

# Stepping Up to USMLE™

.....tips to help you survive your Step 1 or Step 2 testing adventure

## Sidestepping ID Problems

When you arrive at the test center, you must 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. Send a written notification accompanied by copies of two documents which substantiate the change, such as a marriage certificate, court order or driver's license bearing your new name. 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.

## New Prometric™ Interactive Voice Response System

Prometric has a new Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system — you can now dial 1-800- MED-EXAM to reschedule, cancel, or confirm an existing appointment 24 hours a day. After you enter your original appointment date and confirmation number, you will be prompted for your area code. Then just follow the prompts. You can also use the IVR system to obtain directions to the center.

**Be careful!** *Don't use the "cancel" option if you just want to reschedule your test date.* This could remove your record from the scheduling system altogether. It indicates to Prometric that you don't want to keep your testing appointment and don't plan to reschedule during your eligibility period.

## One Minute Scheduling Tips

- ✓ When you receive your orange Scheduling Permit, double check that your name and eligibility period are correct. If either one is wrong, this could affect your ability to schedule or sit for your exam. Contact the NBME as soon as possible if there is a discrepancy.
- ✓ Try not to schedule your exam on or near the last day of your eligibility period. If something unexpected happens (e.g., if a center closes because of inclement weather or you become ill), you may need the extra time to reschedule.
- ✓ When scheduling your appointment, be sure to give the Prometric representative at least one and preferably two telephone numbers, in case you need to be reached prior to your test date.
- ✓ Call Prometric to make your exam appointment as far in advance as possible. Centers can fill up quickly, especially during the peak testing periods of May - June and November - December. Don't forget that USMLE is only one of many examinations that Prometric administers and appointments are made on a first-come, first-served basis.
- ✓ Don't forget that if you need to change your test date, call Prometric *at least five business days* before the date you originally scheduled. Otherwise, Prometric will charge you \$90 to reschedule Step 1 and \$100 to change your Step 2 appointment.

## Give Me A Break

Break time and its use or misuse is a typical point of confusion for many examinees. Read on to find out how to use this feature to your best advantage.

### Just the Facts

You'll have a minimum of 45 minutes of break time to take at your own pace throughout the day. 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 about 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. (See *Keeping Track of Your Time*.)

After you exit each block of questions, the monitor will display a break screen. You may take authorized breaks *between* blocks of questions only. (If you leave your workstation in the middle of a block of questions, this will be reported to the NBME.) Be sure that the break screen shows on your monitor before you leave your workstation.

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?

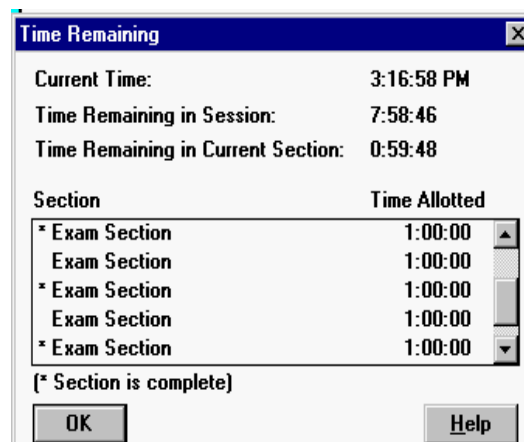
There are two scenarios in which you could inadvertently shorten your break time and/or total testing time. **If time runs out in the block you are working in and:**

- ▶ **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 it.

### Keeping Track of Your Time

Here's how to figure out how much break time and testing time you have left in your exam session. Click on the small clock icon at the top right of a question screen. The window below appears:



"Time Remaining in Session" refers to the total amount of time you have left for the day, *including* your break time. To find out how many blocks of questions are left, count the sections *not* marked by an asterisk. To figure out how much break time you have left, total up the amount of time allotted for these unopened sections plus the time remaining in the current section, then subtract this number from the time remaining in your session. Feeling math-challenged? You can make this calculation on the laminated note board provided for your use at the center.

**TIP:** The clock in the examination software is the "official" time counter for the day. Don't be tempted to compute your break time by using either the test center clock or the times you enter in the logbook when you start and end a break. They won't be in sync with the official examination clock.

