For: Dr. Sue Boiko

Thank you for believing in my art.
AND WELCOME TO...

NOAH'S Foolproof GUIDE to taking Step 1

*Not Foolproof

First & foremost, I think it's important to acknowledge that everyone studies differently.

None of this advice is law. Just think of it as a collection of resources, advice, & reflections about my screwups.

But hopefully it will be useful in helping you achieve your goals!

7 week vacation
PART 1
Exam Breakdown & Resources

Let's Start With The Basics

Step 1 is an eight hour exam.
It has seven one hour sections.
And one hour of breaks!
It's also expensive.

But... I am sure... You all will be... fine?*

*Not a legal guarantee

Just learn from our mistakes...

RIP MS2s

And text me if you have questions.

DO

DI

NO

Serotonin

First let's talk breakdown.
Here are the subjects you'll see:

1. Pathology (44-52%)
2. Physiology (25-35%)
3. Pharmacology (15-22%)
4. Biochem/Nutrition (19-24%)
5. Micro (~12%) 6. Immuno (~8%)
7. Anat/Embryo. (~11%) 8. Histology (~11%) 9. Genetics (~7%)
10. Behavioral science (~5-9%)

Most of this you'll see somewhere in a book. But there are some topics not covered at UCSO.

There's only so much time.
**PATHOLOGY**

Most people study with:

1. PATHOMA
2. Boards & Beyond

Simply put, pathology is what you see during your MS2 curriculum. During MS1 you learned how the body works. However, what is tested more on step is the MS2 stuff, or, what makes the body stop working.

A large part of step 1 & block exams is recognizing & diagnosing disease. These materials are the backbone for learning these skills.

Both of these resources are lecture series. B & B is physiology + path, but Pathoma is path only. For Step 1 & block exams, most people pick one or the other.*

* Not Both

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**PHYSIOLOGY** is a contentious topic.

My mentor advised me to ignore physiology review. For me, that was amazing advice. Almost all my friends did the same. The logic is that during path review & UWORLD* you’re forced to pick up physiology as you go.

I felt this was true for a P/F exam.

If you’re more risk adverse, most study PHYSIO or B & B. I would argue that’s overkill though, especially if you also use UWORLD.

* I used 97% of UWORLD & still felt my physio was fine thanks to PATHOMA.

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**PHARM!**

In general, you have two choices.

Both of these tools are cartoon/memory palace resources.

- **Pixorize**
  - Shorter videos
  - Usually one drug per video
  - (or at least not many)

- **SKETCHY**
  - Fewer, but longer videos
  - Multiple drugs per video

Sketchy is the “gold standard” but many feel it can be overwhelming.
Biochem, Nutrition, & Immuno

Parts of Immuno are also taught in Pathoma. Biochem & Nutrition are a little trickier.

Biochem in particular is not reviewed a lot at UCSD. This subject includes anything from the Kreb's cycle to bycogen storage disorders. Some use First Aid to review these three.

However, I feel that PIXORIZE is by far the gold standard here.

Please note, I highly recommend the Askthemerl 2.0 ank deck for all PIXORIZE resources.

Remember, all resources are usually studied in tandem with their corresponding Anki deck.

If you're unsure what this means please clarify with a classmate!

ANATOMY

Most of us used a powerpoint called the "100 concepts" in tandem with the corresponding Anki deck. There are many decks out there but I've uploaded my preferred one to the dropbox.

All in all, "100 concepts" should get you ~70-80% of the anatomy you need to know, IMA.

This is all my friends I did for the subject.

*Supplemented w/ UWorld for some people.

If you want to be a stats god, B&B is incredibly exhaustive.

If instead you want to learn 80% of stats in only 2 hours, Andy Nell has 4 Youtube videos.

(You can find them on the dropbox).

Other than that I would recommend using UWorld to practice.

STATS

Embryology

I didn't study Embryology because honestly, I can't stand it.

Most of my friends did the same.

This decision had no consequences for us.
Histology

Most of Histology you will learn passively through Pathoma/UNWORLD.

If you want extra help with identification, I would recommend DirtyMed's "High Yield images" on YT.

