

Hey everyone, it's Sury!

- **When I took STEP & why:**
 - **April 1st (Friday of spring break)**
 - I really wanted to have my whole summer to relax and have fun before M3 year. I also liked having the wiggle room of pushing my test back if I truly felt unprepared. I am a big procrastinator so having the test date sooner motivated me to get serious about studying earlier than I would've otherwise.
 - I still started studying towards the middle of January with this date.
- **My studying style:**
 - ***Big time winging it lol***
 - Practice questions are what helps me the most, so I tend to focus on those and reviewing material that I get wrong by visiting First AID or any personal notes I have. I am very visual, so I like to repeatedly look back at the same page of notes.
 - **I did NOT use Anki!!** Anki became a dreaded chore for me, and I was TERRIBLE at keeping up with it. I wasn't great at being patient and clicking through the cards. I think it might've been helpful for me if I used it for Sketchy micro & pharm at least. However, I was not consistent enough to do that by the time STEP studying came around.
 - I often study around people (not necessarily with them). It's nice to have others to keep me accountable for staying on task and also making sure I'm taking breaks and staying active.

1) Resources I Used and How I Used Them

- ☆ First Aid (FA)
 - I used both the pdf version and print copy of First Aid
 - PDF → search function! copy/pasting diagrams, writing in notes, etc.
 - Print copy → skimmed before bed so I wasn't staring at a screen even more
 - **My PDF copy became my consolidated resource with ALL my notes in it from B&B, Sketchy, Pathoma, UWorld, lecture.**
 - I referred back to the pdf every time I got a question wrong to see all the notes, mnemonics, etc. I had on it. Then I would talk myself through it and the reinforcement of seeing that page with my notes really helped solidify concepts in my brain.
- Boards & Beyond (B&B)
 - I shared access with another classmate, so I didn't pay full price for B&B
 - I only watched videos if needed because I got a UWorld question wrong that related to specific content (particularly for physiology)
- ☆ Sketchy
 - **SketchyPharm and SketchyMicro are PURE GOLD 🏆👑**
 - Start as early as possible!! Yes, I know they're kind of weird at first, but they are truly SO helpful!!!
 - I did buy the subscription (split with others), so I had the updated videos, questions, and ability to look at what each of the images stood for
 - Sometimes I watched sketchy while walking on the treadmill at the gym!!
- Pathoma
 - Went through Pathoma during M2 year for block content anyway so followed along with block material and reviewed old material as needed when I got questions wrong.
 - However, most of the extra Pathoma notes were copied into my PDF First AID already, so I could often just go to my First AID to review.
 - Pathoma doesn't cover everything so don't overly rely on it. The videos are great explanations, however!!

- ☆ UWorld Qbank
 - My true love 😊 I honestly had a lot of fun answering practice questions (until my brain started physically melting from the stress towards the end)
 - **You do NOT need to finish all of UWorld.** Focus on your weak points or topics that are more high-yield. I would say most people I talked to did not finish. I finished ~93% but it gets tiring at the end.
 - I tried to do about 1 block of 40/day, but life happened... a lot
 - By the last couple weeks, I was doing 2-4 a day since this was my main way of studying 😊
 - Some tricks I learned
 - I learned one trick was to go with the answer that sounds the most “high-yield”, it’s often right.
 - If normal is ever an option, it’s often right.
 - I used UWorld by **carefully reviewing why I got a question wrong and revisiting that section of my notes in FirstAID** so that I could reinforce the concept in my mind. This was time consuming but worth it for my visual brain.
- Anki
 - *Gross* 😞 Not really. I think it’s a great tool, I just didn’t keep up with it enough from the beginning and didn’t get the hang of it. Oops.
 - If you at least start doing sketchy pharm/micro by block 6, I think it’s very doable to use Anki for Sketchy at least!!
 - A lot of people I know that did too Anki consistently also stopped doing it towards the last couple weeks of studying because it just takes so much time. Some also just only did it for Sketchy at the end.
- AMBOSS
 - I didn’t buy the question bank, there were plenty on UWorld for me.
 - You can get access to all the **articles for free**, just use incognito browser so you don’t have a limit on how many articles you can view a day! I didn’t often need these, but they have some good diagrams/pictures.
 - They had a **free practice test in early February** which I did do, as did a good portion of the class!
- ☆ Practice tests
 - I started with a **baseline test** (UWorld 1) in late January
 - Some people were too nervous to get a baseline score, but I prepared myself to be okay if it was a low score. I just wanted to be able to see growth over my studying time.
 - Then I took AMBOSS free test as well as NBME 26, NBME 30, and UWorld 2. Don’t know if the order really matters, the heavy content can really differ. **5 tests total**

