



THE ULTIMATE GUIDE FOR STEP 1 USMLE

By – MGS

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- Passport
 - If you don't already have a renewed passport – this process seems easy but will take the most time so get it done ahead of time
- Getting your official degree – (only for AAU, modify to your respective schools)
 - 1. Go to blacklion cost Sharing office with 2 (3×4) pics, * registrar ga yalew
 - 2. Take 2 cost sharing papers which will be given to u from there and take it to 6 kilo
 - 3. Go to 6 kilo for stamp and signature at * temariwoch agelgelot around yewendoch dorm ga - return back one of the paper to TASH cost sharing office where it was Initially given to you
 - 4. Then go to gebiwoch of your own kefle ketema with requirements being - renewed metawekiya of same sub city - tempo -cost sharing paper (with 2 copies)
 - 5. Request for tin number if u don't have any(which has a process of fingerprint and stuff so be there early in the morning le werefa)
 - 6. After getting tin number, open file for cost sharing payment there and they will give u 2 form papers to fill for bank payment (there will be 3% discount around 1600 birr if it is paid within same year of graduation so better to remind then when calculated) and write the amount of money u r requested to pay
 - 7. Take 2 letters(1 stays with u and the other u will give to 6 kilo registrar office) and receipt showing your payment from gebiwoch
 - 8. Go to portal website and apply for original degree, student copy and to whom it may concern... u can authenticate when requested by the institution abroad, no long process...(<http://Portal.aau.edu.et>) use this link
 - 9. Then select for alumni services, then original degree -Payment, 80 birr for AAU account - screenshot it then enter the file along with the pics of the cost sharing paper and gebiwoch ga yetesetew paper as well. Insert the code/transaction Id which starts with (FT**** from the screenshot of the payment) then submit - u will be given tracking number which shows u the status and when to take it.
 - N.B - u can ask the 6 kilo registrar office about the portal system for clear info and guidance as well! AAU account number- 1000087392067
- ECFMG website
 - ID – this step doesn't require any money
 - Go to www.ECFMG.org
 - Click on IWA
 - Click on “if never issued an ECFMG ID number and want request one”
 - Read the terms and conditions and check on the two boxes at the end
 - Then put in your information as name, age, sex.
 - Name should be as the one in the passport (most Ethiopian last names is their grandfather's name)

- Select medical school country and click “select” after that list of medical schools will appear. Select your specific school
- Once submitted they provide you with the ID in 5-7 days (maybe earlier)
- If they don’t send you the ID in 7 days you can email them they will respond quickly
- An informative video about this step <https://youtu.be/GBAtuChLVe8>
- Submitting an application for ECFMG certification – this step requires money
 - After filling out the require information about yourself there is a pay of \$160 to be paid through a credit card
 - At the end it will let you download a pdf named form 186 with your name on it
 - An informative video about this step <https://youtu.be/5DtVYhpAt0s>
- Submit Form 186 – has two steps, passport is required at this step
 - Required – form 186, your passport’s photo/scan
 - This works through notarycam so you need to create an account
 - Online written part – you fill out some information here
 - Log in to notarycam
 - Send your form 186 and passport scan/picture
 - Notarycam will then try to verify if you are who you say you are
 - At the end they will tell you they have verified your documents and want to have an video chat to verify you further
 - They will give you an option to contact them then or schedule a meeting
 - If you are in a hurry choose the meet now option and wait them to send you a video chat link through email. May take a few minutes until they do that
 - I chose “contact now” but while it was loading I mistakenly thought it isn’t working and scheduled for another time. If I had waited for about 5 minutes more I would have received the invite link
 - You can also schedule a meeting for another time choosing specific date and time
 - The possible date maybe 2 or more weeks later so consider that before scheduling a different date
 - Online video call part – takes 5 minutes max
 - With the link sent on your email click and get redirected
 - Make sure you have your passport in hand as they will ask you to look at the passport through the video call
 - They will ask you a few questions as stating your name, that you are applying at your own will an so on

