How to Study for the Bar Exam in Your Jurisdiction

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The bar exam is known for high expectations. Those who pass are given the credibility and authority to practice law. It's no wonder preparing for the exam can bring an onset of extreme stress, poor hygiene, and questionable nutrition decisions (no, sugar and caffeine are not food groups).

The best way to bring sense and order to your preparation is to develop your strategy—and to identify resources that will give you the best chance to succeed.

When it comes to study materials, nothing is more important than trusting the source—You'll want to know that you're not wasting your time or being misinformed. Below, we'll look at where to find the best resources to study for your state bar exam, whether your bar administers multistate exams, exams developed in-state, or both.

Multistate bar exams

Almost all states administer the Multistate Bar Exam (MBE)—the exceptions being Louisiana and Puerto Rico—which means prep materials can be ubiquitous across all states.

One of the best ways to prepare for any test is to practice previous versions to get familiar with both the content and the format. For the MBE, there's no better source for sample questions than the National Conference of Bar Examiners (NCBE), the body responsible for writing the exams. The NCBE offers public access to previous exam questions, complete with detailed annotations explaining correct and incorrect responses. Note, however, that questions offered through the NCBE are officially "retired" and won't appear on future exams.

If you're looking for questions beyond the NCBE, there are many prep services that create example questions based on the actual test.

MBE prep tips

- Know the topics. The MBE covers very specific (albeit, large) legal topics—including Civil Procedure, Constitutional Law, Contracts, Criminal Law and Procedure, Evidence, Real Property, and Torts. All candidates should know these areas well. Summaries of black letter law can be useful for memorizing key fundamentals.
- Schedule regular practice. It's a good idea to set personal quotas in your study plan to ensure you're well-versed in all applicable topics. For example, aim to complete 100 questions per week—20 questions every weekday, and then a review of all the week's questions on the weekend.

Multistate essay, performance, and professional responsibility tests

Many states also administer the Multistate Essay Exam (MEE), Multistate Performance Test (MPT), and Multistate Professional Responsibility Exam (MPRE) as part of the bar evaluation—all of which are developed by the NCBE. Much like the MBE, the NCBE offers a number of practice questions and evaluation resources from previous exams.

Know your multistate exam resources:

- MEE. Written responses are more subjective than multiple choice formats. Knowing how to think like your evaluators will go a long way towards earning you points. The NCBE provides sample responses to previous exam questions. Reviewing these analyses will help you get a sense of what information to include, and how to structure your responses.
- MPT. Similar to the essay questions, MPT assignments require a significant amount of writing. But, they're also framed by specific tasks—such as writing a memo, brief, or argument presentation. The NCBE provides detailed point sheets that show how scores are awarded for analysis, and how to structure responses for specific tasks.
- MPRE. This is a multiple choice exam. Sample tests include annotated responses for right and wrong responses, helping give you a sense of how each question is designed to test your knowledge.

State-prepared examinations

Many states prepare their own examinations—or use a combination of multi-state and in-state developed questions. State-specific evaluations can include multiple choice questions, essay response questions, and performance testing assignments. Questions

often pertain to regional issues and laws.

Below, we'll look at some resources for state-specific exam prep:

- State administrations
- Colleges and universities
- Prep courses
- Tutors and books

State administrations

State bar authorities should be your first stop for bar information and resources. Many states provide free sample questions and responses from previous exams. Again, these exams offer a chance to not only learn the format for the exam, but also the content as it relates to your jurisdiction.

Know your state requirements, and use their resources

- The California Bar Exam is notorious for being one of the more difficult, and competitive, examinations. One challenging aspect is the sheer breadth of legal areas covered. You can find comprehensive information about the exam, including topic outlines, on the State Bar of California website.
- Florida, New Jersey, and Texas are states that have high enrollment for bar examinations and provide sample questions from previous examinations.
- State authorities are also your best resource for identifying specific requirements for administration, fees, and any other evaluations required for credentialing.

College and university campuses

Many colleges and universities offer resources to help students plan and attend exams across the United States. Many campus resources are geared towards each school's own students, but they can also be useful to students in similar jurisdictions—and countrywide.

Whether you attend them or not, consult your institutions for higher learning. Here are a few to start with:

- Arizona State University
- Georgia State University
- Harvard

- Northern Illinois University
- Stetson University

Prep courses, tutors, and books

Many prep courses offer tailored resources and instruction for specific states. Instructors are often good authorities on specific state exams, and can offer one-on-one guidance and feedback on your studies.

If you're studying for a specific state exam, many others have already gone through the experience. Many of them have come together to pool their knowledge and resources to offer personal services or published materials that can aid in your studies.

If you choose to take a prep course, be sure to shop around. To ensure you find the best resources out there, be sure to read reviews or consult trusted authorities—such as state bar authorities or academic advisors—for recommendations.

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