

# Neurology Shelf Exam Percentiles



NATIONAL BOARD OF MEDICAL EXAMINERS®  
Subject Examination Program

Clinical Neurology Examination

2013-2014 Academic Year Norms

The table provides norms to aid in the interpretation of examinee performance. These norms reflect the performance of examinees from LCME-accredited medical schools who took a form of this examination as an end-of-course or end-of-clerkship examination for the first time during the academic year from 8/1/2013 through 7/31/2014.

The percentile ranks for each quarter are defined using the school reported start date of the first rotation for this subject. Using the start date of the first rotation, examinees are assigned to the appropriate quarter based on the assumption that their test date would be at least four weeks later. For example, if a school's start date for the first rotation is March, then the performance of examinees from that school that tested in April, May or June would be represented in the first quarter. Since quarterly norms are based only on schools that supplied the start date of the first rotation for this subject, the number of examinees reported across quarters may not add up to the total norm group for the academic year.

To use the table, locate an examinee's score in the column labeled "Equated Percent Correct Score" and note the entry in the adjacent column labeled "Percentile Ranks" for the Academic Year or Quarterly testing period of interest. This number indicates the percentage of examinees that scored at or below the examinee's equated percent correct score.

The mean and standard deviation of the norm group scores for each testing period reported are listed below.

Equated Percent Correct Scores					
	Academic Year	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
<b>N</b>	13,203	3,577	3,104	3,205	3,005
<b>Mean</b>	75.8	74.5	75.7	76.5	76.8
<b>SD</b>	8.8	9.1	8.6	8.6	8.6

Equated Percent Correct Score	Percentile Ranks				
	Academic Year (n=13,203)	Quarter 1 (n=3,577)	Quarter 2 (n=3,104)	Quarter 3 (n=3,205)	Quarter 4 (n=3,005)
100	100	100	100	100	100
99	100	100	100	100	100
98	100	100	100	100	100
97	100	100	100	100	100
96	100	100	100	100	100
95	100	100	100	100	100
94	100	100	100	100	100
93	99	99	99	99	99
92	99	99	99	99	98
91	98	99	98	98	97
90	97	98	97	96	96
89	96	97	96	95	95
88	94	96	94	93	93
87	92	94	93	91	91
86	90	92	90	89	88
85	86	89	87	85	83
84	83	86	85	81	80
83	80	83	82	78	76
82	76	79	77	75	72
81	72	76	73	70	68
80	68	72	70	66	63
79	64	68	65	62	59
78	58	64	60	56	54
77	55	60	56	53	51
76	50	55	51	47	45
75	45	51	47	43	41
74	41	47	42	38	37
73	38	43	38	35	34
72	34	39	34	31	30
71	30	36	30	26	26
70	26	32	26	23	23
69	23	28	23	20	20
68	20	25	20	17	17
67	17	22	17	14	14
66	15	19	14	13	12
65	13	17	13	11	10
64	11	14	10	9	8
63	9	12	8	8	7
62	7	10	7	6	6
61	6	8	6	5	5
60	5	7	5	4	4
59	4	6	4	4	3
58	3	5	3	3	2
57	3	4	3	2	2
56	2	4	2	2	2
55	2	3	2	1	1
54 or below	1	2	1	1	1

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**Neurology shelf exam percentiles** play a crucial role in assessing medical students' understanding of neurology and their readiness for clinical practice. As part of the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) and various medical school curriculums, the neurology shelf exam evaluates knowledge across a wide spectrum of topics, including neuroanatomy, neurophysiology, and clinical neurology. This article will delve into the significance of percentiles, how they are calculated, and their implications for medical students.

# Understanding the Neurology Shelf Exam

The neurology shelf exam is typically administered during the third year of medical school as part of the core clerkship in neurology. This exam tests students' knowledge and understanding of key concepts that are essential for diagnosing and managing neurological conditions.

## Format and Content of the Exam

The neurology shelf exam consists of multiple-choice questions that cover various areas within neurology, including but not limited to:

- Neuroanatomy: The structure and function of the nervous system.
- Neurophysiology: How the nervous system functions, including electrical activity and neurotransmission.
- Clinical Neurology: Diagnosis and management of neurological conditions such as strokes, seizures, and neurodegenerative diseases.

## Importance of the Shelf Exam

Passing the neurology shelf exam is essential for medical students for several reasons:

1. Assessment of Knowledge: It helps evaluate a student's grasp of neurology, which is vital for their future practice.
2. Residency Applications: Performance on the shelf exam can be a significant factor in residency applications, particularly for students aiming for neurology or related specialties.
3. Board Exam Preparation: The shelf exam serves as a stepping stone to preparation for board examinations, such as the USMLE Step 2.