- You will be asked to sign your agreement online (you just tap on the signature blank space and it will automatically sign your name)
 - The people are so nice and will guide you through the step very well
 - An informative video about this step https://youtu.be/x_1QktjXdT4
 - Once this step is done you are illegible to take the exam even after 2024
- **Booking an exam**
 - You will need to fill out the apply for an exam application and choose step 1 and follow the steps
 - Follow the steps through the you tube link <https://youtu.be/waQRVv2gq4E>
 - a few things to emphasize on
 - Eligibility period – a period of 3 months when you feel very confident to take the exam. Mine was March-May. I wanted to take the exam on March but through some problems I couldn't do it on March so I did it on April. If my eligibility period was January – March, I couldn't have done that.
 - Choose the period you feel the most like you will take the exam
 - Through the steps you need to fill for exam booking, there is item 21 (clinical clerkship) – this step isn't actually not mandatory to fill
 - This step is needed for research ECFMG is doing
 - You may leave it as a whole
 - You may write only your internship information
 - You may write your whole attachments from pc1 up to internship – which is just time consuming
 - Price – for step 1 the price is \$1195 (exam price \$1000 and \$195 for international test delivery surcharge)
 - After finishing the above steps you will need to send ECFMG your credentials
- **Sending credentials**
 - You can send through ECFMG.org or through a mobile app called MyECFMG
 - You will need to send 2 things
 - Medical degree – you will need to scan the original degree and send it to ECFMG by your own.
 - There are a few requirements for the size of the pdf, make sure it matches or it won't be accepted
 - Official transcript – this is sent by your medical school and all you can do is inform those involved to send it for you
 - This is a tiring step that involves nagging a lot of people so you will need to be sociable and persistent. They forget about you so remind every day until it is done
 - While this is sent form 327-A will also be send – when this is done, it will say “medical education credential complete and verified”.

Which means you can get an examination permit to book exact date for exam

- **Getting official transcript**

- You follow similar steps as degree with some adjustments on the alumni services site
- The amount you pay is 40 birr and you choose send “send locally” and choose the college of health science
- Once you pay it takes about 2 days to process it
- You will need to go to 6 kilo registrar to remind them to send it to BLH
- There is a secretary at the BLH registrar that will go twice a week to 6kilo to bring processed documents. You may need to remind her to bring it for you
- Once your transcript is there you will need to inform the associate dean office to take that and send it to dean’s office through email
- Once it reaches the dean, she will send it to ECFMG through online web portal when they ask for it during verification step

- **Booking exam date**

- When exam permit is given to you, it is possible to book an exam, but you can even look at available dates online
- You can see which dates are available for any center and date with this site
 - <https://www.prometric.com/test-takers/search/usmle>
- There are 4 people that take the exam per day this is for both step 1 and step 2; I took the exam with 3 other Ethiopians, 2 of which are taking the step 1 as me and one other guy taking step 2
- It is very important to know which dates are available so that you can book the right date for you and the date with your friends as maximum of 4 people per day.
- Since 4 people max per day it is vital to know which dates have been booked with how many people; like for example if you want to take the exam with your 2 other friends on a specific date, but that date already has 2 people who booked it; only 2 of the 3 of you can book.
 - Unfortunately we can’t know how many people have already booked a specific date
 - The only way for groups of people to have the same exam date is by trial and error
 - There is an amount of money you have to pay to reschedule if it is within 45 days of the exam date. The amount you pay to reschedule depending on how many days are left to the exam is described down

RESCHEDULE / CANCEL POLICY

If you need to change (e.g., reschedule, cancel, change test center location) your appointment, you must go to www.prometric.com/USMLE or call the Prometric Regional Registration Center (RRC) noted on your Scheduling Permit. If you reschedule, your rescheduled test date(s) must fall within your assigned eligibility period. If you are unable to take the test within your eligibility period, contact your registration entity to inquire about a one-time eligibility period extension. A fee is charged for this service, and some restrictions may apply.

The date that you change your appointment, using local time of the RRC, will determine whether you pay an appointment change fee and the amount of this fee:

46 days or more before exam (domestic or international): \$0.00

Noon, 45 - 31 days before exam (domestic or international): \$35.00

Noon, 30 - 6 days before exam (domestic or international): \$100.00

Noon, 5 - 0 days before exam (domestic only): \$128.00

Noon, 5 - 0 days before exam (international only): \$328.00

Please note that "0 days before exam" indicates the day before your exam date.

