

## Popular Threads on Solosez

### Bar Exam Breakdowns, Horror Stories, And Hope

I wanted to thank all of you for being such kind supports and advisors. I say this because if I go into some catatonic state because of studying for the bar, I wanted it to be known.

About what time did you guys have a "bar study breakdown"?

Justin Eisele, Law Student

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Bar exam concluded at 4pm on a Thursday. My meltdown began at 4:01.

Lowell Steiger, California

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Justin: Lowell's 'advice by experience' is excellent -- I did much of the same thing (meltdown commenced immediately after bar exam concluded). It's much more practical than doing it in reverse order.

But Lowell, what you didn't mention was how long it lasted....

My meltdown (involving arguably excessive quantities of my then favorite liquid imbibement, with repeated administrations, as needed) followed me pretty much through the next couple of days, at least until I got onto the plane for the first leg of my flight on a five-week, last-shot-before-getting-on-the-career-roller-coaster, trip with a law school friend to the west coast, Australia, and the South Island of New Zealand. Great memories. I hope you have something fun planned for after the bar exam to reward yourself for persevering over the course of study.

David Abeshouse, New York

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I think it started about a week after graduation and lasted about until the results of the bar exam arrived.

Bruce Dorner, Londonderry, New Hampshire

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About an hour after it was all over. Fortunately, by that time, I was already seated with a couple of my friends at the type of bar that serves beer, so all was well.



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Honestly--you'll be so jacked with adrenaline you won't even know it happened. The mentality at this point is that of the pro athlete preparing for a big game--you know your stuff, so all you have to do is stay focused, warm-up, and get in the zone. Don't let the exam get in your head. Don't hang out with people who are basket-cases. Stay on top of the fray and you'll sail through. Good luck!

David J. Galalis, Boston, Massachusetts

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The group that took the bar exam before me recounted someone having their breakdown during the exam. As the story goes -- half way through the last day of the exam, this person jumped up and hollered "I am a covenant, I'm running with the land." and jogged up and down the aisle before running out of the room.

For me -- the single biggest breath of air I took was after I turned in the last exam and was walking out of the room. It was then I realized I had been holding my breathe for 2 1/2 days!!

Beverly Jones Kimes, Tarkio, Missouri

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I too face the Bar on the 26th and 27th. Time to panic NO. This like the Super Bowl You have to peak in 2 weeks not now. Don't leave your game on the practice field. Concentrate on those areas of those subject where you get the most wrong. USE the MBE practice to find out what you don't know. What I do know is that for inflicting French Property law on England William was definitely a Bastard. Like the Super Bowl the key is not to bury the opposition but to play not to lose. Not going to matter if you passed by 1 point or 100 points. Nobody will know or care.

I think the 2 keys are reading and not freaking out. This is a mind game. So don't fall for it. Relax focus and visualize.

John Davidson

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Really, mine was from the day that I turned in my exam until the bar results came were released. From the night/morning before until the end of the exam, my adrenaline was still going. A couple of days after that, I kept myself busy so that I wouldn't think about the questions or the correct answer or whether I even wrote the correct answer. My advice...stay busy and keep your mind on something else until the results are back. The worst part of the bar to me was not only the studying, but the wait was much worse. The days that you will be taking the exam are not so bad if you have already prepared. That is if you stay calm and ignore all of the others who are frantic around you and those talking about the exam and what answers they put...don't listen to it nor discuss it! My advice...relax and all will be fine. Good luck to you!  
LaTosha McGill (February 2005 bar exam)

----- It was kind of a peaceful summer in Austin for me: work in a lawyer's office in the mornings, bar study class in the afternoons, often go out for a beer in the evenings.

I remember walking in to the first day of the bar exam and spotting a friend of mine who graduated a year earlier than I did: he had failed the difficult procedure section his first try. I went up to him and sang "The bar's more comfortable... the second time around..." He was not amused.

The middle day of the bar exam was my birthday, and hence the most pathetic birthday I ever had: I brought a cupcake with a candle in it in my sack lunch. Since the next day was the final day, I couldn't exactly go out and party, and most of my friends had gone home for the summer anyway.

Finishing was a relief, but also kind of the end of an era: the punctuation mark on the entire academic portion of my life. I remember thinking, "that's the \*last\* time I'll have to be filling out circles with a blasted #2 pencil!" (Boy, was \*I\* wrong.)

Michael Koenecke, Richardson, Texas

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My director at Legal Aid, where I was clerking waiting to take the Bar, gave me 2 pieces of advice. First, eat a breakfast. This was something I rarely do. Second, punt on future interest questions. Hey, it worked in 2 states. Kentucky, my first state, required business attire. After two days of testing, I went to my car to change into shorts for the drive home. I could not bring myself to go back into the building to change. Luckily no arrest.

Michael P. Studebaker

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Well--I've taken 3 bar exams (3 states), but the first two were so long ago I don't remember them very well. NH, I took in 2003. I thought I was doing fairly well until I hit the last question on the last day. I kid you not, there was an estate planning question referencing the tax code and it referenced the wrong tax code section (they intended to say 501(c)(3), meaning a nonprofit organization, and instead cited 503(c), or something like that). Now I had worked with the tax code and this totally threw me off. I never expected to find a mistake in the bar exam! Needless to say, although I did write an answer correcting their mistake, I completely missed the real, much easier question. The real answer hit me about 15 minutes after I walked out of there. That really sunk me. The worst thing is that everybody asked me, for the next few months, how I did, and all I could think about was how I totally screwed up the last question on the last day. Anyway, maybe they gave me extra credit points for finding the error because I did pass.

When you're feeling low afterward, try to remember that perfection is not required (I wish I had).

