

THE DOs AND DON'Ts OF BAR EXAM PREPARATION

UNIFORM BAR EXAM FORMAT

TUESDAY (50%)	WEDNESDAY (50%)
Multistate Essay Exam (MEE) 6 essays (3 hours)	Multistate Bar Exam (MBE) 100 multiple choice questions (3 hours)
LUNCH BREAK	LUNCH BREAK
Multistate Performance Test (MPT) 2 performance tests (3 hours)	Multistate Bar Exam (MBE) 100 multiple choice questions (3 hours)

MEE: Worth 30%; You are given one packet with 6 essays = 30 minutes each
Content: See subject chart below; essays can test more than one subject

MPT: Worth 20%; You are given one packet with 2 performance tests = 90 minutes each
Content: The exam consists of 17-25 pages of a simulated case file and library, including a directive to draft a legal document (e.g., memo). The tested skill is to demonstrate “fundamental lawyering skills” regardless of the area of law in which the task arises.

MBE: Worth 50%; Multiple choice questions test 7 subjects in random sequence
Content: The questions test majority rule common law, plus the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, Federal Rules of Evidence and the Constitution (see subject chart below)

Tested Subjects	MEE	MBE
Agency & Partnership		
Civil Procedure		
Conflicts of Law		
Constitutional Law		
Contracts and Sales		
Corporations		
Criminal Law/Procedure		
Evidence		
Family Law		
Real Property		
Secured Transactions (UCC 9)		
Torts		
Wills and Trusts		

SCORING: The UBE is uniformly administered and scored, but each jurisdiction conducts its own grading of the MEE and MPT, and sets its own passing score. The exam is a total points exam. An applicant need not achieve a passing score on each section, but rather a total passing score based upon combining the total MEE, MPT and MBE scores.

3 OVERALL GOALS FOR BAR SUCCESS:

1. MEMORIZE THE LAW

Memorization is a process that occurs after 1) understanding of the rules, 2) consistent repetition of rule statements and 3) application to practice tests to see the context of how and when rules are tested.

2. MANAGE YOUR TIME AND THE MATERIALS

Bar review begins before graduation (and materials are available now) so expect no break after finals. How you manage your time each week and on the bar exam itself is within your control, so invoke self-discipline to complete the tasks and meet the timeline.

3. MANAGE YOUR ENERGY AND EMOTIONS

The study process is very stressful and will test relationships with those closest to you. Proper preparation takes a lot of time, focus and energy, so make arrangements now to minimize disruption.

WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT DURING BAR PREP?

Each bar review course provides a daily study syllabus, with assignments taking up to 8-10 hours per day. The assignments include lectures teaching the law and technique, plus homework to apply that law and technique to practice exams.

Lectures: There are video lectures assigned 5-6 days per week for the first 6 weeks. Most assigned videos are 3-4 hours in length. The material is dense; the content for the subjects you had as a 1L are covered in 12 days (45 hours) of lecture.

Homework: Homework each day will take 4-6 hours, depending upon your reading speed. You will read or review outlines and take practice tests, even before you feel “ready” or memorized.

First 5-6 weeks: = PREPARE TO MEMORIZE AND PRACTICE SKILLS

Get ready to memorize by watching the lectures as scheduled, taking notes, taking all assigned practice tests and reviewing exam mistakes to improve your knowledge and skills

Final 2-3 weeks: = MEMORIZE AND PERFECT SKILLS

= Balance your time 50/50 between memorizing the law and taking practice tests

COMMON PITFALLS AND HOW TO AVOID THEM

1. DON'T: SOLELY WATCH THE VIDEOS

Because the videos teach the law and strategy, a common mistake is to focus primarily on the videos and draw them out to where they take up most of the day.

The lectures only teach a subsection of the rules, and do not cover everything tested on the exam. What is tested on the exam? That is revealed by the other half of the assignments – reading and taking practice tests.

DO: WATCH LECTURES ON SCHEDULE

Because most days require 3-4 hours of lecture, it is difficult to postpone or make-up a missed day. Let them play and avoid pausing and rewinding. The goal is to be a good note-taker and to ask yourself if you understand what was covered. Not understanding a rule will get in the way of memorization later on, so flag the issue for further study, but keep the lecture playing.