- Materials I used
 - Boards and beyond video (1 months)
 - This is a very amazing material with great videos on every topic
 - There are about 20 topics of by system (CVS, Gl..) and basic sciences like biochem, , ...
 - Total duration of the videos is 122 hours and 50 minutes
 - I recommend you to organize a study schedule with some amount of hours per day, I was doing 4 hours of video per day, in 5 or 6 days of the week
 - I took notes while watching the videos if you aren't into notes you can use some notes as First aid
 - Uworld
 - This is one of the most important materials. There nearly 3800 questions in total each with a good explanation
 - There is an Offline file as pdf divided per topic which you can view
 - Online free
 - This has extra features as timed mode that is amazing especially while trying to build speed during exam taking, remember it is 40 questions per 60 minutes
 - There is a paid and free form of the online
 - The catch of the free is that it starts out as 40 questions per block but after like 200 questions it will only allow you a maximum of 5 questions per block. You can bypass that by resetting it (but you will lose your progress history)
 - <https://www.medicospira.com/uworld1/welcome.php>
 - NBME – these are exams that are very close to the real exam

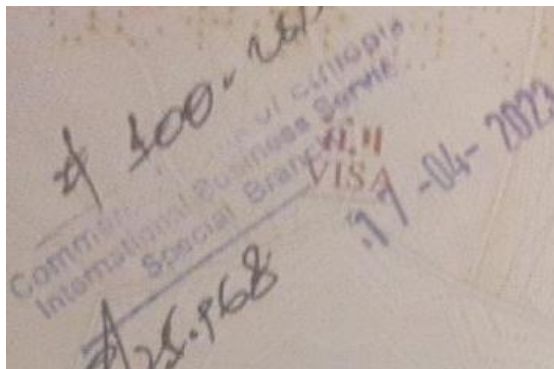
- There are 31 exams each having 200 questions
 - I recommend doing them with timing yourself
 - After completing them there is an online score converter to see your step 1 assessment based on each exam
 - The earlier ones are mostly science rich questions and the later ones (esp 25-31) are more clinical oriented questions
 - If you have time do as more questions as possible
- Other materials
 - I wanted to take the exam in a really short time so I didn't have the luxury to look at these materials but are recommended by other exam takers
 - First aid – especially if you don't like taking notes while looking at boards and beyond
 - This is a short and concise note taken on all topics
 - Has a lot of mnemonics to easily remember some difficult topics
 - It is a really short note so instead of reading without any information or using it as a baseline building material, it is actually a better material for remembering and memorizing topics. I recommend you to use it with BNB videos
 - Pathoma videos
 - Especially on topics of general pathology and oncology
 - To add info on the topics that you find hard to understand from the other materials
 - Sketchy videos
 - Especially for microbiology and pharmacology
 - Important to memorize some drug names and the complications
 - I recommend for you to use it on some drugs you find yourself have a wrong question on the exams you have worked on
 - Amboss and usmleRx question banks – if you have the time the more questions you do the better you will be at performing on your exam. But I only recommend it if you have time, as Uworld already has a lot of questions
 - An important advice here is increasing reading materials does not necessarily mean you are better, the more materials you read, the more you have to remember and the more you may be confused.
 - Have one or two study materials and stick to it, understand that very well and move to doing questions, look at other materials on specific topics
- Needed for trip to Kenya
 - Your unexpired Passport
 - Covid test or get your vaccination authenticated
 - If you have been vaccinated at the teaching hospital you used to work in you can collect the certificate there (in BL you take it at the vaccination site next to pedi ER)
 - Once you have the certificate you need to authenticate it

- First you go to a specific health center where they do these things
- I went to beletshachew health center at lideta
- They will authenticate your certificate online putting in your information
 - I paid around 200 birr for this service
 - System maybe down so you might need to wait or come another day
 - Make sure they write your name correctly as it is in your passport
- Once the online authentication is done you go to ministry of foreign affairs office to get a stamp on your original covid certificate
 - You stand in line to get an estimate of the money- I paid 150br
 - You go down to the bank (same building) to make a deposit –
 - You stand in line to get the bank receipt changed to another receipt
 - You go to the first line give him the receipt and get your stamp
- Yellow fever vaccination – very simple step
 - I got mine at BLH – through the pedi ER yellow fever vaccination office
 - You need to have your passport and 22 birr in hand
 - Give your passport to the 1st door
 - Pay 22 birr to second door and have a receipt
 - Go to 3rd door show receipt and get the shot
 - Collect your yellow fever certificate and passport from the 1st door
- If you want you can have an evisa – you can apply for free at www.ecitizen.go.ke/
 - I thought it was needed for Kenya but in reality it isn't required for Ethiopian citizens as visa is free.
 - You only need your passport at the Kenyan airport and they will stamp it for you as reason “for vacation”
- Airplane tickets
 - It is advised to have plane tickets ahead of time about 3 weeks to get cheaper seats. This may not necessarily be true but the economy seat were full about a week before my trip
 - Kenyan airways is somehow cheaper than Ethiopian airlines; but again check online for cheaper flights
- You can take 100\$ from national bank with bank rates
 - Once you have your ticket you can go to national bank with your passport and the ticket to get \$100 with bank rates
 - The bank authorized to do this is CBE commerce branch located behind commerce (Mexico in front of telebar)
 - This step is very tiresome and may even not work – they may say we have finished our dollar for the day so come on a different day
 - Documents required
 - Passport and plane ticket with photo copies for each

