

Taking USMLE™ Step 1 and Step 2 On the Computer

Who Are You?

When you arrive at the test center, you'll be asked to present your Scheduling Permit and a *government-issued ID* (e.g., a driver's license or passport) that includes both a recent photo and your signature. Here's how to avoid being turned away because of ID problems:

- Your ID *must be current*. An expired driver's license, for example, is *not* an acceptable form of ID for USMLE testing purposes.
- The name on your ID *must exactly match* the name on your Scheduling Permit. If you recently changed your name and your ID reflects that (but your permit doesn't), remember to notify the NBME as far in advance of your test date as possible. Your written notification must be accompanied by two documents: a copy of the official document which verifies the change (such as a marriage certificate or court order) and a copy of your new ID. You'll then receive a letter verifying the change which you must bring to the test center along with your Scheduling Permit.
- If your government-issued ID has only a photo but not your signature, a second form of *unexpired* identification with your signature is required, such as a student ID or a credit card. The name on this secondary ID also *must exactly match* the name on your Scheduling Permit.

Don't Leave Home Without It

The Scheduling Permit shows your confidential Candidate Identification Number. *Test center staff do not have access to this number.* It is printed only on your Scheduling Permit. You will enter this number on your workstation computer in order to start your exam and begin each block of questions.

Please Note

Sylvan Prometric™ recently changed its name to Prometric, Inc.™
Further details are available at <http://www.prometric.com>.

The Top Three Reasons You Won't Be Admitted to Take Your Exam

Reason #1: You forgot to bring *either* your Scheduling Permit *or* your photo ID. You need both.

Reason #2: There is a mismatch between the name on your Scheduling Permit and the name on your photo ID. Your name must exactly match on both.

Reason #3: You arrived too late - *more* than 30 minutes after your scheduled testing time.

In these situations, you must reschedule your exam. Prometric will charge you \$90 to reschedule Step 1 and \$100 for Step 2. If your exam was scheduled near the end of your eligibility period, there may not be enough time to reschedule your appointment.

Planning Ahead

- Confirm your testing appointment and center location at least two weeks in advance. Call the Prometric telephone number provided on your Scheduling Permit, *not* the test center where you are scheduled to take the exam.

- Look for your orange Scheduling Permit a few weeks ahead of time, too. If you can't find it, then you'll have time to request a duplicate. Don't wait until the last minute!
- Make sure you know how to get to the test center and how long the trip will take. You can call the test center or visit <http://www.prometric.com> for directions. Arrive at the test center 30 minutes *before* your scheduled testing time.
- Bring your lunch. There may not be a restaurant or fast food place nearby and you probably don't want to use up your break time trying to find one.
- Don't bring a lot of "stuff" to the test center. You'll be assigned a locker for *all* of your personal belongings, but its storage space is limited. You may not bring any personal items, food, or drink into the testing room. Only an analog watch (without digital readouts) can be worn at your workstation. You will be given a locker key to keep with you during the day.

Checking In and Getting Started

- Sign the Test Center Log. When your name is called, show your Scheduling Permit and form(s) of identification. You may have to wait until you can be seated at your workstation, since examinees are usually started one at a time.
- Review the USMLE information sheet that you are given. It outlines the testing schedule and other important facts about your testing day.
- Smile. A digital photo will be taken of you for comparison with the photo you sent in with your USMLE application in case your identity needs to be verified.
- You'll be offered a set of earplugs — it's probably a good idea to take them. You may find yourself distracted by a ringing phone, by staff or other examinees entering and leaving the testing area (which is normal), or by the test-taking "idiosyncrasies" of other examinees.
- Two double-sided, laminated, erasable writing boards (8½" x 11") and a marker will be given to you for taking notes. These must be left at your workstation when you leave for breaks and returned to the proctor at the end of the exam.
- The proctor will assign you a locker for your belongings and escort you to your designated workstation.
- The proctor will tear off the bottom portion of your Scheduling Permit that shows your Candidate Identification Number and hand it to you to keep for the rest of the exam. Don't lose it because you'll need it to be readmitted after a break and to start each block of questions.

Give Me a Break

You'll have a minimum of 45 minutes of break time to take at your own pace throughout the day. If you need to take a short break after the first block of questions, go ahead. Or, if you want to get through as many blocks as possible before taking a break, you can do that too.

You may add to your overall break time (but not your testing time) by exiting out of the 15-minute tutorial (then you're up to 60 minutes) and by finishing exam blocks early.

You are responsible for keeping track of the amount of break time you use throughout the day.

After you exit each block of questions, the monitor will display a break screen. You may take breaks *between* blocks of questions only. Be sure that the break screen shows on your monitor before you leave your workstation. (If you leave your workstation in the middle of a block of questions, this will be reported as an irregularity.) It's OK to use study materials during a break, but only if the break screen is showing on your

computer.

How Did That Happen?

Your minimum 45 minutes of break time is used for *all* between-block activities. This includes not only the usual concept of a break (i.e., when you leave your workstation), but also the time it takes for you to make the transition to the next block, such as entering your CIN or even taking a quick stretch.

Also, there are two scenarios in which you could inadvertently shorten your break time and/or total testing time. If time runs out in the block you are working in and:

- a test question is on the monitor. You will be able to enter a response to that question, but *the block won't end until you click the mouse or use the keyboard.* (Also, you will not be able to go back and answer any additional questions in that block.)
- the Item Review Screen is on the monitor. The block *will not end until you click the mouse or use the keyboard.*

Time is *not* suspended while the computer is waiting for you to use the mouse or keyboard. The clock for the entire exam day is still running. The same amount of time you spend deciding your next move is also being subtracted from your break time and/or total testing time. Be sure to exit quickly if the time allotment for a block runs out before you have completed the block.

