

Bar Preparation

1 of 1 Handout on Bar Preparation



Joshua Mark Humphrey

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Week 2: What is "Taking the Bar"?

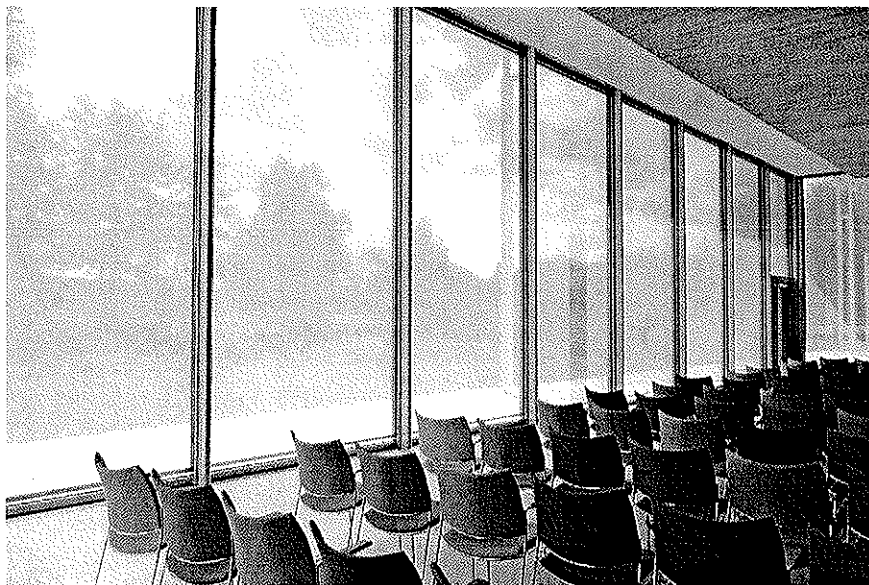


Photo by Christian Fregnan on Unsplash

The long journey to become a lawyer is not completion of law school. Completion of law school nets a student with a degree and a "J.D." (short for "Juris Doctor") at the end of their names. But attaining a J.D. is a significant accomplishment, as law school puts students through intellectual and emotional obstacle courses where the rules aren't easily discernible.

Rather, to attain actual lawyer status and to be able to represent clients in a court of law, a graduate needs to take the appropriate bar examination. This requires a demonstration before the licensing board of the state where the applicant intends to practice. In Minnesota, that's the Minnesota State Board of Law Examiners (BLE). This involves a lengthy application process, which I'll attempt to encapsulate in the next post. But generally, when a student says they're "taking the bar," they are putting themselves before the BLE to be evaluated on both a professional and intellectual basis.

In February, I'll be taking the Uniform Bar Exam (UBE) as administered in Minnesota. The UBE, provided you get a high enough score, qualifies you for admission in the other states that have adopted it (provided you meet **their** scoring requirements).

The UBE is split into three components. The first is the Multistate Essay Examination (MEE). Composed of six 30-minute questions, it's designed to test an examinee's ability to identify "legal issues raised by a hypothetical factual situation; separate material which is relevant from that which is not; present a reasoned analysis of the relevant issue in a clear, concise, and well-organized composition; and demonstrate an understanding of the fundamental legal principles relevant to the probable solution of the issues raised by the factual situations." I.e., the legal writing component.

The second component, the Multistate Performance Test (MPT), or "Basic Matlocking," is "designed to test an examinee's ability to use fundamental lawyering skills in a realistic situation and complete a task that a beginning lawyer should be able to accomplish."

The final component is the Multistate Bar Examination (MBE).

Six hours.

200 multiple-choice questions.

No items.

Final Destination.*

Except for Louisiana and Puerto Rico, all other states and territories do the MBE, but some jurisdictions have alternate components they administer instead of the MPT or the MEE. Texas, for example, does the MBE and MPT, but has set of Procedure and Evidence questions and Texas-specific essay questions. Bea Bischoff writes about actual costs of taking the bar exam in Texas here, which I recommend for any takers there (or if you want to get the sense of the financial costs for the bar exam in general).

