



STEP Prep and Wellness

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Managing Well-Being

Recognize some anxiety is normal and expected. This helps with motivation and memory when at a manageable level.

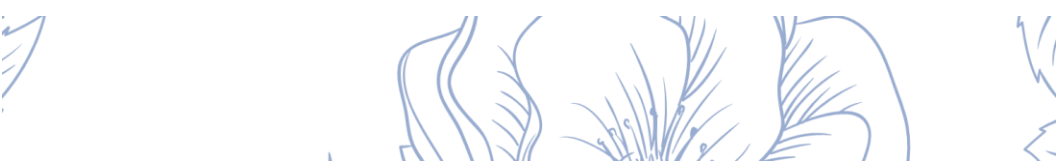
Use your breaks wisely

- Ideally on activities that relax your mind, such as going for a walk, listening to music, doing yoga, coloring, etc.
- Try to minimize your use of social media and watching news during this time
- If something is not working, take a break before trying again.

Spend time with others

- A couple times during dedicated, go to lunch or spend time with family or friends
- When you spend time together with other med students outside of study time, make an agreement to not talk about the exam

Practice Skills

- Deep breathing can help before and during the exam
 - Mindfulness: you can only control your present moment and will handle the future when it happens
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Maintain Self-Care



Sleep

Lack of sleep (even for one night) leads to attention problems, poor concentration, irritability, reduced immunity, and decreases memory. A good night sleep for most people requires 7-8 hours of sleep. Sleep is critical for processing the information you studied.



Eat

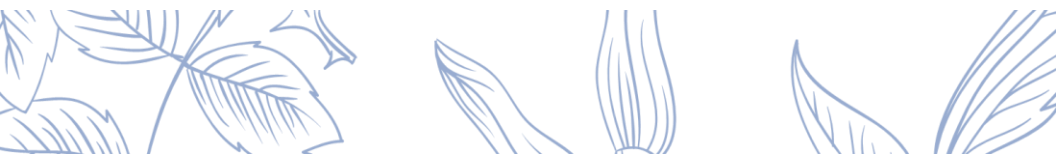
If you are unable to eat a full meal, eat a little every few hours. Eat slowly, ideally in a quiet place.

Try to not multitask and just enjoy your food. This is a good time to unplug.



Exercise

Choose exercise you enjoy rather than force yourself because “it’s good for you.” This can include a 15-minute walk, some yoga, stretching, and more.

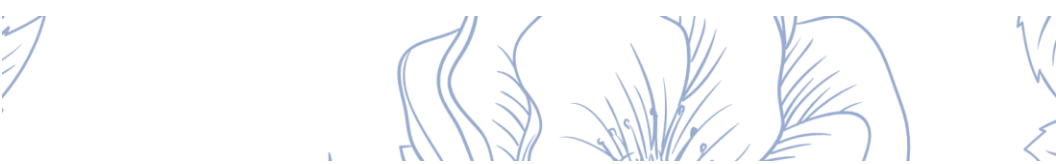




Study Strategies



Make a manageable schedule with realistic expectations

- General rule: Take at least a 15-minute break for every hour studied with a max of 4 hours nonstop at a time. For example, if you studied two hours straight, take a 30-minute break. If you studied four hours, take at least an hour break. I personally recommend not studying more than eight hours a day but if you do, be mindful of your anxiety levels and endurance
 - Some people prefer to use a pomodoro timer and block scheduling to stay organized. For others, this rigidity can cause anxiety. If you are the latter, consider including a 10-to-15-minute transition time between your break and your studying (such as finishing watching an episode of show, grabbing some water, and then sitting down to study again).
 - You may also need a day or two off during dedicated if your anxiety gets too high. This is an okay thing to take. It is better to stop and recover rather than push yourself more into burn out if you are struggling.
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Use Practice Exams and Questions



