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

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Study Groups: To Use or Not To Use?

Bar study is usually a fairly solitary event, though it does not have to be. Whether you should study with others or not is a very individual decision. Sometimes the accountability of having a study partner or group can be helpful. Some people like to talk things out with friends. For others, it feels more stressful to speak to other people about what they are doing.

For some bar studiers, it can be helpful to set aside time with a study partner or small group to discuss difficult concepts each week. Other times, having a study partner can be helpful to go over difficult practice questions that you encounter. You could also grade each other’s essays or do timed closed-book practice at the same time.

Other people choose to do parallel study, where they are in the same space (physical or virtual) and take breaks together, but study individually. Parallel study can enhance motivation because you will feel accountable to other people and will not feel as isolated. But, you will not have to talk things out, which some students find to be stressful. Bar study requires a lot of self-discipline and having a parallel study partner or small group can be helpful in keeping you on track.

If you decide to study with others, you should set boundaries and ground rules. Determine what you want to do with each other and what you want to do on your own. You can have certain times of the day or signals that indicate when you want to talk and when you do not. Study groups can be helpful for accountability, but you do not want to be in a position where you are taking care of another bar studier or being their sole support system. You won’t have time or energy for that.

It is also ok to break up with your study group. If things are not working well for you, change what you are doing. You need to put your study needs first. Remember that none of this is personal, and it will not last forever. If your study partner decides to study on their own, it is about them, not you. You will all still be friends when it is over.

Remember that, as with all relationships, your study partner relationship should be healthy and productive for everyone. If it is not, let it go.

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