Passing the Bar: A Quick Reference Guide For Today’s Law Student  
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Reduce Work Obligations and Plan Your Finances

Recognizing that it is a very privileged thing to say that you should stop working for nine or ten weeks, it is critical that you try to do so. It does not matter whether you have worked through all of law school. It does not matter if you have always worked. It does not matter if you know someone who worked while they studied for the bar. You will not be giving yourself a strong chance of passing the bar if you work during bar study. Studying for the bar exam requires more sustained focus than law school itself.

If you were a part-time law student who worked during law school, speak to your employer early and often about the time off that you will need. It is best to have as close to nine weeks as possible. If you are unable to get solid time off from work, consider studying for the bar over a longer period of time. Doing so will take great discipline and stamina, but so does working full-time and attending law school, which you have already proven that you can do successfully. Negotiate as much time off as you can, even if it is shorter workdays or a few days off each week. You will want more time off closer to the exam. Whatever time you can take off will help. Remember that you will be more valuable to your employer with a law license than without one. You have given them a lot while juggling law school. Now is the time for your employer to give a little bit too.

This is a short period of your life – nine or ten weeks – but you will need to plan your finances well in advance so that you can get through it. Try saving up money for a bar review course and to live off of during this period. If that is not realistic, some banks offer bar study loans. Additionally, some law schools offer bar study grant programs. Check with your academic and bar support teachers to see what other students in your area have done to sustain themselves financially during the bar study period. Borrow from loved ones if you can. Barter for things that you need – you can repay everyone when you are a lawyer.

Many law students support their families – financially and emotionally – while going to school. This won’t work during bar study. You will need near-complete focus and immersion to succeed on the bar. Therefore, you need to come up with a plan so that others are not financially dependent on you during this period. That will require strategic thinking and thorough advanced planning. If it is not possible to eliminate your financial responsibilities, reduce the amount of time you have to work to the absolute bare minimum.

If you don’t feel like you are in a financial position to focus on bar study right now, consider postponing to the next administration of the exam. It is only a few extra months. In the grand scheme of things, it won't matter at all. You want to give yourself the best chance to pass the bar on the first try, and that means making sure that your life is such that you can be laser-focused on studying for the bar.

This is the time to invest in yourself. You will be much better able to care for your loved ones and your community once you have passed the bar and landed your dream job. Let them care for you now.

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