Starting the Exam

- The computer will prompt you to enter your confidential Candidate Identification Number. This number is required to launch your exam.
- A 15-minute tutorial will be the first session you see. If you are already comfortable with how to navigate through the exam screens because you practiced with the sample test questions available on the CD-ROM or the USMLE web site, you can exit out of the tutorial right away.

During the Exam

- If you need to take a break, get up from the workstation and tell the proctor. You must sign the Test Center Log and indicate if you are in the middle of a block of questions or between blocks. When you return, you must sign the log again and show your photo ID and bottom portion of the Scheduling Permit to be readmitted.
- Did your screen just go blank? Did your mouse or keyboard stop working? Don't panic! Notify a proctor right away. If your computer crashes, the proctor should be able to restart your exam within a few minutes. Your resurrected screen will show the same question you were working on at the time of the crash, with no loss of testing time.
- But what if your exam can't be restarted or the power goes out in the test center? If Prometric can't get the exam going again or if fixing the problem is out of their control, then you'll be sent home and rescheduled at no additional charge. Your re-scheduled exam will be a full day of testing, *not* just the exam blocks you weren't able to finish the first time.

Ending The Exam

- After you finish the last block of questions, a brief on-line survey will appear if your testing time has not expired.

- Sign the log book as you leave. The proctor will give you a printed verification that you sat for the exam. Keep this until you receive your score report.

When Will I Receive My Score?

Step 1 and Step 2 scores are now released on a weekly basis. With routine processing, your score should be reported about three to four weeks after your test date. However, there are many factors that may delay it — if you still have not received your score *six weeks* after your test date, contact the NBME.

What Do You Think?

The *USMLE Quality Assurance Program*, created to monitor compliance with USMLE standards for test administration, is now in full swing. Shortly after you take Step 1 or Step 2, you may receive a survey about the quality of your test-taking experience in areas such as whether or not you experienced distractions or had a problem with your computer, the number and length of your breaks, etc. Please take a few minutes to complete and return this survey — your feedback is important to ongoing enhancements to the test administration process.

STEP 1

- **7 hours of testing time**
- **approximately 350 questions divided into seven 60-minute blocks**
- **45 minutes minimum break time**

STEP 2

- **8 hours of testing time**
- **approximately 400 questions divided into eight 60-minute blocks**
- **45 minutes minimum break time**

Some FAQs about Requesting Test Accommodations for Step 1 or Step 2 through the NBME

How do I request accommodations?

First, review NBME documentation guidelines (developed from the guidelines of the Association of Higher Education and Disability) for information on how to support your request. These can be found at the NBME website at <http://www.nbme.org>. *If you have questions about the guidelines or need a hard copy, please call the Office of Test Accommodations at 215-590-9509.*

When and where should I submit my request?

Submit your request and accompanying documentation *at the same time* you submit your Step 1 or Step 2 application. However, *don't* submit the test accommodations request with your application. Send it separately to:

Testing Coordinator
National Board of Medical Examiners
3750 Market Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104
(215) 590-9509

Also, please be sure to check Block 13 on the back of your application to indicate that you will be requesting accommodations. Please remember that it takes 6-8 weeks to process a request for accommodations so be sure to allow enough time for processing before your requested eligibility period begins.

Why does the NBME require that my documentation be no older than three years?

The Americans with Disabilities Act specifies that individuals covered under its provisions be **currently** impaired in their

ability to perform a major life activity. Therefore **current documentation** is necessary to demonstrate current level of functioning. However, for developmental disorders such as learning disabilities or Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, older documentation is sometimes helpful in evaluating a request, so include it as well.

I had accommodations on my last Step examination. What do I need to do now to receive accommodations when I apply for another exam?

You must activate your accommodations in writing *each* time you want to use them. Submit a letter by mail or fax (215-590-9422) stating that you want to activate your previously approved accommodations for an upcoming exam (please state which Step). Or you can download the *Subsequent Test Accommodations* form from the NBME website (click on Licensing Examinations, then Downloadable Forms). Be sure to provide your current mailing address.

I have a diagnosis and my medical school gives me test accommodations. Since I have a history and a diagnosis, will the NBME automatically do the same?

Not necessarily. A diagnosis in and of itself is not a sufficient basis for determining if someone is protected by the Americans with Disabilities Act. The law requires that an individual be “substantially limited” in a major life activity. This definition means the limitations in functioning must be severe. In reality, a medical school or other educational institution may be providing “educational services” to help a student learn or to reach his or her maximum potential and is likely not considering the request under the ADA definition and regulatory rulings. However, the NBME is not an educational institution and therefore must remain outcome-neutral. Our obligation is to provide equal access to the USMLE testing program only for individuals who are covered under the ADA. Consequently, the NBME must consider requests for accommodations under the ADA's precise definition of disability.

I never had accommodations before--will this be a problem?

No. An early diagnosis or previous accommodation are not guarantees of receiving accommodations for USMLE anyway. What *is* important is current and historical information which supports your diagnosis and establishes a pattern of how your impairment has limited your functioning compared to an average person.

Can I schedule a test date now instead of waiting for your decision?

You have to wait until you receive your Scheduling Permit, which will be mailed after your request has been processed and a decision has been made.

Note: If you are applying for USMLE through either the ECFMG (Step 1 or Step 2) or the FSMB (Step 3), please visit their websites at www.ecfm.org or www.fsmb.org for specific instructions on requesting accommodations - the instructions differ slightly from what is provided here.