others study psych you out.
Nothing, I kept to myself though
Nearly everything they did.
It gets really difficult to see people moving into dedicated and if you don’t have a support system outside of your med school friends it can get very lonely
Where they are in their study plan
People started to obsess over Step, so I removed myself and just focused on myself and what I needed to do to succeed.
People were disrespectful during lectures and small groups (doing u world during class etc.).
Don’t know, tried to stay away from social media and people that stressed me out 1st and 2nd year
Hearing people talk about how behind in studying they were but finding out they were way ahead of me.
How much people had already studied, or judging others for not using the same resources
It's very easy to compare yourself to other people... I don't think it’s a bad idea to go home or somewhere where there are no other med students so you can just focus on yourself. Or if there are a few classmates you really get along with and work well you can study with them.
Everything
I did not talk to them
Their study habits
Everyone was comparing their progress and what resources they had already used, which stressed everyone out who hadn't gotten that far or was using different resources.
Not at all
Their presence
Hearing what their strategy was
Anxiety producing statements, ego, fear-producing comments, comparison

Comparing study schedules, etc.
There are too many resources in general, so the battle of which to use and why was always stressful.
People trying to gauge how much studying you were doing/had done
People got crazy; some of my close friends really become mean and competitive
Talking about scores
Hearing about their UWorld progress, how far they'd gotten, what their percents were
Everyone seemed to be enjoying the suffering together, and it made me feel alone
Don't worry about all the resources other people used for the exam - trust what works for you and stick to it.
Not much, didn't really talk to too many
Not much. I did my best to "run my own marathon" like Dean Mandel suggested.
Classmates who were clearly more prepared and relaxed talking about how it will all be okay (unfortunately that advice isn't valid for everyone). Classmates asking about what I'd done was annoying. Classmates telling me what they're doing was annoying (unfortunately that just made me feel more stressed).
Nothing, my classmates were great. You will become more irritable as test date approaches though.

Student response to:
What did you appreciate / like / enjoy about what your classmates did/said during second year moving closer to the study period?

Everyone felt like they were in the same boat. I don't care if someone was doing terribly or really well just as long as people were open about it. No matter how great someone was doing it's still a stressful experience and I wish everyone understood that.
Appreciated not talking about Step studying
Positive comments, testing each other but outright saying not to be judging if someone gets it wrong.
General underlying excitement for moving forward into third year
Positive encouragement
Camaraderie in that we all agreed our lives sucked.
Advice, their honesty in how much they were preparing as opposed to not.
Supportive comments
People asking how are you holding up. Being honest that they were having a hard time too.
My closest friends and I made this pact that if we all failed to do well in Step; we'd agree to apply for a low-tier residency together.
I liked it when they gave me my space.
Appreciated commiserating and talking about how far behind in studying we were.
Invitation to study together
I really enjoyed talking to them about the frustrations about studying and having them be there to listen to be in misery.
Being supportive. Giving real advice on how to improve on a certain section. Talking about anything but STEP 1 studying!
I liked studying with a few friends who were not being crazy about the whole thing

Expressed their insecurities and the stress they were also facing during this study time. I appreciated being a part of a community that was comfortable being vulnerable and openly shared feelings.
I liked how they did not compare themselves to each other. It was everyone's own journey.
Even though the stress can be magnified, it's comforting to see that everyone else is going through the same thing and seeing MS3s and MS4s who've been through it is also comforting. Talking to classmates about strategies for studying and plans after can also be very helpful.
Learning different potential study strategies people were experimenting with.
Mental breaks together
Support was always nice and UCSD students are the best at this.
Camaraderie
I appreciated when my classmates started using First Aid and Pathoma as the primary resources for their write-ups in PBL. The material presented in those study resources were what we wanted to know anyways, so it made PBL much more of a generalized learning experience and I found I got much more out of those sessions when this transition occurred.
It was nice to have a support network of friends to relax to, vent to, stress out to, who understood exactly what you were going through. Everyone was super supportive and open to sharing resources and notes. We still socialized which definitely kept me so sane.
Taking time to hang out and truly leave behind studying
It was nice seeing people and just catching up
It will all be okay.
Appreciated that a few friends came to help me move during the dedicated study time
Saying general, encouraging things rather than specifics about what resources worked well
Giving hugs, mutually complaining
Roommate/classmate got silly with me for great breaks
Having social gatherings and having time to vent was helpful.
Very little
Not talking about step
Support, solidarity, encouragement
Hanging without talking step
Just their presence!
People sharing resources/study tips
Allowing for space
Spending time going out of the house, like getting a beer
That we're a team and that they believe I'll rock the test.
The online posts were a nice distraction
We’re all in it together!
Having a couple of friends that I was in frequent contact with was nice because we could offer perspective and encouragement.
I appreciated classmates who just did not bring step1 things up and instead just encouraged each other to continue to work through everything. I appreciated when classmates encouraged each other to stay well.
The fact that they were suffering just as much as I was.