- If you are using Ethiopian airlines, you need a receipt from a ticket office (there is one in front of Beherawi theater). For Kenyan airways go to their ticket office at Hilton Hotel and they'll put a stamp on the back of your ticket. Do this a day or so before going to the bank.
- You will need a CBE account with enough cash in it for the exchange (preferably your own account).
- To increase your chances
 - go there early (I recommend you get there at 1:30) – as there are a lot of people going there being the first in the cue helps a lot
 - some people ask for visa, so having the e-visa printed may help

NB. They will only give you the dollar if you go 1-2 days prior to your date of flight so make sure to have a contingency plan incase this doesn't pan out.

- This is not only great for the bank rates but it will also be legal to take the dollar
 - I was told if you carry more than the allocated amount they will confiscate the dollar
 - I took the risk but no one actually bother to even check me for the amount I have; and I doubt they will take it away if you have 100-200\$ as they will understand you need it. But you don't know the type of people you may meet



- Airport immigration services
 - There are people from immigration that see you at the airport
 - They decide if you can go or not. They may tell you, you can't leave
 - There have been a few Ethiopian youth going to Kenya as visa is on arrival. If they consider you are going there to stay there they may deny you the pass
 - If you book a round trip (both eth to kenya and kenya to eth) they most likely let you pass
 - Also you can show them your exam permit and explain you are going there for a legitimate reason

- My experience – I had a round trip ticket. They didn't give me any hustle
- At Kenyan airport – have your passport, yellow fever and covid papers close
 - Follow the other people to reach the main gate
 - There are 2 checkpoints along your way
 - 1st – they ask you for covid certificate or recent negative result
 - 2nd – they ask you for yellow fever certificate
 - Along your way you can see forex exchange sites
 - These have low rates as compared to the ones in the city
 - If you feel confident you can wait till you reach the city to exchange
 - If it is your first time though I recommend exchanging there as the rates aren't that different. In my experience 1\$ for 128Ksh at airport and for 132Ksh at the city
 - At the Kenyan immigration service – last checkpoint
 - There are a lot of windows, you go at the first one (evisa and passport from other countries)
 - You give your passport, tell them your stay period get a fingerprint scan and just go
 - Next step is baggage claim if you have baggage that went in through cargo
 - Then you exit
- After exit from the airport
 - There are a lot of taxi services that say “selam new” and “wondeme”
 - They will say about 2000KSh but never listen at the rates for Uber and Bolt (a cheaper ride hailing service there) is about 700ksh
 - Try to get them down to at least 1000KSh
 - Most of them will say they don't have change so 1000 is kinda okay
- Most transactions in kenya are through a mobile banking system called m-pesa (as telebirr)
 - If you have that it will be so easy for you
 - You will need a Kenyan safaricom sim card – you will see one shop right when you get out of the airport, where all the taxi's will ask you for a service
 - Get a sim → activate m-pesa → give them money to put on your account then you are good to go
 - Now you can use Bolt/Uber, pay the exact amount (they can't say I don't have change), pay at a restaurant, pay at a supermarket
 - The easiest way would be to ask for the sim card of someone who already went as everything will be already activated
- Stay hotel
 - There are a lot of hotels with walking distance to the exam center

- I recommend booking one of those – as there is no hustle of going to the exam center with transportation service and maybe be late due to traffic or other issues
- I stayed at the embassy hotel – rates are about 30\$ per night. I booked it for 3 nights (90\$ for 3 nights)
- I met with other people who stayed at jamai central (\$80 for 3 nights), parkside view (\$25 per night)
- I recommend you view hotels near computer central Nairobi online at booking.com or other sites to look at the hotels
- I booked online through these services but you can book once you reach there as it is cheaper if you go there in person and pay
 - Sometimes the prices in \$ are very expensive, so change your dollars to Ksh and pay with that
 - At embassy hotel when I was about to book for my friend they told me the rates are 3800ksh per night but in dollars 38\$ per night. So I changed my dollar to ksh outside at 132 rate and payed with Ksh