Genetics

- Genetic disorders on Pixorize
- Genetic lectures on B&B
- The FA chapter is also good (-short!)

Randy Neil also has an excellent (short) YouTube series:
- USMLE STEP 1: Genetics
- USMLE STEP 1: Genetics II

😊 Behavioral Science 😊

You don't need a whole lot here, but it will come up on exam day.

For PSYCH:
- Use first-aid to learn EGO DEFENSES & PERSON. DISORDERS
- Use the Ankiing Cards dual tagged w/ HiHlgh-YiIl & Fa>Psychiatry-Pathology.*

For ETHICS/SOCIOLOGY:
- Remember that 80% of UNWORLD I did? It was solely to practice the ethical scenarios & to master a bit of statistics.
- I would also recommend DirtyMed's "USMLE Communications Questions" video.

* This is kind of complicated so I just uploaded a PSYCH desk to dropbox.

As you can see there are a ton of resources.
It's okay if you feel overwhelmed!
I did as well.

But like, eventually you'll find what works for you.

Just remember that these are suggestions!
Experiment, try what you like, and make your own custom study plan!

I'll leave you with some words of encouragement from Dylan Hutson.

"This is the lowest you'll probably ever feel in your medical school career, so you can really only go up from here!"
One of the most asked questions is: “When should I start?”
And that’s a great question.

And I’m hesitant to put out a timeline, because there is definitely no “one true path”.

But here is my schedule & reflections for you to use and adapt.
Happily it helps guide you in finding the study pace that is right for you.

Many consider Pathoma 1-3 the most high yield stop 1 content.

ONCOLOGY
- Pathoma Ch. 1-3.
Pathoma doesn’t overlap well with this block. I had to also watch most of the SOM lectures.
However, Ch 1-3 are super MY for SSW.
Learning 1-3 now pays off later!

EBMI
I watched SOM. Others watched B&B biostats.
IMO, it really doesn’t matter. This is a very fair block. Enjoy it.

ARDD
ARDD is an involved block. ONC & DERM, IMO, are the two blocks w/ the least third party overlap. In order to stay organized, consider it two separate blocks that share on exam.

RHEUM
- Pathoma Ch. 2 + Ch. 7.1 (Vasculitis)
- B&B: MSK: 3.8, 3.9, 3.9, 3.10
- B&B: Autoimmune: 4.1-4.5
RHEUM, in isolation had excellent third party overlap. I had zero issues on these questions.

DERM
- Pathoma Ch. 19
- B&B DERM: 11-1.11
Honestly just pick one. Doing both does not help.

So here’s where the trouble starts. SOM DERM has minimal overlap.
If I didn’t shoot the SOM slides in the 11th hour, the second half of the exam would’ve rocked me.
Rheum was great though!
GI
- PATHOMA CH 10
- PATHOMA CH 11

There are two 15-point quizzes in this block that can really hurt your score if you miss them. In my experience, Pathoma had practice questions on the final but the quizzes were not so much. That being said, pass is only 65% (at most) so...

THANKSGIVING
- PATHOMA CH 18: MSK

I know, I know. But trust me, MSK is a super easy pathoma chapter. You might be able to bang it out over only one day of your break.

You’ll be so glad you knocked it out early!

WINTER BREAK
- PATHOMA CH 4: Hemostasis
- PATHOMA CH 5: RBCs
- PATHOMA CH 6: WBCs

I was able to have a restful winter break while doing the above chapters.

Is it annoying to study over break?

Of course it is.

But, being able to kill time before winter quarter is pretty critical for taking this exam before dedicated.

Consider winter break your “checkpoint” to solidify what your test date goals are.

But remember:

Your health comes first.

Early is optional.

ERG
- PATHOMA CH 13: Female genital system
- PATHOMA CH 14: Male genital system
- PATHOMA CH 15: Endocrine
- PATHOMA CH 16: Breast

Lots of mandatory stuff this block that was very final exam relevant. Pathoma doesn’t overlap amazingly or terribly. Consider supplementing.

CARDIO
- PATHOMA CH 8: CARDIAC
- PATHOMA CH 9: Vascular

CARDIO had excellent Pathoma overlap. Here are two of my friends experiences.