Susan Abert

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I have to admit - I am a strange studier - and thus my experiences would probably not give a lot of support to anyone else. My Law school "bar exam advisor" was having fits because I was working. She probably would have had bigger fits if she knew how few hours a day I was studying.(never on Saturday - two hours on Sunday, M-F the BARBRI review in the morning - direct to work, home, dinner, study an hour - a break - study an hour or maybe a little more - break - study 30 minutes before bed) Please do not depend on my experiences.. though at this late day - I hope you've studied much more than I did... LOL However - my advantages during law school, and the bar exam were that I am an extremely fast reader.. (extremely --) which gives me more (a) time to think about the question (b) time to write about the question. I finished the first 90 minute MPT in about 45 minutes -- and put my head down and took a nap.... I think the gal sharing my test table about freaked out. (note - this was merely because it was my favorite area of law - and impossibly easy for me.... I got a perfect score on that section... LOL) I do - however, have the world's WORST handwriting and worried most of all about whether they would be able to read what I wrote.... I suspect one "low score" question was due to handwriting alone.... as it was the last question of the first session.... and my handwriting was deteriorating. My recommendation GET A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP - especially the night before the first day... in OHIO it's the worst day (in my mind) because you write ALL DAY. Be methodical during the bar exam - once you are done with a question - move on and forget it. Don't "second guess" yourself that day - the next day - or the months you are waiting... since it won't do any good. Trust in yourself. I was amazed - when I walked out of the exam - I called my mother. She asked - did you pass? and I said YES-- I do believe I passed. It was as hard as I expected, but not harder... I think I did alright. I was right....

Cheryl Keggan

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Oh Cheryl, I beg to differ, I believe that title is mine. I have no idea how profs and examiners read any of mine. The one time I saw a law exam afterward, I could hardly read any of it myself.

Robert Walker, Herndon, Virginia

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After the first morning session....I was taking the CA bar, which is a 3 day exam. First day was 6 essays. 3 hours and 3 questions in the morning, and the same in the afternoon. After the morning session when, despite all warnings and training to the contrary, I ran short on time and on the last question ended up having to jot down the legal points in outline form because I didn't have time to actually write an essay. After that, I was 100% sure I had flunked the exam and didn't even want to go on with it. Totally meltdown was looming....After all, you can't basically just miss an entire question and expect to pass...

Well, peer pressure over lunch forced me to continue and 3 months later, I learned I had indeed passed!

Moral of the story: no matter how bad you think it's going and you feel the onset of a meltdown. Continue. And, if you run short on time, do what Barbri says: write down anything to get it on paper for the examiner to see. Apparently, it indeed counts, even if it's not a complete sentence..

Vonda K. Vandaveer

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The most important thing is that you are relaxed and rested when you go in for the exam. No matter how much studying you have done or how much you know, if you are exhausted, fatigued and stressed when you begin you will be unable to recall a great deal of what you know. The night before, get a good night's sleep and during the evening make sure you do something OTHER than studying.

Jes Beard, Chattanooga, Tennessee

----- Just before I took the bar (7 yrs ago), I had a veteran of bar exams in several states give me the following practical advice. I was glad I took it, so I will pass it on ...

1. If you can bring it in (you could in Mass when I took the exam, but I've heard the rules might have changed), bring a cheap foam chair pad. Folding metal chairs are brutal on one's back and butt after sitting for 2 days.
2. Read the call of the question on the essays first. I made that mistake on one question. I spent my time answering a question only to get to the end to find that they were looking for an answer written to a different perspective. At least in Mass., bar examiners spend about 15-20 seconds speed reading each essay to see if you've found the point. Forget about that IRAC formula (issue, rule, analysis and conclusion) that you learned for law school exams. It is all about issue spotting and stating the state rule. Show the reader that you know the rule by underlining it.
- 3, Focus on the practice questions in the PMBR books rather than the BarBri materials. PMBR is closer to the real thing. I remember several questions on the multi-state that were identical to PMBR questions except that the name had changed.
4. Bring ear plugs! It is surprising how loud the air conditioning, dropping pencils and turning pages will sound when you're trying to concentrate.
5. If taking the Massachusetts exam, throw in MGL 93A consumer protection if there is even the slightest possibility that it might apply.
- 6, They test 6 subjects on the multi-state, if there were a 7th - it would probably be remedies. Don't be surprised if you see questions about remedies within a contracts, tort, or property question.

7. Don't eat a turkey sandwich for lunch - there is an enzyme in turkey that will make you sleepy.

8. Stay at a hotel close to where the exam is being given. The last thing you want to worry about is traffic or being late on the morning of the exam. If staying in a hotel, room service will not be able to handle the simultaneous delivery of 500 room service breakfasts all at 7:00 a.m. Bring a few bagels and orange juice with you when you check in and stow them in the mini-bar. Speaking of which - don't otherwise touch the mini-bar (especially not on the night between).

9. Do ask your s.o or spouse to stay with you at the hotel on the night between.  is a great stress reliever.

10. On the night between, go for a walk - get away from everyone else in the hotel that is talking about how bad the first day was. I walked along Boston Harbor from the Trade Center where the exam was given, beyond the Aquarium and up to the North End and back. It helped me to clear my mind. and focus on the essay topics for the next day.

GOOD LUCK!!!!!!

Peter Clark

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Buy a comfortable pen, something that forms to your fingers when you hold it. I used a Waterman that I got a couple years earlier and about half way through developed a lovely and painful irritation. The mark was there for about a week.

Steve O'Donnell, Lancaster, Pennsylvania

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My bar exam was not that long ago....Feb '05. I was not around other bar takers during the entire time that I studied for the bar and so I did not have too many breakdown periods. There were plenty of times that I felt overworked and just could not study anymore. I eventually learned that it was best to take a break rather than spend the entire day just getting through 15 pages (even then I was not sure if I retained all of it; just words on the page).

Towards the end, things got better. I was doing really well on the practice essays and my multiple choice scores were increasing. I just kept reminding myself of the average (around 80 in IL) and told myself that I will be fine as long as I studied. Plus, since I did not take a bar review course, I could tailor my studying to meet my needs (and there is no such thing as being behind; well not really). This method probably isn't for everyone, but it works great for me.

I am currently studying for the patent bar, which I am taking this Friday. I am at the point where I am just reviewing. I love this part. I am taking one test a day and on my schedule. There are 100 questions on the exam

and you get 3 hours to answer 50 questions each. The time periods for taking each section differ for each person. I do not like practicing by taking timed exams. Time has never been a problem for me. I usually have to slow down. Anyhow, so far I have been able to relax, play with my daughter, do 50 questions and still have about an hour to spare. My scores are strong (go enough to pass). However, I would like to increase them just to make sure. My score have jumped up 10 points over the last three exams. I have four more to go!

Back to the state bar. Sorry for the scenic route. Just make sure that you rest. Do not take any practice exams on the day before the exam. If your state bar exam is anything like IL, it is an endurance test and you need your energy. The second day, the MBE, was the worse for me. I got tired of filling in all of those bubbles!! Especially after having filled out all of your info!!

hmmm...I think that I will stop now. There is so much that there is to say. I have already cut myself off a lot (if you can tell).