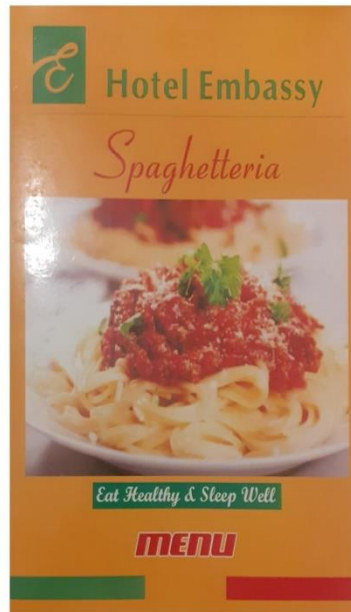
○ Nairobi

- It may be scary at first but the people are so nice and you would fit right through
- Go and walk the streets before the exam day so that you won't be lost at exam day
- You can also look at the places and surrounding even from home through maps
 - There is a street view mode so you can look at the road and everything in detail
 - <https://www.google.com/maps/@-1.284447,36.820248,3a,81.40078y,88.5054h,53.017147t/data=!3m4!1e1!3m2!1siJiJwRN4gsdHaXCPwVdQIQ!2e0>
- One weird thing is that most outlets there are different so if you decide on taking a PC or phone charger you need the right adapter



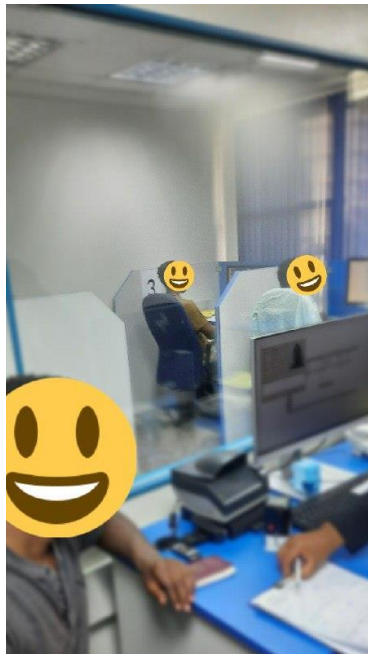
- Price of common items
 - Drinks
 - Water 1.5L – around 80Ksh
 - Soft drink 300ml – 50Ksh, 1.25L – around 90Ksh

- Fresh juice - 300
- Meals
 - Spaghetti with tomato sause (has side salad) – 450Ksh
 - Medium sized pizza – 400 to 600Ksh



- Transportation
 - If you need to go to other places in the city mostly prices on bolt are 200 to 400Ksh depending on the distance

- Return to airport – 700 to 800ksh (if you go through the express way the drivers mostly make you pay the express fee of 300Ksh)
- Examination site – computer pride
 - You need to get there about 30min before 8:00am (reach at 7:30am) with your passport and printed exam permit
 - They put your name down and then ask you to the exam room... you will be escorted by the front desk guy
 - You will walk past a few blue color doors named
 - Kitchen – that's where you eat, it has a microwave if you want to heat up your food
 - Ladies – female bathroom
 - Gents – male bathroom
 - You will be given a locker to put your phone, food, drink and other stuff
 - This was the exam center – 4 exam takers per day



- For a better explanation – look at the video
 - <https://youtu.be/-GcH5SsiwOQ>
- Exam description
 - Exam is given in blocks of 40 questions each. Step 1 is a total of 280 questions given as 7 blocks. There is also an exam tutorial considered as block 1 on the exam which you can skip if you already seen it

- There is a total of 8 hours given for the exam 7 hours for the 7 blocks (one hour per block), the rest 1 hour is given for breaks which you can take as however you like
- I took my break as this
 - I did 3 blocks back-to-back
 - Took a 15 mins break – ate a snack, drank water
 - I did 2 blocks next
 - Took a 30 minute break – this is when I ate my lunch
 - I did the rest 2 blocks
 - Had 15 minutes to spare at the end
 - I was so tired on the 5th block. It was very difficult for me to focus on that block, am sure that will be my lowest score
- I recommend you to do as what fits you better; you can even take 10 minutes break between each block. Depends on how you like to do exams
- If I was to change my technique I would do 2 blocks → 10 mins break → 2 blocks → 25-30 min break to eat lunch → 2 blocks → about 10 minutes break → then do the last block
- The exam tutorial is attached below; you want to see that before the exam date so that the tutorial won't take minutes from your break. There is also a free 120 questioned online sample exam. I recommend you do it about a week before your exam when you are very confident to simulate the exam like experience
 - <https://orientation.nbme.org/Launch/USMLE/STPF1>

I hope this was helpful,

Good luck on this journey

You got this!!