The National Conference of Bar Examiners (NCBE) scores the MBE component, while jurisdictions grade the MEE and MPT (the NCBE

then calculates the scaled scores). These are weighted differently: MBE (50%), MEE (30%), and MPT (20%).

The UBE is graded on a 400-point scale. Minnesota's passing grade is 260, twenty points lower than the highest score requirement of the UBE, Alaska at 280. I couldn't find out why Alaska sets that high a score, but did discover that Alaska's Multistate Professional Responsibility Exam (MPRE) requirement is set at 80. Minnesota's, by comparison, is 85.

Different jurisdictions, different priorities!

The goal for me then is a score of 260. Should be doable. Hopefully.

I oscillate between worrying about the test and whether or not I'll pass to not being too concerned. One of my reactions to seeing others stress is to take a deep breath, acknowledge it, and work through it. So much of law school is learning to sit down and do the work, and I figure I've basically learned that at this point. If I haven't learned that yet, I will on subsequent attempts. But there's a lot that could go wrong, such as having an off day correspond with an exam day. Or having my laptop fail. Or prioritizing one subject when I should have concentrated on another.

Hey, maybe I'm more worried than I thought?

Next time: the application.

*For Minnesota examinees, this is the Riverside Center in St. Paul.

BAR EXAMS

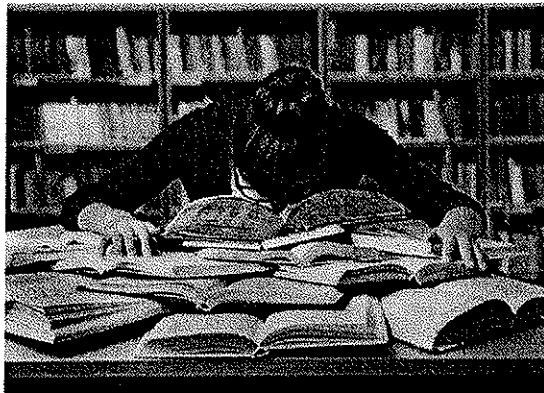
The Day Before The Bar Exam Dos and Don'ts

The bar exam is exactly one week from tomorrow.

By KERRIANN STOUT

Jul 17, 2017 at 5:20 PM

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I say this with equal parts joy and terror: the bar exam is exactly one week from tomorrow. One of the questions I get asked most frequently is “what should I do the day before the bar exam?” My go to answer is “absolutely nothing.” For some inexplicable reason, my students seem dissatisfied with that response. So, I consulted with my friends. What did I learn? People have some really strong opinions on this topic. What else did I learn? It is my article, so I get to present you with the ones I think are the most effective! Here is what I put together:


Do make your list and check it twice. Your “really important things to bring with me to the bar exam” list, that is. Every jurisdiction is different as to what is allowed or prohibited.

- Any admission documents you need (ticket, ID, etc.)
- Laptop and charger
- Pens and pencils (my friend suggested you bring 1 million of them, I'll let you use your discretion here)
- Earplugs (even if you don't normally use them, if you are allowed to bring them with you, I highly recommend you do so. You never know.)
- An analog watch
- Any medication you may need
- Snacks
- A comfy outfit (might I be so bold as to suggest layers? The last thing you want is to be uncomfortable with the temperature)
- Feminine care products, if applicable
- If you are checking into a hotel later that day, call and confirm your accommodations.

Equally as important, is knowing what not to bring in with you. They will make you throw away, or put in your car most prohibited items. However, if they even smell a cell phone on you, you will automatically fail. It can create some logistical difficulties but figure out where you will be leaving your phone during the exam. If it is at all possible to just leave it home — that is probably your best bet. Also, don't be surprised if you discover other, seemingly random, requirements such as a prohibition on open toed shoes

Again, what is an absolute no-go in one jurisdiction is a-ok in another so please, please, please confirm with your jurisdiction.