Student response to:
Any other wellbeing wisdom/nuggets of advice/tips?

Making a schedule helped me a ton. If I finished what I had set out to do for that day (example: read through CV section of Pathoma and FA in the morning and a total of 80 UWORLD questions with review, and some ANKI cards) and it was 4pm then I would just call it a day and go relax and know that I was going to get through everything I wanted to before my test day without having to study until 10pm
Don't let success get to your head or failure get to your heart.
You are not your score.
Not so much advice but I wished I would've adopted a strict schedule and exercised daily
If there is any need for a grieving period during your studying take it, visit with a mental health provider regularly- don't try to power-thru.
Self-care (whatever that means, friends, sleep, food, laziness) is ESSENTIAL to effective studying.
Exercise daily! Do one small fun thing each day. Talk to your core support often but put away distractions while you're studying because you need to build your ability to concentrate for long periods of time. Plan something really fun after your test and look forward to it!
Don't lose hope. Keep others around you so you don't drown in your own hopelessness.
Start early and pace yourself. Do nothing the day before the test.
Just do one thing every day that makes you feel at peace.
Have your spouse talk to other spouses to normalize their experiences.
Start early!! IT's so much nicer to take your time studying and not feel rushed for time. So start a month earlier than you think you'll need.
If you are having a really bad, discouraging day - take the day off and do something fun. Try your best to be well-rested and happy to stay motivated.
Active (rather than passive) studying is important.
Pick your resources and stick to them. As long as you're using UWorld and first aid you will do well. Don't change your plan and keep adding resources based on what other people are doing or saying (except for sketchy micro! that one's amazing). Stick with your plan and know that whatever method has worked for you thus far in med school will continue to work for you for STEP 1
Exercise and eat well
Take care of yourself. This is the easiest one to forget. Especially as the test gets closer. Do what you can to make sure you're eating healthy, getting a good amount of sleep, and doing things that make you happy. It’s easy to say, but believe me it can definitely be hard to do as the stress mounts.
Make your own plan early, and stick to it- don't cheat yourself by procrastinating.
This period can be really hard on relationships
This was the most stressful part of med school but you will get through it! Just try to do something else for yourself every day, don't study 24/7, and even though it gets very tempting to push your test date back most people I talked to regretted doing this. Some people were happy they moved their test date up. Also take a vacation after!
Meditate at least 15 minutes a day (I recommend reading "Waking Up" by Sam Harris over winter break). Exercise every day. Eat well. Treat it like a job: be sure to "clock out" every day/evening for at least a few hours and relax.

Study harder earlier and as soon as you can especially in second year when the study load is much easier to handle.
Take time to step outside and get some fresh air
Find what keeps you sane - and do that.
Meditate, relax, and try to keep things in perspective. Yes, this test is big for your application, future, pride, etc., BUT it is not everything. Your worth is much more than the score you get and you are not validated/invalidated by your score. Your score DOES NOT determine the kind of doctor you'll be, so try to stay grounded. Also, the studying and the stress will definitely consume you, so be aware of your mind, be kind to yourself, and try to maintain a balance that will help you stay grounded.
I did 5wks of the "dedicated" study time. That last week before the exam was very hard as I was getting burnt out. Make sure to have hobbies and people to fall back on during the study period so that you aren't studying for all your waking hours.
DO NOT MOVE YOUR TEST BACK. You won't feel ready. I definitely didn't. It is impossible to underestimate how quickly you forget things (and how much you have to study to just stay where you are) by the end of dedicated. As unprepared as you may feel you will likely not be more prepared in a week (exception: if you haven't finished UW before step 1). Also, I felt like shit after I walked out of step 1 and thought I had done horribly. I grieved and dreamt about the questions I got wrong. I ended up getting a great score. It's okay if taking step 1 doesn't bring you as much relief as you expect. Your gut feeling about your performance is not always right.
Do lots of things for yourself
It's good to be around people who love you and can encourage you when you're really struggling. Try to keep things in perspective, this is important but it will not be the end of the world if you don't do amazingly well or even if you don't pass.
Eat healthy, exercise! Have something you look forward to each and every day!
Study early. If you wait until the dedicated study time you will be overwhelmed by how much you have to learn and want to die. Also, don't over-purchase resources. You only have time for so much. I tend to think it's better to do UWorld twice and really know everything in it than to do another question bank and only half know both.
Stay active. Go outside
Don't let this test get the best of you! Looking back, my only regret is how much time I wasted freaking out, and how poorly I took care of myself. SLEEP is a very necessary and important tool for quality studying- prioritize it over all else!
Exercise everyday
Exercise, eat well, and sleep enough
Have compassion for yourself, STEP is not the end all be all for residency/life
Find a good cafe and stick with it. Meet the people that work there. They may give you free food/drink.
Try to continue to do things that will help you de-stress/take your mind away from studying every day. It's very easy to get completely wrapped up in studying non-stop.
Try your best to enjoy the experience, remember your love for medicine
Exercise; spend time with people you love, and MAKE A SCHEDULE!
Don't isolate yourself too much! Yes it's important, but the test won't define who you will be on the wards. You'll do fine and you'll be a doctor.
Exercise every day. Get sunlight every day.