2. DON'T: FOLLOW, "IF IT'S NOT BROKEN, DON'T FIX IT"

You might hear advice to stick to what you did during law school. Using law school study techniques (e.g, outlining, recopying class notes) during bar review can backfire. Why? There is no time nor need to recopy your notes nor make flashcards early on. If the task is not assigned in the syllabus, use caution before doing it.

DO: LEAN IN TO YOUR LEARNING STYLE

One caveat is to consider your learning style as you go through bar prep. Do you remember what you see more than what you hear? You can choose to take handwritten notes during lecture by printing out the worksheet that goes with a lecture. When reviewing notes, consider adding color and/or drawings. Do you remember what you hear? Make audio flashcards by recording yourself and playing it back. Replay the lecture audio during time you are not actively studying (e.g., driving, working out, making dinner).

3. DON'T: KEEP IT TOO SIMPLE

The amount of material you are issued by a full bar review course can be overwhelming. For that reason, it is tempting to seek out a simplified version that is easier understand. However, the bar exam does not merely test big-picture basics. As tempting as it is to look at a shorter, simpler outline – know its limitations. It is not the only tool to rely upon.

DO: SEE THE BIG PICTURE

A true understanding of a subject requires you know its parts, how the issues relate and whether there is a chronological sequence to the subject matter (often yes). Condensed outlines are great for showing you the "map" for a subject, and to help with organizing and issue-spotting. Thereafter, turn to the full outline to learn the details of what that map reflects.

4. DON'T: TREAT EVERY DAY LIKE "LEG DAY"

This exam tests 3 formats and 15 subjects. You would not show up to a fitness competition having focused mostly on your legs, just because that is what you preferred to work on and upon which you see the fastest results. Not every day is "leg day" so tackle your weaknesses to be well-rounded.

DO: FAIL EARLY AND OFTEN

Embrace the fear of failure and go head-first into taking on your weaknesses. A professional musician or athlete does not focus on what they like and are good at doing. Instead, they rehearse to fix their flaws, dissecting each aspect, breaking it down, repeating the process

little by little. You are training to be a professional, therefore the bulk of your time will be doing what is uncomfortable, complicated and in the moment, frustrating. It will pay off!

5. DON'T: FOLLOW PROFESSOR REDDIT

Be careful not to fall into the trap of looking to and relying upon social media for advice on how to cut corners. It is natural to vent with others facing the same challenge. There is no secret shortcut, and even if there were, it would vary by individual. And because your knowledge and skill varies and this process is new, it is hard to know which advice to follow. Meanwhile, the two hours you spent online did not increase the odds of you passing.

DO: GO OFF THE GRID

Optimize your environment to foster learning. Put your phone on DND and leave it in the other room. The focus and stamina it takes to sit for the exam over two days does not happen without practice. The quick check of your phone is a distraction that interferes with the neuro-processing that must take place for learning. You are postponing the process by far more than the physical time it takes you to do that task.

6. DON'T: FREAK OUT!

The bar review process helps with test-taking anxiety, though many will view it as creating test-taking anxiety. This outcome is up to you.

DO: PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Test-taking anxiety can be minimized through familiarity. If you take practice tests, closed-book under timed conditions early and often (as assigned), you will better understand what pace is required to read, type and make decisions. You will start to see repeat questions and favored fact patterns. And that is what this is about. You are exposing yourself to as many fact patterns as possible so you can mimic the appropriate response.

WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW TO GET AHEAD:

Get a jump start on learning the law

Make a list of the subjects you did not learn in school or the MBE subjects you struggled with the most. The most time-consuming part of bar prep is reading outlines followed by watching lectures. Consider doing either or both now to get a jump start. Make a calendar of the time before the start of bar review or graduation and study one subject a week or bi-weekly, depending on your time.

Complete your bar application

Stay diligent with completing the exam application process and responding to follow-up requests from the examiners.

Have the difficult conversations

To carve out sufficient study time and create an environment that promotes learning, you may need to make difficult choices and impose upon others.

ALWAYS ASK YOURSELF:

IS WHAT YOU'RE DOING TODAY GETTING YOU CLOSER TO WHERE YOU WANT TO BE TOMORROW?