2) Plan/Study Day

- Studying during blocks
 - Study the block material!! For instance, in Block 7, study GI/Renal/Endocrine because it also aligns with the block. Also, a great time to review cardio/pulm since that was during Block 6 and should be somewhat fresh. I tried to sandwich it where I studied block material hard for a few weeks, then studied cardio/pulm for a couple, and then went back to reviewing block material before exam week.
- Studying during breaks/”dedicated”
 - I technically didn’t use our dedicated time over the summer, but I did study during the week off between Blocks 7 and 8.
 - I treated it like a workday (a long one). I took advantage of the full time off to focus on complex topics that took more of my brain energy.
 - I for sure still took time off!! I still attended med prom, birthday parties, etc. This was great motivation for me to finish my questions and review for the day.
- By the end I completed **5 practice tests** including 2 UWorld tests, 1 free AMBOSS test, and 2 NBMEs.
- I also did the **SAMPLE 120 questions from NBME** – allegedly 1-3 of these will show up on your real test (not for me unfortunately)!! I did this 2 days before my test to warm me up and make sure this content was in my head.

- I don't know if this will be updated but here are the links:
 - [Practice Test Link!!](#)
 - [NBME Practice Test Answer Key](#)
 - [A website we found with some answer explanations!](#)
- A typical day looked like this:
 - Morning (8AM) → UWorld, PBL Objective
 - Lunch & Walk before PBL
 - After PBL → More UWorld, watching videos I was weak on (basically completing tasks on CramFighter)
- The weekend was pretty much the same just without the PBL. 😊 Often there would be some takeout brought to the PCCLC or a movie night!

3) Staying Sane

- I used **CramFighter** and bought a year subscription to study for M3 shelf exams too. This gave me a great way to organize what I needed to do, and it was fun to check boxes off. I also loved that you could reshuffle your tasks and anything you didn't get done or extra things you got done could be adjusted for in your future schedule.
- **TAKE BREAKS!!**
 - Take AT LEAST one evening off every week. It is okay to sleep in, it is okay to hang out with friends for a whole evening. You will function better if you do these things. Listen to your body and take care of it.
- **TREAT YOURSELF!!**
 - So much Lakota was purchased during this time, oops
 - Also eating out a couple times a week during study breaks hehe
- **Hangout with people! – extra points if you don't talk about school/medicine 😊**
 - I visited my boyfriend in KC about once a month and he came and visited me in Columbia about once a month as well. I would study at specific times during the day when he was busier and set aside at least half the day to just hangout.
- I actually **studied in a "pod"**! I had two friends taking it the same day as me and we all essentially lived in one room of the PCCLC together for 3 months. This was great because I had companionship AND people to help me understand a concept I was struggling with. Otherwise, we quiet studied at our own desks. We also took breaks together to go on walks, get coffee, get takeout, watch movies, vent about STEP, etc. Studying with people isn't for everyone, but it's a great way to feel like you're not alone and to at least have a group of others you can talk to about the struggle and stress that STEP 1 is. We also drove together on test day which really helped the vibes during the test 😊

4) Things I Wish I Done Differently

- I wish I had done more **Sketchy** earlier...
 - The curriculum doesn't get into every single bug even during 2nd year. The videos are generally very short for micro and knowing a few facts about the bugs can easily get you points.
 - The pharmacology videos are a lot longer, so it often takes me more passes to get these down.
 - There are also some decent sketchy videos in the pathology section!! The ones for **lysosomal storage diseases** saved my life because I absolutely hate those diseases.
- I wish I had kept up with **doing one set of UWorld per day** more diligently and making up for missed days on weekends. It feels like a lot at first, but you get the hang of it, and it can really save your future self. Then when you take days off or have a sick day, you don't get even more behind!
- Do not compare yourself to others and their progress or methods. I was really stressed about not doing Anki, but it worked out just fine even though I took the test fairly early. 😊