## Plan Ahead

! Confirm your exam appointment and center location at least two weeks in advance. (The Prometric center may have closed or changed locations since you made your appointment.) Call the Prometric telephone number provided on your Scheduling Permit (1-800-MED-EXAM), **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 from the NBME. 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. Take a dry run if you need to. Visit [www.prometric.com](http://www.prometric.com) or call 1-800-MED-EXAM 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 will be given a locker key to keep with you during the day. You may not bring any personal items (other than the clothes you are wearing), food or drink into the testing room. Only an analog watch (without digital readouts) can be worn at your workstation.

## Checking In and Getting Started

! Sign the Test Center Log. Show your Scheduling Permit and form(s) of identification when your name is called. 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 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 should 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. If you need to replace these during the day, contact the proctor. These items must be left at your workstation when you leave for breaks and returned to the proctor at the end of the exam.

! You will be assigned a locker for your belongings and then you will be escorted to your designated workstation.

! The bottom portion of your Scheduling Permit that shows your Candidate Identification Number will be torn off and handed 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.

## Don't Leave Home Without It

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

## Skipping the Tutorial

You should practice taking USMLE using the sample test questions available from the USMLE web site or the informational CD. Once you're comfortable with the screen navigation, you can skip the 15-minute tutorial that appears at the start of your exam at the test center, especially since those 15 minutes can be added to your total break time. But there's no magic shortcut button for this. The tutorial is built like all other sections of the exam and appears exactly the way you see it in the sample test questions. To exit the tutorial quickly, click on the "Item Review" button at the bottom of the second screen — no need to page through the entire section. Click on "End" and then answer "Yes" and "OK" to the next two questions. On the next screen, you'll enter your CIN to start your exam.

### When to Contact the NBME

Name change\*  
Address change\*  
Duplicate Scheduling Permit  
Duplicate score report  
Report a problem at test center

### When to Contact Prometric

Confirm, cancel or reschedule exam appointment  
Directions to the test center  
Change test center location

\* Click on the USMLE link on the NBME website ([www.nbme.org](http://www.nbme.org)) to print forms for changing your name or address.

## During the Exam

! If you need to take a break, get up from the workstation, 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, your exam can usually be restarted within a few minutes with no loss of testing time.

! If you experience a software or hardware problem that you think may have compromised your exam, *please call the NBME after your testing session.* (Test center staff should also report it to the NBME.) Some examples include problems with testing or break time or the inability to continue your exam session due to a crash or power outage. NBME staff will perform a thorough investigation and communicate the results to you.

**NOTE:** If a Prometric problem prevented you from completing your exam, *contact the NBME for information on retesting.* The NBME has to review your exam data, then your record has to be resent to Prometric — so it will take at least a week before you can schedule another examination. (You won't be charged a rescheduling fee.) Your retest 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. This will give you the opportunity to provide feedback about your testing experience.

! Sign the log book as you leave. The proctor will collect the bottom half of your Scheduling Permit and give you a printed verification that you sat for the exam. (Don't panic if this notice doesn't print. It just means that there was a malfunction in the software that generates it. Prometric staff will file a report confirming this to the NBME.)

## When Will I Receive My Score?

Step 1 and Step 2 scores are released every Wednesday. With routine processing, your score should be reported three to four weeks after your test date. (Because of the many quality control checks built into the scoring process, this time frame is not likely to decrease in the foreseeable future.) If you still haven't received your score *six weeks* after your test date, however, contact the NBME .

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## Disability Services

(215) 590-9869

USMLE provides services to examinees with disabilities who are covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Call Disability Services for general information about ADA coverage, to submit a written request for test accommodations, or if you have any questions before your scheduled test date. You can also visit the USMLE website at [www.usmle.org](http://www.usmle.org) (click on *Test Accommodations*) for details. Here are some important reminders:

**Send** your request for test accommodations directly to Disability Services *at the same time* you submit your Step 1 or Step 2 application. (But send your application separately to the address shown in the application instructions.)

**Provide** complete and up-to-date information to expedite processing of your request.

**Review** your confirmation of accommodations letter to be sure you understand your testing arrangements.

**Call** the Prometric *Special Conditions Unit* (the number is shown on your Scheduling Permit) to schedule your accommodated exam. Do *not* call a test center directly.

**Remember** that no personal items, including medication and food, may be brought into the testing room. There will be a personal locker available for your use.

**Practice** using any assistive device such as a touch pad, screen magnification tool, audio rendition of an exam, etc., that you may require *before* your test date.

**Request** any changes to your confirmed accommodations *several weeks prior to your scheduled test date*, in case a new Scheduling Permit needs to be issued. Call Disability Services with any questions.