



Passing the bar may seem like an intimidating and daunting task. However, with the right preparation, success will not be an impossibility.

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Although you will probably study harder than you did in all three years of law school combined, just remember the bar exam is the last obstacle you will have to overcome before officially making the transition from law student to full-fledged attorney.

Study Methods

The most important part of preparing to study for the exam is to figure out what works best for you. That is, you must determine which study method will help you to best absorb the material. For example, many students find listening to lectures more helpful than reading outlines. Others find that they need to write everything into their own outline. Still others find that they need to study with a group so that they may constantly talk over the material. If you haven't determined the best method for you, do not begin studying until you figure it out. The key to effective studying is to study the correct way for you.

The environment in which you study is also extremely important. Make sure that you have a place to study where you will have no distractions. Take this time to be completely selfish. Let all of your friends, family, and significant others know that you will basically be incommunicado for about 2-3 months but will make it up to them later. Also, don't make any drastic changes to your lifestyle, diet, exercise routine, etc., until after the bar is done.

Essays

The key to the essay portion of the Bar Exam is making your answer legible, concise, and understandable. Your goal should be to make the grader your friend. The best way to do that is to master the IRAC method. If you are not familiar with IRAC from law school, learn it quickly: Issue, Rule, Analysis, Conclusion. Sticking to this systematic method of essay writing will help to maximize your score because it will make your exam easier to grade and at the same time put the grader in a good mood. Also, make sure your answers are thorough, but concise. Here, quality matters, not quantity.

After you master IRAC, make sure to practice, practice, practice. Past exams are available from the state bar, your law school library, and your bar review course. Do as many of these real bar essays as you have time for. It is essential to practice using real time constraints. The more you practice, the less intimidating the actual exam will be.



Multiple Choice

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The multi-state portion of the bar exam is often the most difficult part for many test takers. The questions are purposefully written to confuse you, and the answer choices are often just as baffling. Despite the countless hours you may spend studying the substantive law, you will certainly fail the MBE if you don't take the time to practice answering multiple-choice questions. It is also a good idea to record the questions you got wrong in a journal. Make sure you understand the reason you got the question wrong and make sure you don't miss it the next time.

With a fair amount of studying, you will start to notice patterns in the questions. In fact, you will notice that the same or similar questions are often asked on multiple exams. Keep a record of these questions because you will see some of them on your exam. It will almost feel like cheating when you know the right answer. Besides knowing the law cold, the next-best strategy is to know the ins and outs of the exam itself. Once you are thoroughly familiar with the little tricks of the exam, it is possible to outsmart the bar.

Performance Tests

If you take the bar exam in a state that utilizes the performance test, consider yourself lucky. This is the one area of the bar you can master without knowing any substantive law. However, you will have to take the time to practice them. In these tests, you are required to analyze a set of facts and apply a library of authority in order to come up with a solution to a legal dilemma. Doing well on a performance test can save your score if you bomb an essay. So make sure you take these seriously.

The first thing you need to figure out is what the graders are looking for with the particular question. Find the structure of your answer in the question itself. Typically, the question will give you a format to follow, and adherence to this format is absolutely critical. Next, make sure you use every piece of authority and use every person mentioned in the problem when you are answering the question. Also, watch for any legal tests mentioned in the cases. If one case mentions a test, make sure to apply it in your answer. Again, practice, practice, practice.

Conclusion

The bar exam is completely conquerable as long as you start studying early and keep a steady pace. Make sure you get a good night's sleep the night before and be confident when you enter the exam room. Don't let the exam bully you. If you prepare properly and thoroughly, you will succeed.