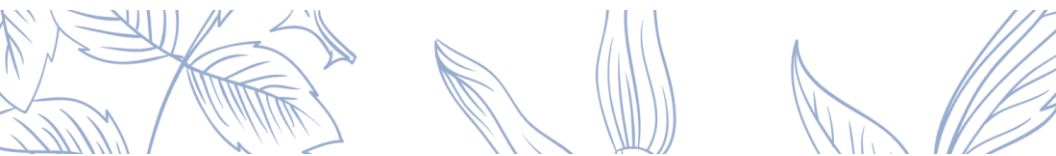
- Flash cards are helpful as well but learning how to identify what the questions are asking will really help
- During untimed practice exams or when practicing questions, cover up the answers and try to answer before seeing them
- Use these exams to see your strengths (topics that need slight review) versus those that need more review

Things to Remember

- You do not need to remember everything. Focus on learning what you need to pass the test, not what you need to be a doctor.
- Some people benefit from studying with a friend and quizzing each other- this is due to teaching topics being a strong learning strategy. Others study better alone.

At the end of the day:

Do what works best for you





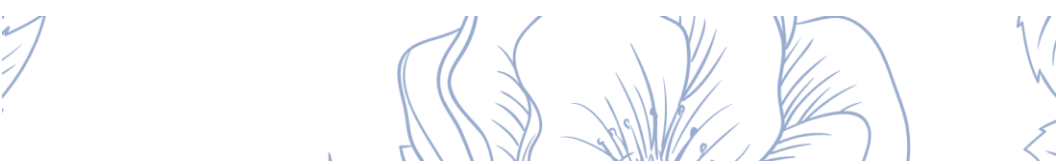
Test Taking Strategies



Look for the **BEST** answer, not the **RIGHT** answer

- For ethics questions, the answer usually has something to do with consulting
- Try to narrow down the answers when you can. Crossing out incorrect answers helps your brain's decision making. Look out for keywords (like NOT or EXCEPT) and read thoroughly
- If you are purely guessing, do not change your answer after your first guess unless you are sure you were wrong
- Take a guess and move on if you are stuck for more than a minute

Things to Remember

- Answer every question even if it is a guess
 - Remember that there are experimental questions that are not graded on the actual exam
 - Try not to "track" or calculate your potential score as you go
 - If you feel overwhelmed or are drawing blanks, stop for a moment, take a deep breath, then guess and skip it
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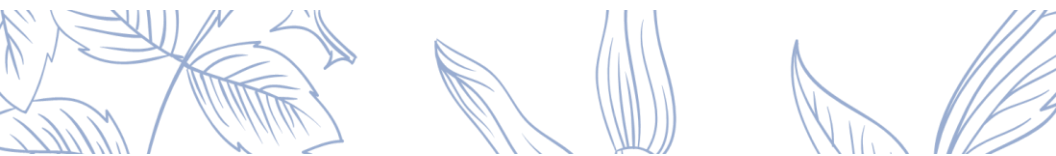


For Exam Day

- Get a good night sleep and have a good breakfast (be mindful of caffeine and any nausea)
- Do not study the day of the exam
- Remember that STEP is a long exam so bring a snack and water to leave in your locker (you will have access during exam breaks)
- You can bring foam earplugs if you want
- Dress comfortably


After the Exam

- Have something fun or relaxing planned out for yourself and follow through with it, no matter how you feel like you did
- Try to not compare or talk to others about the exam. There also is not a need to look up answers. At this point, it is over, and you will decide what happens next once you receive your score.





Final Notes



There is no correlation between your STEP score and how good of a doctor you will be

- Do not compare yourself to others: Everyone learns differently and at different paces so while you can experiment with different study strategies, you have to learn what works best for you.
- Your practice exam scores will fluctuate at times. This normal. If your score drops, **do not panic**. Take a day, recover, and keep going.
- Remember to remind yourself of your strengths. This exam may not show your strengths, but those will be seen later on in your journey, maybe during rotations or with patient care.

Need further assistance? Reach out to the Student Counseling Center at (410) 328-8404 or visit our website at umaryland.edu/counseling