Good Luck!!

Denise Randolph-Okonkwo

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Not till after the exam, and my usual post exam exuberance.

As far as hitting the wall:

First, you managed to graduate law school; you know most of this stuff from school; and you've been studying. You probably know 90% of what you need to know. Focus on the stuff you know you have trouble with.

Second, put in your study time, but don't make it your life. You probably know that from law school, but maybe not. Even in law school, I'd knock off studying early afternoon the day before the exam, get a nice, if inexpensive dinner somewhere (Chinese or pizza, typically) go out and see a movie, or come back and read a trashy novel. I mean, if you don't know it 18 hours before the start of the exam, you aren't going to know it 12 hours before the start of the exam, and taking 6 or 8 hours off will do wonders for your peace of mind.

Get a decent breakfast, and if you have a particular comfort food, make sure you eat that, even if it's not normally a breakfast food (chocolate covered cherries, in my case)

Watch your time. You should have learned to pace yourself on exams in law school, but some people manage to run out of time before the end of the exam. On the multiple guess questions, this means the half dozen or so property questions that run a page and a half fact pattern, out of the 200 total, take your best shot and guess if you have to. They are worth the exact same thing as the shorter questions; it does you no good to spend 15 minutes each on a half dozen questions, an hour and a half total, and blow 20 other questions because you ran out of time. Same holds true for any other question you're stuck on for more than about 3 minutes; remember,

you've got 100 questions for 3 or 4 hours; you need to do 33 or 25 questions per hour, or about 2 minutes per question. If you get to the end of the exam and the time hasn't run, you can always go back and look at the tough ones.

Don't go out drinking after the first day and get yourself arrested for DUI, like a friend of mine did; not only did she fail the bar exam (probably because she was in no shape the second day) but she wound up having to report it to the bar examiners; they take a dim view of that sort of thing.

Ronald A. Jones, Florida

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My Bar experience tells me this.....assuming you've been diligently studying.....make sure you spend some time relaxing, sleeping, or otherwise taking your mind off the exam. Allowing anxiety & stress to overtake you is very detrimental to maximizing your chances of passing.

Also, I took comfort in looking at the past statistics for passing the MBE and/or the whole exam. For example, if 69% of the first time takers in your state usually pass, and you were in the top half of your class, and you have been studying (not like a maniac or like you think you should, just normal studying) - you should be in great shape.

Albert Unger

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For the bar exam, preparedness over an extended period pulls you through (or not). This is similar to litigation and having a trial setting. You prepare over an extended period and then its crunch time.

One has to learn to keep things in perspective or your career will be short in law practice. One has to sleep, eat, exercise and balance oneself to keep from reducing your capabilities.

When I was studying for the bar exam, I had to balance the intense "head" work with intense physical exercise. I was working also, but that was not adequate distraction to maintain balance. As a result, when I went downtown with a client and another attorney with an established practice, he joked about why the other lawyer was bringing "Guido," which was then followed by another joke about needing Guido.

It is difficult to keep the bar exam from overwhelming you, but later it will be a case or a number of cases or another challenge. Learning to regulate one's emotion and intellect to match what is required is an important long range skill.

My biggest fear about the bar exam was the number of people who were convinced it would not be difficult for me. While I mostly agreed with the assessment, I was worried about the effect of that assumption proving invalid. I did fine, but it was because of the preparation and discipline in preparing over an extended period.

Darrell G. Stewart, San Antonio, Texas

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Some more advice for the pile: leverage your time against what you're already good at.

For example, don't be afraid to say, "screw it--I'm giving the examiners all the future interest and conveyancing questions." This is the approach I took, and it worked for both the MA and NY exams (MBE and essays).

The logic went like this: I've never understood this stuff and I never will. Those sub-topics account for maybe seven questions out of 200 on the MBE. If I eliminate the obviously wrong answers and guess on those seven questions, I can get at least one of them correct. If I spend any more time on those questions than a few seconds, I'm not going to increase my score. The time will be wasted. Better instead to spend those minutes on what I understand--such as torts-- so I can get all 35 of those questions correct.

Applying that logic, you now need to decide what trade-offs you're going to make on exam day, and then leverage your remaining study time accordingly. Don't waste your precious few hours studying something you'll never understand. Spend those four hours instead studying what you're already good at so you can nail that topic cold. For me at this point last year, four more hours studying future interests wasn't going to do a damn thing for my comprehension and would have resulted in 0 additional points. But, studying four more hours of torts would (and did) allow me to pick up a few more points down the stretch (as measured by my practice tests--I don't know what my point distribution was on the real thing).

We are programmed by law school to strive for perfection. And rightfully so, because as lawyers we should strive for perfection. The bar exam, however, is not law school, and it is not the practice of law. It is a contorted alternate universe where mediocre and good enough are the proven roads to success. As such, now is the time to stop trying to be perfect and to get comfortable with your mediocrity. Sacrifice the sub-topics you suck at and focus your energies where you can pick up the most additional points.

DISCLAIMER: This tactic only works if what you're giving the examiners are sub-topics that account for only a few MBE questions. You can give them future interests, but you can't give them all of property. Likewise, on the essay day, you can give them estate tax (a rarely tested subject in NY, and only as a sub-component to an essay) but you can't give them wills (there is always a full essay on wills).

Again, here are your mantras:

(1) Time is your commodity. Spend it wisely. (2) Don't try to be perfect. You can't be.

David Galalis, Massachusetts

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Either the "I'm a covenant; I'm running with the land" is an urban bar exam legend, or Beverly and I took the same bar exam in years close together! (NY 2000/2001).

Yes, I took NY twice. I will tell you why so you can learn from my mistakes:

Ditto what lots of folks said about not getting psyched out, and not striving for perfection. I did both, and it killed me. My score the first time I (unsuccessfully) took NY was a 696. A 700 was needed to pass. I was that close, and I am certain that the psyyyyyyyyyeeech factor was the only thing that kept me under the edge.

Every thing you need to know for the exam is in your material. Just keep reading it. I spent so much time worrying about it, and worrying about worrying about it, and talking about worrying about it, that I lost sight of the need to bear down and READ IT. Again and again. And do practice MBE's And not think about anything else.