Friend 1: Pathoma + som stuff during last 9 weeks. 95%
Friend 2: Pathoma only during the last week. 75%

MBB
- PATHOMA CH 17: CNS

One of the best blocks in MS2 for step studying. Here me out. MBB is TAYLOR formatted, there is no final. Before every quiz I would study the assigned som lecture, but since there is no final the only reason you have to do are your step 2 reviews. The som chapter in PATHOMA is also very brief, so for a five week block, you’ll have time on your hands.

During this block I also completed the PATHOMA CHs for Renal & Pulm.

PULM
- PATHOMA CH 9: RESPIRATORY

At this point, since I had already finished PULM, my focus during this block was PHARM review. Since I had not been watching sketchy pharm during the school year I had a lot of catching up to do. Postponing pharm until the end was a mistake!

The block exam itself, thankfully, had pretty solid overlap.

RENAL
- PATHOMA CH 12: KIDNEY+ URINARY
- FIRST AID: NEPHROTIC+NEPHRITIC SYNDROMES

Renal was when I really started feeling the pressure. Since this was my last full block before test day, I had to wrap up Biochem, nutrition, anatomy, & stats in the span of a few weeks. It’s a lot of material, so I didn’t finish until Week 1 of MOSD.

The block itself was very fair, but word to the wise:

Dr. Rishkin told me before the final that her favorite lecture is “HTN.”
The entire 1st week of MOSD was mandatory.

MOSD: This block has a take-home exam.

In regards to third party materials, I really don’t have any definitive recs.
Due to the nature of this block, some block material may overlap w/ PIXORIZE, while other topics may match w/ PATHOMA.
It’s really just a mixed bag.
However, if by this point you’ve finished your content review, you will probably enter MOSD already ready to take the block exam.

I’m sure all of these recommendations were a lot to take in.

It’s ok if you feel like you’re being pulled apart.

Just take it one block at a time, and remember that these are just suggestions!

You might find other material, like B& B, that you prefer over what my friends and I did.

And there is nothing wrong with that.

But... don't forget that passing your block exams is still important.

And every one of you will need a different amount of som lecture exposure to pull this off.

Some of you may not need it, but seriously,

Getting at least some exposure to som lectures prior to each block exam is recommended.

Be flexible & be prepared to change up your strategies from block to block!
I'm gonna start off and tell you: Anki is not needed to pass. So don't let anyone tell you otherwise.

 Plenty of People have successfully passed without using it.

That being said, I do think Anki makes life easier.

One of the hardest parts about studying for Step1 is remembering all the material from blocks you've already finished.

When I was in the middle of cardio, for instance, how much of ARDO do you think I had forgotten?

The answer is a lot.

It might seem like a pretty obvious concept, but keeping your Anki reviews from previous blocks active pays huge dividends later.

Actually doing these reviews, however, is a huge pain in the butt.

On top of that, it can be kind of confusing when trying to decide which deck to use.

There are a ton of decks out there.
As a result, we aren't going to spend time specifically on ANKI settings since people have varying preferences.

Instead, we'll wrap up with some deck recommendations and general tips & tricks.

If you are going to be using ANKI, you honestly will need one of these:

**Anking V.11** Download from Reddit
  - Some cards are outdated or redundant.
  - Free!
  - You will still have no problem passing with V.11.

**Anking V.12** Download from Anki Hub (.com)
  - Everyday will live-update your decks with the newest step-relevant material.
  - $5/month  😂

In order to easily navigate through your cards & find the ones relevant to the resources you are using, you will also want to install the:

"Colorful Tags (+Hierarchical Tags)"

Add-on

This add-on allows you to find cards that are directly attached to each sketchy, pathomby 888, etc lecture.

Hierarchical tags allow you to find cards specifically relevant to any video you watch or chapter you read.

Personally, I prefer to make a new deck for each new video I watch.

This allows me to stay organized and more easily revisit certain material down the line.

Remember that there are some non-Anking decks that I covered in Part 1.
Similar to the MCAT, practice exams are a necessary evil.

Let's talk about the different types.