Take breaks and take care of yourself. I often felt like I was going crazy during the study period but it's important to remember that it's only a few weeks and that we've been working hard for several years (even going back to before medical school!).
Take care of yourself above all else. If you really feel like you are hitting a wall, take a half-day off, or more if you need it. Better to take a day to recover than to spend two days giving half effort studying and being miserable about it
Don't overdo it, if you need to take a day off
Basic stuff. Eat well, continue to exercise, be creative!
For each of the 40 question blocks on the test, whether they be practice tests or the real thing, break it down into 4 10-question blocks. After you take 10 questions, stop, center yourself, and forget about the past 10 questions (whether they were easy or hard). Then do the next 10 questions. This helped me prevent that feeling of "oh no this block is so hard I am failing this block ahhh!!!!"
Step 1 study time is time to be selfish. Don't feel like you have to hang out with people if you don't want to. Feel free to say no. Your studying, and mental health are of the utmost importance. Throughout it all, remember that you belong. You are smart. You are prepared/preparing. You will be a doctor who will help people. Even if you don't end up doing radiology/neurosurgery/ophthalmology/ENT/(insert another super competitive specialty), because of your score, you will reframe and achieve your goals as an MD! Love yourself. You've come a long way.
Don't adopt any bad habits during this time (e.g. smoking or drinking excessively). It will pass, no need to cause any lasting harm.

Summary

There is no perfect study recipe for Step 1; different learning styles require different resources. That being said, this is a summary of general trends and advice to keep in mind as you embark on this challenging yet rewarding journey.

Nearly every student used First Aid for the USMLE and UWorld Qbank, with UWorld significantly rated to be the single most important resource. Pathoma, Sketchy Micro, and NBME full-length practice exams were also heavily used by students. Use of other resources appeared to be variable, but many found Anki flashcards, Doctors in Training videos, USMLE-Rx Qbank and Goljan Audio Series to be worthwhile. Try out resources early in the year and then pick the resources that work best for your learning style and stick to them; don't be shaken by what other people are using.

UWorld practice tests seem to be a the most reliable estimate of Step 1 scores, while NBME exams more frequently underestimated scores; so, if your score is lower on an NBME exam, shake it off. Also note that most students scored 3 points higher on the real exam compared to their final practice test, so don't lose heart.

Many factors seemed to positively influence Step 1 scores, such as having a higher Step 1 score goal, higher MS1/MS2 exam scores, studying lightly for Step 1 earlier on during second year, having higher UWorld Qbank scores, and having a higher MCAT score. Other factors that seemed to be only minimally beneficial included completing more of UWorld (including total, 'incorrects' and number of passes), starting to study intensively earlier and for a greater number of weeks.

There were a few things that seemed to be harmful to scores. Despite many students feeling that their scores were potentially improved by moving their test date, the students that moved their test scored on average 9 points lower than the students who did not move their test; however, this difference was not found to be significant. Therefore, it is likely best not to move to move your test.

Some factors appeared to have no impact on score, such as studying more hours during intensive study days and, subjectively, the agenda of daily study schedules. The number of resources used was also a non-factor; using more resources is neither beneficial nor harmful to scores.

Final advice for being a good classmate during this stressful time: give supportive comments, share insecurities, or commiserate about 'how far behind' you are studying. Avoid giving unsolicited advice, sharing how many UWorld questions you did that day or what your recent practice scores were. For personal wellbeing: exercise daily, keep in touch with loved ones, take breaks and eat well; find balance and plan something to look forward to. Keep your head down. You can do this.

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