That is all I did the second time and I passed handily--and six months later I took PA, while raising two newly-acquired stepkids, moving from one city to another to be with them and my new husband, and finding a job therein. It was no problem because I knew mentally how to prepare those times. The psych factor is what kills people. And I was a superachieving, law review type who had never before experienced failure--which only made the FEAR of failure worse and actual failure more devastating. DO NOT SUCCUMB! If you fear you are going to meltdown, hole up for a few hours or days with someone who has taken your bar exam recently and will talk you through this insanity. And when that person stops talking, do a practice MBE.

And of course, regular exercise, sleep and good nutrition are absolute musts. I sacrificed all those my first time as well and it showed. I also engaged in the ultimate no-no, a few beers the night before the exam "to calm my nerves" . . . that alone was probably enough to take away my edge and cost me those four points!

So please, Justin, do as I say and not as I do (did) and JUST DO IT.

Jill Engle

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My horrific story is that on the eve of the last day of the Feb '04 bar in Pasadena, CA, there was a heavy rain storm that flooded the convention center. The state bar reps stated that they were trying to dry out the rooms but if they could not get us in before noon, then they might have to disqualify our entire exam because other testing sites across CA would be getting out at Noon for their lunch break and thus our tests would be compromised.

Anyway, everyone was freaking out, some crying some looking around in disbelief, some laughing because half the students thought that this was some sort of planned scheme carried out by the state bar to screw us.

As for me, realizing that the CA bar is one of not the toughest bar in the nation, I felt kind of relaxed knowing that hey, I could use this as my excuse if I fail the exam... (:

back to the story, the state bar let us to the testing site at exactly 11:45 am and immediately told us that due to the delay in the morning schedule, they were canceling the afternoon part of the exam (which was a 3 hour performance test). Some applicants shouted for joy while others started crying. I attribute this to the fact that doing well or bad on a PT exam can drastically raise or lower your scores.

The worst thing about the entire thing (beside the emotional and mental stress) was that many of us did not get to eat lunch because of the delay and had to take the essay portions without any lunch and knowing that these essay scores and our first day essay scores and PT#1 were all going to count double to replace our missing PT#2 scores. So this added a new found pressure to perform well on the essays.

Anyway, after the exam and venting about the situation with my wife and friends for the next month or so, I gave it all up in God's hands and just had to accept that the situation happened and that I did the best I could under the circumstances I was in. Well a few months later, when I checked my scores, I passed!!! and it just made it all the more sweeter, knowing how crazy the experience was...

even to this day, finding out I passed the Bar exam was one of the best days of my life....

Moral of the story:

1). Eat a good breakfast, to ensure that you have energy and enough substance to get you through, just in case lunch gets canceled or something weird happens 2). No matter what crazy things happen (which it will), keep focused on the exam and stay calm. Emotions and stress are the two biggest reasons people do not perform well on bar exams. 3). Organize and Issue Spot: More than anything, make sure you headline and underline the main and sub issues and organize your essays and PT's in a Roman numerical fashion to make it easier for the bar exam grader to read and pass you. Indeed, alot of examiners if they see you have the correct heading will sometimes will just glance or skip entirely what you wrote underneath because they assume that if you issue spotted correctly, then most likely than not, your analysis is correct. Vice Versa, if you fail to issue spot and headline it, then the examiner cannot give you any points for that portion and do this a couple of times too ofter and it will drastically decrease your chances to pass.

John D. Tran, Irvine, California

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I took, and passed, the Iowa exam in Feb 04. They made us hand-write all the essays - which in my mind forced brevity. Remember the examiners don't want to read long essays any more than you want to write them.

Then, in a brilliant example of planning, my wife and I decided to move the family to Colorado in May 04, so I had to take the July exam here. It was WAY easier the second time around - maybe because I was confident and RELAXED. I looked around at the people who were completely stressed out and just smiled. That may sound cocky, that's not my intent. The term "minimum competence" just kept playing in my mind. Hell, I passed Iowa and misspelled "subpoena" through the whole thing! Perfection is definitely not required...

CO let us use laptops for the essays and performance exams. That made things a lot easier (at least for me, I can type a lot faster than I can hand-write.) And LET'S NOT FORGET LUCK!: I practice copyright law - low and behold, one of the performance exams was a simple copyright issue. That was a big confidence boost.

Relax, you'll do fine. The fact that you found this list and had the confidence to make a post while in law school puts you at the top of the "resourcefulness" class in my book. I don't know what the pass rate is in CA, but you probably only have to do better than half the people in the room. 

Kevin E. Houchin, Fort Collins, Colorado

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I remember placing the call to my wife at work after opening the envelope - this was WAY before the internet - And telling her that I had passed, and that she was the second person on the planet I had told.

She asked me who I had had the nerve to tell before her.

I told her that there was a painter painting the front hall of the building we were living in, and when you hug a complete stranger you really have to provide some kind of explanation.....

Jim Moriarty, Cresco, Iowa

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When I took NY some lady passed out, another threw up, someone wore a diaper because she didn't want to get up to go to the bathroom, a car alarm went off (I don't know why they were allowed to bring the car into the Javits Center.

When I took Florida, I was sick, fighting with a girl, and had no sleep. All my essays were less than two pages long (double-spaced). One essay asked about Florida constitutional law and I just made up the law. I still managed to pass it.

Dave Gottlieb

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1. Use the force, or quote a mantra, or get a massage. The important thing is not to panic. 2. Use duct tape. 3. Take a sweater, water, and ear plugs

(no lie, the day I took the exam in the Houston Astrodome, a \*marching band\* with a LARGE drum section practiced for about two hours less than six feet from where I was sitting before the testers managed to get it moved).

4. I'm with Dave on this one, LEVERAGE your time and expertise. Don't waste your time on subject areas that you don't know and can't learn fast. For example, here in Texas, at the time I took the bar, you could expect no more than 9 property questions and about 9 oil and gas. I knew I could manage the property, but not the future interest, and I completely gave them oil & gas. 11 questions.

I didn't know family law, but I learned enough in one day (make and use flash cards). Fortunately, I had a separately acquired understanding of community property. Ditto Commercial Law, which I studied for 2 hours right before the test.

My point here isn't to brag about how little I knew, my point here is that I spent my time learning a little bit more about areas I was already confident in, rather than trying to learn subjects I knew nothing about and therefore wouldn't be able to learn well or at all.

And yet, I passed the bar--and got a license just as good as the one issued to the Guy Who Most Obviously Studied To Hard For The Bar (Otherwise Known As "The High Scorer").

