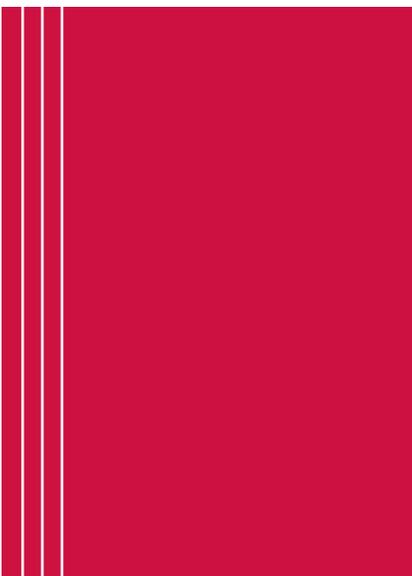




# USMLE Step 1

## *Content Description and General Information*

A Joint Program of the Federation of State Medical Boards of the United States, Inc.,  
and the National Board of Medical Examiners®



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## **Introduction**

This booklet is intended to help you prepare for the Step 1 component of the United States Medical Licensing Examination® (USMLE®).

The information in this booklet, sample test materials and tutorials, and other informational materials are available at the USMLE Web site (<http://www.usmle.org>).

In addition to the information in this booklet, you should review relevant sections of the USMLE *Bulletin of Information*.

Sample test materials are available at the USMLE Web site, in both downloadable computer format with tutorials, and as sample items in a booklet. You **must** run the tutorial and sample materials to become familiar with the test software prior to your test date. The tutorial provided at the beginning of the Step 1 examination has fewer screens and less detailed information than the tutorial available as part of the Step 1 practice materials on the USMLE Web site.

In addition, the practice materials on the Web site include items with associated audio or video findings. You should become familiar with these types of test items before your test date.

Please monitor the USMLE Web site (<http://www.usmle.org>) announcements section to check for changes in the test delivery software and to access updated practice materials. You must obtain the most recent information before taking any USMLE examination.

## **Examination Format**

Step 1 consists of multiple-choice questions prepared by examination committees composed of faculty members, teachers, investigators, and clinicians with recognized prominence in their respective fields. Committee members are selected to provide broad representation from the academic, practice, and licensing communities across the United States and Canada.

Step 1 is a one-day examination. It is divided into seven 60-minute blocks and administered in one 8-hour testing session. The number of questions per block on a given examination form will vary, but will not exceed 40. The total number of items on the overall examination form will not exceed 280.

## **Purpose and Design of the Examination**

The Step 1 examination is designed to measure basic science knowledge. Some questions test the examinee's fund of information per se, but the majority of questions require the examinee to interpret graphic and tabular material, to identify gross and microscopic pathologic and normal specimens, and to solve problems through application of basic science principles.

## Content Description

The content description that follows is not intended as a curriculum development or study guide. It provides a flexible structure for test construction that can readily accommodate new topics, emerging content domains, and shifts in emphasis. The categorizations and content coverage are subject to change. Broadly based learning that establishes a strong general understanding of concepts and principles in the basic sciences is the best preparation for the examination.

### Content Outline

All USMLE examinations are constructed from an integrated content outline, available at the USMLE Web site (<http://www.usmle.org/pdfs/usmlecontentoutline.pdf>), which organizes content according to general principles and individual organ systems. Test questions are classified in one of 18 major areas, depending on whether they focus on concepts and principles that are important across organ systems or within individual organ systems.

Sections focusing on individual organ systems are subdivided according to normal and abnormal processes, including principles of therapy. Each Step 1 examination covers content related to the following traditionally defined disciplines:

- anatomy
- behavioral sciences
- biochemistry
- biostatistics and epidemiology
- microbiology
- pathology
- pharmacology
- physiology

The Step 1 examination also covers content related to the following interdisciplinary areas:

- aging
- genetics
- immunology
- molecular and cell biology
- nutrition

While not all topics listed in the content outline are included in every USMLE examination, overall content coverage is comparable among the various examination forms that will be taken by different examinees for each Step.

Most organ systems are partitioned into Normal Processes and Abnormal Processes, and include subcategories of specific disease processes. In most instances, knowledge of normal processes is evaluated in the context of a disease process or specific pathology. (See Table 1 on page 5.)

**Table 1. USMLE Step 1 Test Specifications Systems and Processes\***

<b>System</b>	<b>Range</b>
<b>General Principles of Foundational Science**</b>	<b>15% – 20%</b>
<b>Organ System</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immune System</li> <li>• Blood and Lymphoreticular System</li> <li>• Behavioral Health</li> <li>• Nervous System &amp; Special Senses</li> <li>• Skin &amp; Subcutaneous Tissue</li> <li>• Musculoskeletal System</li> <li>• Cardiovascular System</li> <li>• Respiratory System</li> <li>• Gastrointestinal System</li> <li>• Renal &amp; Urinary System</li> <li>• Pregnancy, Childbirth, &amp; the Puerperium</li> <li>• Female Reproductive &amp; Breast</li> <li>• Male Reproductive</li> <li>• Endocrine System</li> </ul>	<b>60% – 70%</b>
<b>Multisystem Processes &amp; Disorders</b> <b>Biostatistics &amp; Epidemiology/Population Health</b> <b>Social Sciences</b>	<b>15% – 20%</b>
<b>Process</b>	<b>Range</b>
<b>Normal Processes†</b>	<b>10% – 15%</b>
<b>Abnormal Processes</b>	<b>55% – 60%</b>
<b>Principles of Therapeutics</b>	<b>15% – 20%</b>
<b>Other‡</b>	<b>10% – 15%</b>

\*Percentages are subject to change at any time. See the USMLE Web site (<http://www.usmle.org>) for the most up-to-date information.

\*\* The general principles category includes test items concerning those normal and abnormal processes that are not limited to specific organ systems. Categories for individual organ systems include test items concerning those normal and abnormal processes that are system-specific.

† This category includes questions about normal structure and function that may appear in the context of an abnormal clinical presentation.

‡ Approximately 10%-15% of questions are not classified in the normal processes, abnormal processes, or principles of therapeutics categories. These questions are likely to be classified in the general principles, biostatistics/evidence-based medicine, or social sciences categories in the USMLE Content Outline.

## Physician Tasks/Competencies

In addition to being organized by organ system, the Step 1 exam is organized by physician task and competency, as shown in Table 2. More information about the physician task and competency outline is available on the USMLE Web site (<http://www.usmle.org/pdfs/tcom.pdf>).

Test items are constructed to assess one of the competencies listed below.

**Table 2. USMLE Step 1 Specifications: Physician Tasks/Competencies\***

<b>Competency</b>	<b>Range</b>
<b>Medical Knowledge/Scientific Concepts</b>	<b>55% – 65%</b>
<b>Patient Care: Diagnosis</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>History/Physical Examination</b></li><li>• <b>Laboratory/Diagnostic Studies</b></li><li>• <b>Diagnosis</b></li><li>• <b>Prognosis/Outcome</b></li></ul>	<b>20% – 30%</b>
<b>Patient Care: Management**</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Health Maintenance/Disease Prevention</b></li><li>• <b>Pharmacotherapy</b></li></ul>	<b>7% – 12%</b>
<b>Communication</b> <b>Professionalism</b>	<b>2% – 5%</b>
<b>Practice-based Learning and Improvement</b>	<b>4% – 8%</b>

\*Percentages are subject to change at any time. See the USMLE Web site (<http://www.usmle.org>) for the most up-to-date information.

\*\*The Step 1 examination includes management questions in only the categories listed in this table. It does not include questions related to clinical interventions, mixed management, or surveillance for disease recurrence.