## What Are Percentiles in the Context of the Shelf Exam?

Percentiles are a statistical measure used to understand the relative performance of students who take the neurology shelf exam. They indicate how a student's score compares to the scores of others who took the same exam.

## How Percentiles are Calculated

Percentiles are calculated based on the distribution of scores from all

students who have taken the exam. Here's how the process typically works:

1. Score Collection: Scores from all participants are collected.
2. Ranking: Students are ranked from highest to lowest based on their scores.
3. Percentile Calculation: The percentile rank is calculated using the formula:

$$\text{Percentile Rank} = \left( \frac{\text{Number of scores below yours}}{\text{Total number of scores}} \right) \times 100$$

For example, if a student scored higher than 80% of the participants, their percentile rank would be 80.

## Interpreting Percentiles

Understanding the implications of percentile scores is vital for students:

- Above 90th Percentile: This score indicates exceptional performance and is often viewed favorably by residency programs.
- 70th to 89th Percentile: A solid performance, generally considered satisfactory for most residency applications.
- 50th to 69th Percentile: Average performance; students may need to strengthen their knowledge base for competitive applications.
- Below 50th Percentile: Indicates a need for improvement. Students should consider additional study resources and possibly retaking the exam if permissible.

## Factors Influencing Percentile Performance

Several factors can influence a student's performance on the neurology shelf exam:

### 1. Study Habits

Effective study strategies can significantly impact test scores. Students should consider:

- Active Learning Techniques: Engaging with material through practice questions and clinical vignettes.
- Consistent Review: Regular review sessions to reinforce knowledge over time.

## 2. Resources Used

The quality of study materials can affect outcomes. Recommended resources include:

- Textbooks: Comprehensive texts like "Clinical Neurology" or "Adams and Victor's Principles of Neurology."
- Online Question Banks: Resources such as UWorld or Amboss provide practice questions that are reflective of the shelf exam format.

## 3. Clinical Exposure

Hands-on clinical experience during rotations can enhance understanding and retention of neurology concepts. Engaging with patients, participating in case discussions, and observing procedures can solidify theoretical knowledge.

## 4. Peer Study Groups

Collaborating with peers can provide different perspectives and insights, making studying more effective and enjoyable. Discussing challenging concepts and quizzing each other can be helpful.

# Preparing for the Neurology Shelf Exam

To achieve a competitive percentile ranking, students should develop a robust study plan. Here are some tips for effective preparation:

1. **Create a Study Schedule:** Allocate specific times for studying different topics to ensure comprehensive coverage.
2. **Utilize Practice Exams:** Regularly take practice exams to familiarize yourself with the format and identify areas needing improvement.
3. **Focus on Weak Areas:** After practice exams, spend extra time studying the topics where you scored the lowest.
4. **Seek Feedback:** Discuss challenging topics with faculty or mentors who can provide guidance and clarification.
5. **Stay Healthy:** Maintain a balanced diet, exercise regularly, and get adequate sleep to optimize cognitive function.

# Conclusion

Understanding neurology shelf exam percentiles is essential for medical students as they navigate their education and prepare for their future careers. Percentiles not only reflect academic performance but also serve as a key indicator for residency applications. By employing effective study strategies, utilizing quality resources, and gaining clinical experience, students can improve their chances of achieving a competitive percentile rank on the neurology shelf exam. Ultimately, this preparation not only aids in passing the exam but also lays a solid foundation for a successful career in medicine.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What is the significance of percentiles in the neurology shelf exam?**

Percentiles in the neurology shelf exam indicate how well a student performed relative to their peers. For instance, a percentile rank of 75 means the student scored better than 75% of test-takers.

### **How can students improve their percentile ranking on the neurology shelf exam?**

Students can improve their percentile ranking by studying key neurology topics, utilizing practice exams, participating in study groups, and reviewing high-yield resources specifically designed for the shelf exam.

### **What percentile is typically considered a passing score for the neurology shelf exam?**

While passing scores can vary by institution, a percentile rank of around 50 to 60 is generally considered acceptable for passing the neurology shelf exam.

### **Are there differences in percentiles based on the year of medical school?**

Yes, percentiles can differ based on the year of medical school, as students in their clinical years may perform differently than those in their preclinical years due to varying levels of exposure and experience.

### **What resources are recommended for understanding percentile ranks in shelf exams?**

Resources such as the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) guidelines,

as well as review books and online platforms that specialize in neurology education, can help students understand and interpret percentile ranks.

## How are percentile scores calculated for the neurology shelf exam?

Percentile scores for the neurology shelf exam are calculated based on the distribution of scores from all test-takers, where a student's score is compared to the scores of others to determine their relative standing.

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