Do relax. You don't need me to tell you that you are stressed out. You have been studying for months with little to no down time. Finally, you have a day to breath and not think about whether neighbor did in fact have an easement. You have to try to enjoy it. Need some suggestions? Binge watch Netflix, get a massage and/or a manicure and pedicure, go for a walk, have lunch with a friend, go to the movies, or go to the gym (unless you've never gone to the gym before in your life. Now isn't the time to try it out. You don't want to be so sore that you can't even pick up a pencil for MBE day!)



or have a family member or friend call you to make sure you are awake. Or maybe just sleep in your seat at the testing location? Just kidding. That will probably get you arrested.

Do plan your celebration. You may have already done this one. So, if you already have some post bar plans, great! Confirm them or work out the details. If you haven't yet, now is the time to think of something fun to do. It doesn't have to be big or expensive. It should be something that you can really look forward to over the next few days. It will give you something to focus on in moments where your brain may want to wander to anxious thoughts.

Do pump yourself up. For the bar exam, as with most things in life, you have the opportunity to be your own biggest cheerleader or your own worst enemy. It is important that you accept where you are in this process and acknowledge all that you've done to get there. Give yourself an epic pep talk so that you can walk into the test with no regrets. While you are at it, visualize getting your pass letter!

Don't study. Your brain is like an over soaked sponge. You need to give it a break in order to allow for full absorption. When I said earlier that I usually tell my students that they should do "absolutely nothing" the day before the bar exam, not studying is what I am referring to. If you don't know it by Monday morning, you aren't going to. At this point, the only thing studying will do is freak you out. That being said, there are some people who feel very strongly that they have to "do something" the day before the bar exam. If you are one of those people, hear me loud and clear, **NO PRACTICE QUESTIONS!** Passively reading through the law for an hour or two is one thing, but practice questions are completely off limits.

Don't be afraid of a little superstition. The bar exam can bring out the weird in people. My friend Steve, who is an extremely smart and rational person, told me that he ate salmon for dinner the night before the test because he read somewhere that it is brain food. I wore the same black yoga pants and grey long sleeve t-shirt for 3 days straight (don't worry I showered and changed the "essentials" in between). We both passed. Do I think it was because we engaged in these little rituals? No. But, I don't think they hurt us either. At this point, you are done studying and everything that remains feels totally out of your control. Do what makes you feel good and brings you comfort, even if it is a little silly.

the point. The last thing you need right now is to get into a huge, pointless fight with someone.

Don't talk about the test. Don't talk about it on Monday. Don't talk about it on Tuesday or Wednesday during lunch or after the exam is over. Don't talk about it Thursday through infinity. There are very few things I'm 100% confident about in this world. One of them is that no good can come from discussing the bar exam at this point. All it can do is bring on unnecessary stress.

While all of this is great advice, if I do so say myself, the most important thing that you can do is be self aware. Everyone's "day before the bar exam" plan will be different, and that is fine. You need to do what is best for you. To quote one of the most inspiring people I know, Professor Vanessa Merton, "all you can do is the best you can do." Good luck and Godspeed.



Kerriann Stout is a millennial law school professor and founder of Vinco (a bar exam coaching company) who is generationally trapped between her students and colleagues. Kerriann has helped hundreds of students survive law school and the bar exam with less stress and more confidence. She lives, works, and writes in the northeast. You can reach her by email at info@vincoprep.com.

