

## AOA Pre-Clinical Pearls Fall 2011

### General Pre-Clinical Advice

Make Boards studying part of your study plan for every midterm and final - use boards books (First Aid, BRS Phys, BRS Path, Goljan Path) to follow along with every course and annotate those boards resources while you go through the classes.

Study hard for your first two years - even though the grades themselves matter little, how much you learn in those two years directly correlates with how well you do on Step 1 and how much you know in your third year clerkships.

Study what you don't know. It is very easy to get in the habit of studying more for the classes you like and to avoid putting in the time to master concepts that you find tedious, difficult, or irrelevant. Don't give in to this temptation and you will improve your grades, test scores, and clinical knowledge.

Prioritize sleep and exercise! You will be more effective with studies if you make time for consistent exercise and enough sleep.

Try as hard as you can to learn all the material from 1st and 2nd year while maintaining sanity by exercising / socializing when you need to. This will pay off with good USMLE scores and clerkship grades.

Only you can decide what is the best use of your time. If you find yourself zoning out in class, on the internet or not paying attention, you might benefit from leaving and reading on your own.

Remember that it will not always be this way - you will eventually get to actually do medicine and will hopefully remember why you chose the field in the first place.

As a medical student, you maybe always looking forward to "easier" times ahead. Although the material and work you do gets more interesting as the years go on, it's important not to overlook the present because the time truly does fly by with the right attitude. Try to enjoy the moment! You will never again have so much time on your hands -- strive to really get to know the patients and hone down your physical exam skills. And for Gods sake, please learn for the sake of learning and not for the grades -- it will be way more fun for you as well as your attendings!

I found it useful to plan out my week in advance with regard to studying (including what subject), exercise, laundry, grocery store, and relaxing. That way I knew that all studies and tasks would get done so that I could enjoy downtime without worrying about the rest. The "schedule" would likely change a bit as the week went on and things came up, but I felt more in control of my time having planned it out ahead.

If there are practice tests, quizzes, questions available for the course....do them! Do them early while you're studying, and then do them again before the exam.

Especially during first year, try to really enjoy life outside of the classroom. As medical school continues, you get less time outside of school. And while first year seems so overwhelming when you are in it, I wish I had listened to others before me and spent more time enjoying time outside of school. It will help you keep yourself grounded when things get tough.

On the School of Medicine website, you will find a PDF full of advice from previous pre-clinical students about what books are really helpful for each class and what resources are best for studying. Read these before you buy your books and before you start each course.

Get a study buddy that goes at the same pace as you and orally summarize topics for each other. Quiz each other. Make up ridiculous mnemonics. One study partner is better than a bigger group because there is less chatting, worrying, and reviewing of topics you are already overly familiar with.

<p>Take as many practice exams as you can get your hands on for all classes. It helps to illuminate what is important, finds your weaknesses, and makes the information stick.</p>
<p>If you wait until the last minute, it only takes a minute.</p>
<p>Coursework in years 1-2 is pass/fail; thus, you should begin organizing your notes, notecards, and studying with a focus on Step 1 rather than geared towards the course exams (as long as you're sure you'll pass).</p>
<p>With each year things change, both what you enjoy and the things that stress you out. You'll find that the grass is rarely greener next year, but rather a different shade of green. Keep yourself from constantly looking forward to the future and make sure to enjoy the moment.</p>
<p>Buy a copy of First Aid for Step 1 at the beginning of first year. I used it for all classes (except Biochem - it isn't helpful for our class) as review for tests. It was very helpful for the common questions that all WWAMI sites used. I felt very prepared for Step 1 and was used to using First Aid which made studying much easier.</p>
<p>Don't be afraid to become interested in a field early, and if you think you'll want to do something "competitive," get to know the department and start doing research in that field early - that is what the people you'll be competing with from other schools are doing.</p>
<p>The ebooks link on UW's healthlinks webpage has a lot of really useful content that can often supplement or replace hard-copy texts.</p>
<p>Try to keep in the back of your mind what is important to you, whether that is family, friends, a specific activity or sport, etc. Make time for whatever it is, because medical school will eventually be over and you want to make sure that you haven't lost what is most important.</p>
<p>Do preceptorships, particularly if there's something you're interested in that's not part of the standard 3rd year curriculum. It will let you determine if you actually like it or just the idea of it, and make connections. It may seem like you don't have time, but you do, and it will be soooooo worth it!</p>
<p>Although first and second year are very busy, take a leadership role in an activity that interests you to help keep yourself engaged with your peers and your interests.</p>
<p>Get the First Aid for Step I and Step II books and go through the chapters as you study for each class. It will help to familiarize you with what is important for the board exams, which is often also important for the class exams. Additionally, when you go to study for the boards you will already have looked at the First Aid books many times and some of the charts and tables will be hazily available in your long term memory.</p>
<p>Medicine is the study of humans, not books.</p>
<p>Don't fret about boards too early. If you work hard and study the core material presented in your courses you will be prepared to ace the boards. Realize that there will be some info you'll have to cram in during your dedicated study time prior to the test, but it's definitely not required that you study First Aid throughout the first to years to succeed on Step 1. Do whatever keeps your stress level low.</p>
<p>This is your dedicated time to learn. Make the most of it, enjoy it, and remember that you chose this career!</p>
<p>Doing well in all of the classes and understanding normal physiology and pathophysiology will both be most useful for your future clinical years / practice and for doing well on the USMLE. Focus your energy on a comprehensive understanding of the coursework with whatever resources work best for you. Don't worry about first aid or any of the specific USMLE studying until it is time, if you have worked hard you will be surprised by how much you've learned.</p>