- **NBME**
  - NBME exams are the standard exams made by the actual test maker.
  - There are seven versions: 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31.
  - Many believe #31 is the most realistic.

- **UWorld Self Assessments**
  - Free with most subscriptions.
  - They will give you a numeric score (i.e., "300")
  - But most believe UWSAs are inflated. Supposedly UWSA1 is more inflated than UWSA2.

- **FREE 120**
  - The free 120 is UWA, the most representative practice exam we have.
  - It's also from the testmakers. This exam is best saved to take 3-4 days before the real one.

I used these three!

Please note that NBMEs do not give you a numeric score.

Instead, you'll get a "% chance of passing" along with an overall % correct.

For instance, you may get a raw score of "61%" and a % chance of passing of 53%.
So, how do you know when you are ready?

Well, there are a few schools of thought.

**THE "General" Way**

- 2 NBMEs w/o CI's outside fail range.
  
  => this is about a raw score of 65%.

  When you get a raw score, your confidence interval will be that score +/- 2 points.
  
  A "fail" is generally below a 60-61%.

  If your CI is outside this range twice, you generally should be good to go.

**THE "SAFE" WAY**

- 2 NBMEs w/ raw score > 70%.
  
  A pass for step 1 is generally around 61-62%. Therefore, if you can hit 70% twice you're incredibly safe.

After you are done with NBMEs, the FREE 120 is usually your final "gatekeeper."

Again, most people will save the free 120 for the week of their exam. People arguably consider it the most representative test.

As a result, people have strong opinions on what a "safe" score is.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MY TAKE</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>SAFE</th>
<th>&quot;Unsailable&quot;</th>
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<tr>
<td>65%</td>
<td>70%</td>
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All in all, just remember that these are rules of thumb that are based on anecdotal evidence.

I'm all in.

Several people in my class passed just fine without ever breaking a raw sixty-five percent.

It really just boils down to how much you're willing to gamble.

But you know,

Be smart about it.
Pixorize topics in order of what I think is highest yield.

1) Vitamins (~23 videos)
2) Biochemical pathways (~24 videos)
3) Chromosomal abnormalities (~8 videos)
4) Immunodeficiencies (~10 videos)
5) Metabolic disorders (~19 videos)
6) Lipids (~8 videos)
7) Glycogen storage disorders (~4 videos)
8) Lysosomal storage disorders (~7 videos)
9) Autosomal dominant disorders (~13 videos)
10) DNA repair (~4 videos)
11) Collagen related disorders (~6 videos)
4) Peroxisome dis., Mitochon. dis., Cytokines, transfusion reactions, transplant rej., "misc" videos.

Although we didn't talk much about uWorld, it still might be the best resource out there.

People in my class passed w/ anywhere from 0% to 100% of it completed.

In general, most aim for 50-80% completion by test day.

And remember, every uWorld Q has a few anking cards matched to it!

And most important, above all else:

Make time for family.
Make time for friends.
And never forget MS2 can still be incredibly fun.
And well, That's it!

Everyone, thank you all so much for your interest and support for this project.

Your help in making this come to life really does mean the world to me.

Some parts of this year are going to be tough, but I'm confident in all of you!

Don't forget to still have fun this year, and of course...
Good Luck!
For many of you, this will be the most stressful exam you’ve taken. But rest assured, if you are here, you already possess the strength & intellect to defeat this exam. Once you’re done, you will be grateful you gave it your all, because you’ll use this knowledge every day.

- Kelvin Du

You’re all very smart cookies!! Diligent & hard working!! don’t forget to breathe, eat, rest, and play!! when you’re tired and feel like giving up, take a sunset walk outside and breathe fresh air. remember all the people who believe in you! we know you can do this too! sending you encouraging hugs!!

- Jess Kim

Make studying a habit; use a habit tracker with friends and set reasonable daily goals throughout the process!

- Jose Sandoval

Studying for this test made me question a lot of things to the point I was even actively looking up ways to pay off my student debt if I just dropped out. I want to normalize that this test is not a reflection of how amazing of a doctor you will be and even though it can be overwhelming—You will carry on!

- Dylan Hutson