5. IMHO, (although probably too late for you), you should stay away from bar review classes. It's a bunch of people, sitting around in a group obsessing about the bar exam, drinking beer and pretending to study while filling in the blanks in "study outlines," who then get together during the bar exam itself and feed each other's panic, and then wonder why so many of them didn't pass. Bar review classes increase your panic level exponentially. Stay away if you are the least susceptible.

5a. On the other hand, you should get a copy of the Bar Review Study outlines (filled in), even if you have to pay for them.

becki fahle, San Antonio, Texas

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When I took the bar exam, I was fortunate to have a Firm that was paying for my bar review. One of the senior partners took me aside just after the bar exam and told me that for every point over 75 (passing grade) I scored, I would owe the Firm \$100.00 for overstudying . . .

Walter D. James III, Grapevine, Texas

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DON'T PANIC!

After half-way through the first day I was ready to go home. I had just blown half the written questions, or so I thought.

Not only had my fourth child been born one month ahead of schedule, just ten days before the test, but I found myself seated next to someone with almost exactly the same name who was on his sixth time taking the test. If the exhaustion would not get me, I thought the Karma most surely would.

I went back in to get some practice for my second go at it. Imagine my astonishment, and relief, when I passed.

James McGill

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I'm still amazed -- my wife picked up after the last session, we went to a motel, I rested a while, we went out to dinner and a show, I just relaxed for a couple of days & that was it.

Jay S. Goldenberg, Chicago, Illinois

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I "hit the wall" about 3-4 weeks before the actual bar date. I took about 1 1/2 weeks off and acted like a baby and pouted and said I could do no more but had not even finished studying Texas subjects. Somehow I pulled it all together the last few weeks and took test determined I was not going to pass - but when I walked out after it was over - the relief of having sat through it was great and I didn't want to jinx it by thinking it was not so bad....so I decided it seemed easier than I thought b/c I must have screwed it all up. I passed with a pretty high score - but then you know the old saying - if you pass with a fraction of a point over what you need that is a fraction of a point more than you need. My husband called me at work to tell me the results had come in and I could be heard down the hall yelling - "I don't believe it....I don't believe it....I passed?" I still would not believe it until I saw it listed on the state bar list on the computer. That was May 2! 002 and I was 53 years old. I had graduated at 51 years of age in 2000 but had not taken the bar until Feb 2002 b/c I was so busy working - but I had signed up every time and paid for it 4 times before actually taking it. I don't know if this is sad or not but it was the first time in my life I could honestly say I deserved to be proud of myself. It really changed my life. Law school is rough but not rocket science. Taking the bar is an evil mind game and those who write the multi-state part ought to all be put away somewhere. Adrian Jonrowe, Attorney at Law (love typing that!!), Austin, Texas

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As someone once said to me "there's no Summa Cum Laude on the bar exam." And thank god for that <g>.

I've passed it in three states. If you're feeling burned right now, take a day off. Then put your head down and push through till the end of the exam. In my experience, the last two weeks before the test are critical. That's actually when the real studying begins. If you're feeling behind, you'll be amazed how much you can assimilate. If you're feeling perhaps a bit too cocky, you'll find your holes and fill them in.

On practical level, it really helped me to have people quiz me on various subjects (this is especially useful if the person doing it has some legal training, as they can often give you hints that help you figure out the right answer when you are stumped; they're also more likely to know if you are close to the right answer but not quite there, which can also be helpful).

Doing practice essay exams can be very helpful too. I found that it really helped me to pinpoint what I had nailed down and what I needed to study more. At least for me, that was the best way to fill in holes. It's kind of like playing with a piece of software and then referring to the manual when you can't quite figure out how to make something work. At least for me, that's often more efficient than reading the manual cover to cover.

Jake London

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Imagine what it is like for, say, the poor Japanese applicants, for which the pass rate is now up to 5 percent. It used to be two. Some take it again and again, like the paralegal in Grisham's *The Rainmaker*, and more times than members of a certain illustrious Massachusetts political family. <g>

Joking aside, it is really so tough that it almost seems that talent has little to do with passing. In a rigid society like Japan, the chance to be one's own boss and in a profession that is highly respected, as law is, is a bit like dreaming of becoming a sports superstar. (Most lawyers in Japan are solos.)

I found the New York and Illinois bar exams quite tough, but doable. One lives through it. It just took work. Massachusetts and Missouri, bless their hearts, admitted me on motion.

Norman Solberg, Osaka, Japan

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I don't remember how I studied for the multiple choice section, but for essays, what I found most useful was doing every practice question that I could lay my hands on. On both the NY bar (in 1988) and the MD practitioners exam that I took in 2002, there were essays that were IDENTICAL to the practice problems I'd done. I didn't even have to think, I just wrote the model answers from memory. This was especially a lifesaver on the MD bar where I'd run short on time and only had 5 minutes to answer that last essay, which I'd done before.

Also, on both NY bar and MD bar, I found the first questions really hard and wound up spending way too much time on them. You really need to keep an eye on the clock (even write down the time you need to be done w/a section) and force yourself to write something and move on.

Finally, I have found that bar examiners don't care so much about your conclusion as long as you spot the issue and analyze the Q. So if you see a question where you can't tell if there was consideration for a K or not, you say "The issue is whether there was consideration that would give rise to a K" It might be argued there is because of X or there isn't because of

Y...Even if you ultimately say that it's X and it was Y, you'd only lose a point at most; you get the most points for analysis.

Good luck. I actually loved studying for and taking the NY and NJ bar after law school. I had the luxury of being able to study full time and spent a relaxed summer in Ithaca with many of my law school buddies. Plus, I knew that in the end, it was only test on paper and the worst that could happen was to fail and take it again. Since then, all my "tests" - difficult clients or ethics decisions have had much more real consequences or go on and on with no end in sight and I often long for the days of the bar exam where I could deal with a finite task.

Carolyn Elefant

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I went straight to the pool after taking the test each day and did not talk to anyone. I went to the movies the night before like they told us to, and did just fine. In fact, I found the MA essays pretty easy.

There were no trips after for me. My son was sixteen months old and sick the day I took the bar, so my husband stayed home from work.

Andrea Goldman, Newton, Massachusetts

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After taking the Maine bar, I went to my wife's family farm and mowed hay and tended sheep for four days.

