

Studying for USMLE Step 1? Watch out for these 4 mistakes

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Make sure you're not making one of the four common mistakes while preparing for the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) Step 1. An expert gives advice for studying smartly.

Joshua D. Brooks, PhD, associate director of medical academics at Kaplan Medical, has a strategy you should use to prepare for the USMLE Step 1: Make a "Why I missed it" sheet, and keep track of all the questions you get wrong on practice tests.

"It sounds depressing, but there's a reason for it," he said. "Everyone misses something different. If I don't know what I'm missing, how do I get better?"

When reviewing your practice test results, track the question topic and include a description of your error so you can review it later.

Brooks offers insight into four common USMLE Step 1 studying mistakes you should avoid:

1. **Passive studying.** Just because you're reading a book doesn't mean you're retaining the information. Before you review a topic, go over some practice questions to get yourself in the right mindset, Brooks said. Switching between activities to stay mentally alert also can help.
2. **Memorizing instead of understanding.** If you take a practice test and don't know how to solve a question, Brooks said to "grab a book and look it up." Learning the reasoning behind why you got a question wrong will help you remember later on.
3. **Studying in the wrong location.** Brooks recommends mirroring your studying to the experience of taking the USMLE Step 1 test. Keep the TV and music off and work in a quiet room with no distractions. Try to study in different locations to prepare.
4. **Misreading or misinterpreting questions.** Use your "Why I missed it" sheet to monitor questions you may have misunderstood, and review how your reasoning veered off-track.

Look for more USMLE Step 1 study tips and insights in future posts at *AMA Wire*®. AMA members can view an archived recording packed with even more advice from a recent presentation by Brooks. If you're not a member, join today.