Passing the Bar: A Quick Reference Guide For Today’s Law Student

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Exam Day Strategies

Just like you must plan for every day of bar study, have a plan for exam day. You want to know what time you will need to wake up, how you will get to the test site, what you can bring to the test site, what you will eat before, during, and after the exam, and how you will get home/back to your hotel. You also want a plan for what you will be doing during each portion of the exam.

Thoroughly review the security policy for your jurisdiction so you know what you are permitted to bring into the test facility, and what you are not permitted to bring in. The bar examiners are extremely serious about security. If you bring in something that you are not allowed to have, you will risk having your exam score invalidated and not being permitted to take a subsequent exam. You will have to report it as a character and fitness violation to any jurisdiction in which you apply for admission.

Also make sure you know what you are required to bring with you. You will likely need a photo identification and a seat ticket. You do not want to be refused from the exam because you did not bring appropriate documentation.

**Map out a plan for your day.**

If you are taking the UBE, your schedule will likely look like this:

**Tuesday**

9:30-12:30: 2 MPTs

2:00-5:00: 6 essays

*(Note that in some time zones you will have the MPTs in the morning and the essays in the afternoon, and in other time zones you will do the essays first. Make sure to pay attention to the schedule in your jurisdiction. You should be able to find it on your Board of Law Examiners’ website.)*

**Wednesday**

9:30-12:30: 100 MBEs

2:00-5:00: 100 MBEs

It is your responsibility to keep track of your timing, so know what time you should be at each transition point. For example, forty-five minutes in, at 10:15, you should be done reading and planning your first MPT, and should start writing. At ninety minutes in, which is 11am, move on to the second MPT. Spend no more than thirty minutes on each essay. For the MBEs, you've got one minute and forty-eight seconds per question. That’s roughly seventeen questions per half hour, twenty-five questions per forty-five minutes, and thirty-three questions per hour. So, at 10am you should be on question seventeen, and at 10:30 you should be at question thirty-three or thirty-four.

Make a schedule for yourself and look at it every day. Memorize it. Write it out on scrap paper next to you as soon as the exam begins so that you can stay on track. It might look something like this:

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| **Time** | **Task** |
| 9:30am | Open MPT 1 and begin planning |
| 10:15am | Begin writing MPT 1 |
| 11:00am | 1) Stop MPT 12) Open MPT 2 and begin planning |
| 11:45am | Begin writing MPT 2 |
| 12:30pm | End MPT |

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| --- | --- |
| **Time** | **Task** |
| 2:00pm | Begin Essay 1 |
| 2:30pm | Begin Essay 2 |
| 3:00pm | Begin Essay 3 |
| 3:30pm | Begin Essay 4 |
| 4:00pm | Begin Essay 5 |
| 4:30pm | Begin Essay 6 |
| 5:00pm | End |

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| **Time** | **Task** |
| 9:30am | Begin MBE |
| 10:00am | Begin question 18 |
| 10:30am | Begin question 35 |
| 11:00am | Begin question 52 |
| 11:30am | Begin question 69 |
| 12:00pm | Begin question 86 |
| 12:30pm | End |

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| **Time** | **Task** |
| 2:00pm | Begin MBE |
| 2:30pm | Begin question 118 |
| 3:00pm | Begin question 135 |
| 3:30pm | Begin question 152 |
| 4:00pm | Begin question 169 |
| 4:30pm | Begin question 186 |
| 5:00pm | End |

It is also recommended that you bring your own lunch. Many test sites will offer meal services. However, if you bring something you 1) won't have to wait in line and 2) can make sure the food won't upset your stomach or make you sleepy.

Wherever you are taking the bar exam, dress in layers. The room will either be too hot or too cold. You want to make sure you are comfortable and not distracted by your body temperature. The temperature outside likely has no relation to the temperature inside the testing facility.

Also make a plan for what to do if you don't know something. It is impossible to know everything. There will be a sub-question of an essay that you don't know. Practice making up a rule. Everyone faces things they do not know. The key is to make something up based on your general understanding of the law, apply it, conclude, and move on to where you can get more points because you do know the applicable rule. Don’t stay on the question you don’t know, at the expense of spending more time on something you do know.

Also make a plan for what to do if stress and anxiety fill your head and make it difficult to focus. Will you get up and walk to the bathroom? Will you write out a mantra on scrap paper? Will you close your eyes and take three deep breaths before reading the next sentence? Have a plan so that you can move through your anxiety, instead of letting it move you.

Everything about preparing for the bar exam is about having a plan, and executing it. You are likely a master planner at this point. This is the last plan you have to fulfill.

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