I actually don't remember exactly what I did after the Massachusetts bar, but I think Guinness Stout figured prominently.

Passed them both first try.

Jim Moriarty, Cresco, Iowa

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The Ohio Bar exam started on a Tuesday, my meltdown started on a Saturday. I was eating at a Mexican restaurant Saturday evening and choked on a tortilla chip. I was admitted to the hospital over the weekend as the ER doc was worried about an infection. So Monday morning, the day before the bar exam, they took me to the operating room to "scope" my throat. As the anesthesiologist was preparing to drug me up, I told him I was taking the bar exam the next day and asked him to make sure the drugs he gave me would not be in my system for long. He guaranteed me that I would \*not\* be 100% for the bar exam. They didn't find any foreign objects in my throat, just a tear in the esophagus. But I did not get any studying done in the three days before the bar exam. Not a drop. It didn't matter, I passed by a comfortable margin. That was my bar study breakdown. It was almost a year ago and I'm still broked down!

Christopher Bumgarner

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I'm driving up the NJ Turnpike, an hour after completing the bar exam. There's going to be a major MARATHON party to celebrate.

Half way back home, I hear a rattling from under the car. I climb underneath to investigate [mistake #1]. I see a rusty muffler about to fall off and I try to fix it [mistake #2]. A piece of rust falls into my eye.

Next stop : St. Luke's Emergency Room, where I spend the next 10 hours having a F.O. [foreign object] hosed out of my eye. Result : a C.A. [corneal abrasion].

Oh, well. I would have gotten way sicker if I had attended that party.

Charlie Abut, New Jersey

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My horror story:

I was sitting for the PA bar exam without any colleagues. I didn't have money to sit for NJ and PA together so in the first year I sat for NJ and then followed up with PA. I paid my own way through school, had no money for BAR/BRI so I studied independently, the whole bit.

On the second day of the exam, I finished a little early in the morning session, so I decided to drive out to the King of Prussia mall where my good friend worked and have a nice bite to eat for lunch rather since I didn't know anyone at the exam.

I went to the ATM to get some money for lunch. I got nothing. The receipts indicated that I had no money. I knew that wasn't true, having just deposited my pay check. So, I called the bank from the mall on my cell phone. The conversation went something like "Well, Miss Phillips, you came into the bank yesterday and withdrew all of the money out of your accounts." Huh? Long story short, someone (inside job at the bank) had taken all of my money from savings and from checking. I had nothing. Not even enough to get lunch. Of course, at the time, I didn't know it was an inside job, so I was convinced that someone was posing as me somewhere in the City of Philadelphia (you'd think that they'd want a rich girl) and that I would return home and find someone inside my apartment. With this worry in my head, I had to return to the exam and finish the afternoon essay portion. The whole time, I was running through various scenarios from being evicted from my apartment because I couldn't pay rent to being arrested at my apartment for some heinous crime committed under my identity.

Sigh. Such drama.

The real result? Several weeks later, I find out that I passed the exam, they caught the person who stole my money and they put my money back into my accounts.

Kelly Phillips Erb, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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This did not happen to me, but to a friend of mine - while taken the bar in VA, heard someone behind him losing his lunch - all over the person in front of him.

Ronni Jillions

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I too have a story about the Bar Exam. 2 weeks before the exam on a Thursday, I had to mow the grass before heading to the library for an exhilarating day of bar study.

I was in a rush and trying to finish as quickly as possible so I could get to the library. To make a long story short, because of my rush to finish I was not as careful as I should have been and know how to be. As a result I cut my toe in the lawnmower, which required a trip to the Emergency Room and stitches in my foot. Needless to say my rush to finish my yard work did not serve me, as I did not make it the library that day or the next day either.

When the exam came I went in with my foot all bandaged up. I am not sure whether the worst part was the actual injury or telling my friends how it happened. Anyway, the exam came and went and 5 weeks later I got the letter saying I had passed!

Michael K. Elliott, Huntersville, North Carolina

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I have been wondering about all the angst on this thread because I am so old that there was no multi-state when I took the bar in 1963 or 4 (I can't remember). I took the NY Bar which was reputed to be so difficult that it created a pressure all of it's own. I still recall the Dean of my law school telling the graduating class the PLI would kill him, (he was a lecturer for the PLI BAR Review) but if we were in the certain % of our class, he felt we did not need a bar review, we would make it because we could identify the issues (as Carolyn said in her note) and that was the key. My study group voted to take the PLI course anyway, and we hung together for the two day exam with one rule - no discussion of the exam during lunch. (Dinner was at home as we were all married commuters). So, Kelly's experience encouraged me to chime in this thread to say to those about to take a Bar, RELAX, you got thru law school, you will get thru the bar exam. Again, RELAX, and good luck.

Herbert Alan Dubin, Rockville, Maryland

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The night before the patent bar exam, trying to fix my garage door, which was stuck.

Something hit me in the face with the sound of an explosion. Landed on my back and when I opened my eyes, couldn't see because blood had splattered all over my glasses. The bolt/bracket holding the spring to the

garage door had snapped and hit me across the face. Seventeen stitches across the nose, fortunately by a plastic surgeon who had been called to emergency for a woman in who dropped something on her nose in her garage.

Showed up at exam with bandaged nose and two black eyes.

Kevin J. McNeely, Washington, DC

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I have been in 3 car accidents in my life. 2 of them were on the way to bar exams.

I was driving to Roanoke from Washington DC to take the Virginia Bar Exam, and this woman was merging onto the highway, didn't see me, and merged right into the side of my rental car. Luckily, it was the day before the exam and the car was still drivable.

The second, I was driving to Pittsburgh to take the PA bar, and I hit a deer. Luckily the car still worked, but I was getting strange stares driving through downtown Pittsburgh with the front end of my car smashed in and fur sticking out of it.

Jason McCready

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Congratulations on the privilege of sitting for the bar exam! I hope that wonderful experience is for only 2 days and not 2.5 or 3 days...

I followed the advice of trusted advisors and studied like heck all the way up until the week of the exam. I did a week of PMBR, which really did a great job of teaching how to take a multiple choice bar exam, and BAR/BRI. I ended up focused mainly on the "big 6" topics, as they were 3/4 of the exam. I ended up not attending the 3-day PMBR course a week before the exam because there was no time. The last 2 weeks is pure memorization and association. But then again, everyone is different. Some of my classmates passed who did computerize bar prep only while some did not that did what I did. In the end it comes down to confidence, stamina, and - from one of the Indiana Jones movies - "choosing wisely."

