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

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Use Your Organizing Skills To Organize Yourself: Creating a Daily Schedule

It is critical to plan everything during the bar study period. Time management, the ability to make and follow a schedule, and self-discipline are essential to success on the bar. Fortunately, they are also skills that you likely already possess as someone who came to law school to change the world and work with marginalized communities. For more on time management, you can check out the CALI lessons Time Management: Creating Your Plan, at <https://www.cali.org/lesson/18183>, and Metacognition, at <https://www.cali.org/lesson/18099>.

You will have to come up with a plan of attack for this exam. You will need to figure out what study materials you need to make and/or purchase. You will need to choose places to study and come up with a daily study schedule. You will also need to schedule nearly every minute of the nine or ten weeks that you will be studying. Having a clear schedule can help keep you in a good place mentally, because you will be able to build in time for physical and social activity. If you do not have a schedule, you may find yourself putting off things that are critical for your mental, physical, and emotional well-being.

Approach this process as you would any organizing campaign or event you would plan. Think about your goal – to pass the bar exam on the first try. Then figure out what you need to do in the short, medium, and long term to achieve that goal. Also think about who your allies will be and who is likely to hinder your efforts. Then, plan accordingly. Talk to your allies about how they can support you. Find ways to get away from toxic or harmful influences. (If you are in a dangerous situation reach out to someone in the Student Affairs/Student Services office at your school for assistance.) You won’t have time to devote energy to people who take from you, and do not give you anything in return. Tell them early on that you will be unavailable for nine or ten weeks. If necessary, physically separate yourself from them by moving or changing your phone number. Sometimes, people have loved ones screen calls and emails for them so that they only have to respond to critical messages.

You need to create a bar study schedule that works best for you. Many people find success in a regularized schedule that has them doing essentially the same thing at the same time each day. Other people find this to be boring and prefer to switch things up. Your commercial bar review company will give you assignments, but it will be up to you to turn them into a plan. Make a plan for what you will be doing at each point in the day – be it bar review lecture, making/reviewing study materials, doing practice questions, eating, sleeping, exercising, having dinner with your children, etc. Also think about where you will want to study. It can sometimes be helpful to switch your study location to give your brain a fresh start. If the schedule you create does not feel like it’s working, you can always change it. It is not set in stone. You should always be working from a plan, even if you modify that plan periodically. [You can find a sample schedule on the J.D. Advising website.](https://www.jdadvising.com/create-daily-bar-exam-study-schedule/)

Any plan should include doing these three things each day (until you finish watching the lectures) – watch your lecture, make/tweak your study materials, and do some form of practice. This means doing MBEs and essays every day, and at least one MPT per week. Your commercial bar review company will most likely assign you more work for each day than is humanly possible to complete. But, if you watch your lecture, make your memorization materials, and do some practice every day, you can go to sleep knowing that you have accomplished the essential tasks you need to complete.

Your plan also needs to include down time. You will need to take care of your physical and mental well-being every day. You should build in time weekly to have fun with loved ones, and daily to spend time taking care of yourself. That might mean going to the gym, doing yoga, meditating, reading a non-law book, and/or watching non-law related television. Build into your schedule time for daily essentials such as showering and food acquisition. If you are a parent, build in time daily to spend with your children. If you map it out, you will see that there is time in the day to do everything. But, you will need to plan it out.

On most weekdays, you will need to put in between eight and ten hours of solid study time. Each weekend you will work for about eight hours total. That will likely increase in the couple of weekends right before the bar exam. However, if you work steadily from the beginning, you will not need to ramp up considerably in the weeks leading up to the bar exam. It is best to maintain a strong and consistent study schedule throughout the bar study period.

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