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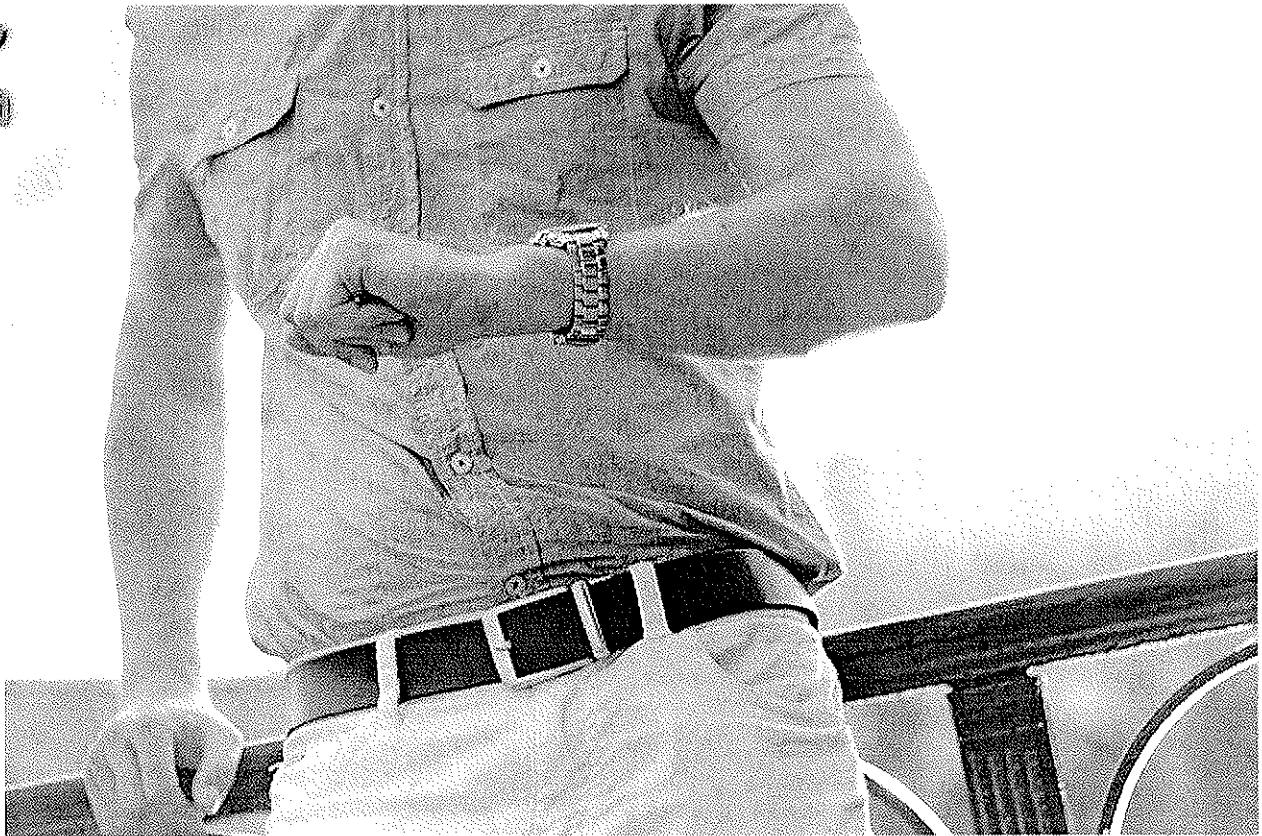
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Waiting For Bar Exam Results? 7 Awesome and Productive Things to Do while you Wait!



7 Awesome and Productive Things To Do While Waiting For Bar Exam Results

Students often wonder what to do while waiting for bar exam results. Many students rush to apply to work somewhere. However, it is generally a bad time to apply for a job if you are not working or don't have some preexisting connection. Employers tend to be skeptical of hiring those waiting for bar exam results. You are overqualified for paralegal positions and underqualified for attorney positions.

However, whether you work or not, there are still plenty of ways to be productive and awesome while waiting for bar exam results. In this post, we list seven things to do while waiting for bar exam results.

7 Awesome and Productive Things To Do While Waiting For Bar Exam Results

1. Learn something about finances.

Since you will be making money as an attorney, it is well worth it to learn about finances. So many people focus on making money that they never realize that they are throwing away so much money with bad financial decisions!



We highly recommend that you start by reading *Your Money or Your Life*. This book is life changing for many people and is a great introduction to a new way of thinking about money. It is also an easy read. We also love the blog *The Money Habit*. The blog is written by a Harvard graduate who retired at 28 years old. (We are not affiliated with the book or the blog and do not make any money for recommending either! We just genuinely love both.)

2. Reflect on what you want out of life.

This sounds cliché but a lot of people just wander from one stage of life to the next, on some pre-set path, without ever asking themselves if this is what they want to do. Take advantage of this “in between” time period of your life to reflect on what you want moving forward.