We were told in PMBR that the number of people we hear of that do not pass includes those who could not attend the exam or didn't show after the first day. Accidents happen at the most inconvenient time. I biked every day as an escape, until a week before the exam - due to a bike accident. The bruising was still there for the bar, but without any discomfort. That was a much better outcome than those I hear of at PMBR who went in labor, miss flights, or broke bones - each causing a missed exam. Those that attend the first day and got overwhelmed by the experience are at a loss for 2 reasons. First, they don't focus on day 1 and day 2 is likely not enough to make up for it (or so they surmise). Second, they assume they did poorly and don't want to go back. I know of nobody who felt they "cinched the exam." Actually, some of those who did may not have passed.

I was burnt out from studying the weekend prior to the exam. I am told this is a good peak point. I stayed at the site of the exam arriving a couple of days prior to "check out the site." I felt surprisingly calm throughout and more or less knew what to expect. I knew what was on the exam, or rather, studied so much that I could not have been more prepared.

Although I, like many, doubted I was truly prepared, you just are. The exam is you v. the examiners, not all the rest of the takers. Don't talk to others about the exam - you will be off your game if you do. Don't think about prior questions during the exam or after - second thoughts are a killer to confidence. Besides, who is to say that the person you talk to got it right or that you remembered all the facts in the question so as to go back to your notes to check "the right answer." It is a confidence killer and waste of time and effort when you can least afford to sacrifice either!

The whole experience, like law school, is nothing more than an endurance test. If you graduated law school, you can pass the bar exam. The critical factor is your preparation - i.e., whether you have proved to yourself that you "studied enough" to "know enough." Take the exam like a distance race - hit the question and move on without looking back. You have 6 hours to answer 200 questions of varying length. The long deed question where you have to trace owners is worth as much as the short evidence question - if it takes too much time, answer B and move on. Remember endurance. Of course you can only do this with a few questions, so select them wisely. Time is the killer, and the examiners know this.

I had the MBE on day 1. It was as expected, I had no idea how I did at the time I took the exam, during breaks, or a week later. Who cares, you answered the questions within the set timeframe. Be sure to finish the exam and not run out of time! I paced myself every half hour, not x time per question because the questions differ in length/difficulty. The best way to prepare for this now is to take those practice exams now and study by reading over the answers to the questions you got right as well as those you got wrong. That way you learn how think like the examiners, and you may recognize some of those questions on your exam as well! There are only so many ways they can ask about the same material!

Day 2 was fairly predictable. You'll know which essays will be present by topic. That will likely be about 6 to 8 of 10. I boned up on the obvious beforehand. At the lunch break I "relaxed" and looked over my notes for the remaining "obvious" essay topics. If you have not had a WET or Family Law question in the morning, it has to be in the afternoon. An easy give-me essay when you expect it. Remember to spot issues, all the issues no matter how minor. You are not necessarily acting to resolve the matter - you don't have the resources at hand. Use common sense with the issue and move on. After studying for the MBE you'll know more than enough to pass the essays on those subjects. The other topics - say a divorce - we were told to say an equitable division of property is the expected result. However! By stating that the judge may find a 60/40 split of marital assets due to the state's statutory factors showed the grader that you know it does not have to be 50/50!

Sleep well, or rather rest a lot. Eat properly. Do what you have to do - attend and answer all the questions within the set time period - then forget

about it. You can't do anything about it after the fact. Breaking that down further - at lunch on the first day some will say the exam has been easy while others will think it has been difficult. Remember, you probably are not taking the same exam! The difficult AM will be getting the "easy" afternoon! This is another reason not to talk about the exam. The exam is you v. the examiners. Who cares how everyone else is doing. The time to commiserate is after the exam - when nobody will want to talk about their "inspirational experience." By that time you won't care because it is time for the next endurance test - waiting for the bar results! Celebrate your victory - sitting for the bar exam - and awaken sometime about the time results come out.

Good luck, or rather, congratulations on sitting for the bar exam!

Bill Driscoll

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Back in time, or before time, I came straight from Law School to my new job in Boston. I knew Boston as well as I knew the street map in London (then or now). Boston was laid out by grazing cows and the paths they took. In those days cows had no sense of direction. My new law firm specific which Bar Course I was to take paid for it, and began paying me! I faithfully attended the selected course daily and discovered someone else closer to my age, who, unknown to me, was the Clerk of the Supreme Judicial Court of Suffolk County and the just retired long time President of the Senate and alleged powerful as whatever in Boston and the Commonwealth (we are careful to use that a lot since it separates us from all the rest, as if we needed that.) John E. Powers was a very interesting fellow, gregarious, pleasant, and we became friends as the elders of this small community which average age was about 24 with or without us. He was also no stranger to the Bar Exam since this was his sixth attempt, something of a noteworthy accomplishment. Done with the course, we were to attend two day Exam held at some place not within my ken, Boston College. After some effort I traced a course from my apartment to the site of Boston College, which gave no guidance to the uninitiated, as to the locus of the exam building. The weekend before the exam I came down with a raging flu, a fever that never left triple figures, and no idea of how to do much of anything except sleep and, if religious, presumably one prays. For some reason I spoke or met with John E. who empathized and offered to drive me to the exam (which solved the problem of where it was). However it did little for my flu, Loathe to postpone the exam for six months I supposed I could do worse than fail, but not trying. He picked me up each morning and suffered sharing the car with me. He actually discussed bar questions and answers (as we had done during the course). Truly as the fever rose the clock raced around the face of the analog clock (pointed arrows on a circle with numbers). I had no idea then, or now, about what it asked, wanted, called for or what I wrote or thought or much of anything else. I tried to talk my way out of even bothering with the second day, but John E. thought that the Irish never quit. I obliged and in a daze finished the next day. He drove me home. The following Monday I appeared for work and was instructed that in Boston 50+ lawyer law firms wore suits (of which I had none). It was clear I would not enter the inner sanctum without matching pants and jacket. I saw nothing wrong with

dungarees and cotton collar shirts and a tie. I was sent across the street to Filene's which was represented by the firm. The partner called the President who oversaw my beginning wardrobe and it was delivered to the firm correctly tailored the following morning. He did not personally deliver it, but I must say the President was a terrific guy and fun to be with. Needless to say associates did not talk to Presidents of anything. I never saw him again. In November (four months later), the hiring partner called me in to tell me that I had passed . . . Back to work. I believe the major mistake common to all of us, is to go back over answers and correct them usually changing the original answer. The odds are enormous that one can generally flunk a passed exam this way. Most spontaneous answers are correct, it is the second thought that is erroneous. If you learned the law in law school, such as it is written, review is probably of marginal assistance, unless you are in a different jurisdiction from where your law school is. I went to Columbia and was cool with New York law which was unknown in Massachusetts which was demurring right and left as well as serving complaints and making attachments without filing anything in court. Without the Bar Review I would not have even been able to carry on a conversation with a Massachusetts lawyer. Dick Howland

-- Dick Howland 326 North Pleasant Street Amherst, Massachusetts

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Well, not exactly a horror story. I feel lucky. No real horrors during preparation for the bar exam. I even got back into fitness by starting each day with an early-morning workout.