Set aside a dedicated time to do reflect on what you actually want out of life. Don't just think “well I want a job.” Instead, go to your local coffee shop with a journal. Think about and articulate your priorities. For example, if you are considering career options, instead of thinking only of what field you want to work in, think of what kind of life you want to have. Some priorities may be:

- Making money
- A flexible schedule
- A challenging career
- A career where you are given autonomy
- A career that provides a good amount of work-life balance
- A career that helps you develop a specific skill (e.g. a research-focused job, litigation-focused job, etc.)

3. Do something you missed while studying.

Catch up on House of Cards. Learn how to make that perfect mint mohito. Go visit your sister or have coffee with your mom. Now is the perfect time to recharge your battery and do something you missed doing while studying.

4. Travel.

It is not too late to plan a post-bar exam vacation. Getting away from where you are can be beneficial. Not only will you get away physically, but you will also get away mentally. You can leave some of the bar exam stress and anxiety that you felt while studying behind. It can be a wonderful break from waiting for bar exam results to come in!

A good post bar exam vacation does not have to be super-pricey nor does it have to be very long. Read this post for four tips to planning a stellar post-bar exam vacation.

5. Update your resume and LinkedIn page.

When was the last time you updated your resume or LinkedIn page? Now is the perfect time to polish both! Proofread both. Update your accomplishments. Update your picture on LinkedIn. Get everything ready to apply for jobs. Read more tips about polishing up your LinkedIn page here.

Now is also a good time to attend any networking events or events of any professional associations you are involved in. These can be a great avenues to establish or maintain professional connections.

6. Come up with your "Plan A" and your "Plan B".

Your "Plan A" is what you will do if you pass the bar exam. Creating your "Plan A" may entail planning your swearing-in ceremony and any post-bar exam celebrations. You may also choose to reach out to certain connections or apply for certain jobs if you pass. Plan out the path you will take if you pass the bar exam now.

Don't forget to come up with your "Plan B" too – that is, what you will do if you fail the bar exam. Will you take time off work? Will you try a new approach when you study?

We recommend you read the following posts:

- How to come up with a Plan B for if you fail the bar exam

- How to tell your boss you failed the bar exam
- A note to those who fail the bar exam
- I failed the bar exam. What should I do?
- Should I rewatch my bar review lectures? (thankfully the answer is “no” in most cases)
- 12 tips for working and studying for the bar exam

7. Build an exercise routine.

You probably were not at the peak of physical health while you were studying for the bar exam. Now is a good time to get back into shape. If you have really fallen out of an exercise routine, just start by exercising a couple days a week and start slow. It is the perfect time to build healthy habits again before you enter the next phase of your life as an attorney.

Looking for bar exam help?

If you are looking for private tutoring, please feel free to contact us at your convenience (even if it is toward the end of your bar exam preparation!). We also offer bar exam tutoring, bar exam essay feedback, and multiple-choice (MBE) assistance to students nationwide.

In addition, we offer private tutoring for several state bar exams as well as the Uniform Bar Exam (UBE). Also, check out our highly regarded Uniform Bar Exam course if you are interested in a full-service approach to the uniform bar exam. We also offer many other options if you are taking the UBE (MEE one-sheets, an MEE seminar, an MEE course, among others!).

If you are looking for a new approach, please feel free to contact us at your convenience.



Ashley Heidemann is the owner and founder of JD Advising. Ms. Heidemann scored over a 180 on the Michigan Bar Exam in February of 2011 after graduating as the #1 student in her law school class of over 200 students in 2011. She, as well as a team of others, offer bar exam courses, seminars, and private tutoring for bar exam students nationwide. This includes services for the Uniform Bar Exam (UBE) and Michigan bar exam. Please [click here](#) to contact her company, with any questions.



This entry was posted in Bar Exam and tagged bar exam, Michigan bar exam, New York Bar Exam, recover from failing, RESULTS, uniform bar exam (UBE) on August 17, 2017
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6 thoughts on “Waiting For Bar Exam Results? 7 Awesome and Productive Things to Do while you Wait!”



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