Exam went as smoothly as the bar can for a first-timer. Felt pressed for time the whole first day (nothing new there). Had hand cramps the second day (should have practiced writing full essays instead of simply outlining essay answers). Finished up and left for home. Later that evening I noticed that the license plate had been stolen from my car. I parked that car in Philadelphia for 4 years without incident. Two trips to King of Prussia for the bar exam and the plate gets lifted. At least I passed.

Andrew D. Mead Attorney at Law P.O. Box 415 Brownstown, PA

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My recollection of the patent bar exam is that many people sitting around me had failed to familiarize themselves with the MPEP. I was surrounded by a flurry of rapidly flipped pages the entire time.

Pennsylvania also decided to announce state bar exam results at noon on the day of the patent bar. A certain attorney on this list who shall remain nameless also taking the patent bar at the time decided to check at lunch. I hid and called home. I was feeling good about the morning patent session and didn't want to risk getting bad news. After 60 days or so of "grading" the Pa bar in my head, I was convinced I had failed. My wife was looking at the results as we talked. I had to hang up on her. She gave me the good news on the way home.

Passed the patent bar too!

Andrew D. Mead, Brownstown, Pennsylvania

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All right, here's my advice based on my horror story: listen to all directions carefully!

I had already passed Illinois, and was taking Missouri without a study course. Everyone assured me that Missouri never actually tested on of the possible topics (I forget, now, which one it was), so, as I had very little time to study while working full-time, I didn't study that topic.

Drove to Jeff City in an ice storm on the morning of the exam, and just got there on time. They announced that there were 6 essay questions in the book, but I must not have been listening too carefully. I open the book, and the very first question is on the topic I didn't study.

Something inside my head short-circuited at that point and I freaked out. As I struggled with that question, I somehow got it in my head that the announcement had actually been that there were 6 books each containing 6 questions. I was so panicked that I was so far behind that I actually finished the whole exam in about half the time. At that point, I realized my mistake, much to my relief. I went back and recopied some of the answers to make them more legible, but I didn't change anything because I believe in the no-second-thoughts rule. Then I left. Apparently, it was good enough.

Timothy A. Gutknecht, Columbia, Illinois

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Man! Next time I have to take a bar exam, I am going to hire one of you to take it for me!

That'll guarantee me a pass, Wooo HOOO!

Frederick Mischler, Dayton, Ohio

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I took the Mo Bar in Jeff City in 1994 at that gawd-awful Ramada or Red Roof or whatever it is. My horror story involves the fact that the ceiling collapsed in my exam room due to heavy rains. I was in the last row, and it came down about five feet from my head. Then the maintenance guys from the hotel came in and started nailing plywood and plastic over the hole! DURING THE EXAM!! Fortunately, I had previously learned an exam strategy that I always use for such big events that involves putting oneself into a total state of concentration. I noticed the ceiling collapse, of course, but I was able to return to my test and finish. Meanwhile, a bunch of crybabies at the front of the room, the equivalent of half a block away, started whining to the proctors (who had no authority to do anything) and even calling the Missouri supreme court clerk's office in the middle of the test to complain that they needed some sort of extra time or re-do or something because of the ceiling collapse. They got nowhere of course.

The tests were collected at the regular time and no re-takes were offered. People were wailing like they were victims of a genuine tragedy in the hallway during lunch and loudly calling their important daddies to complain that they simply didn't feel safe going back into that room, blah, blah, blah. One person tried to recruit me for this effort because I was so close to the collapse, but I said I thought I'd done well and didn't want a re-do. She was pissed and I got a LOT of hateful glares during the rest of the afternoon....but I passed the bar! 

Meg Tebo, Chicago, Illinois

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Akhhhh, that just proves that the bar examiners are a bunch of bastards!!! A ceiling collapsing?!?! You're lucky you have concentration of steel, but that would be really distracting to most! I thought it was bad when they didn't let that good Samaritan who was trying to save the guy having a heart attack retake it, but this may be worse. I kept telling myself during bar study that the examiners were playing a game with me and decided I wasn't going to let them win. I got pissed - that's how I passed.

Majdel Musa, Chicago, Illinois

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I didn't pass the bar until the second time around. Back in mid-seventies Iowa, there was no multi-state. The entire exam, five half-day sessions spanning Monday until Wednesday noon, was essay. And it had to be written entirely by hand. I guess there weren't any handicapped people, as we called them back then, around. You could take the exam if you were sixty days or something like that short of graduating from law school. And the results were posted around 11:30 p.m. on Wednesday with the swearing-in at the ungodly hour of 8 a.m. the next morning.

The first time, the bar review was held over a period of several months, beginning in March for the June exam. Senior year in law school, my mind and priorities were elsewhere. And the approach struck me as "Well, go look this up and think about it." The second time, the bar review began the day after Christmas and continued for 2 weeks, three sessions daily, finishing up the week before the bar exam. The boot camp approach was "You're not going to have time to look this up, so pay attention real fast," somewhat more encouraging, at least for me.

The first time I took the bar exam, I thought I had to spend every minute writing, filling up as many blue books as possible, until the final bell. Obviously, that wasn't the solution.

When I took it the second time, I created a scheme which worked for me. We had to answer five out of seven questions during each 3-hour session. I read through the exam book, selected the questions I'd answer, and take a break. I returned and spent 15 minutes writing, no make that "printing" because my handwriting was so bad, the answer. And take another bathroom, hand washing (yes, I am a compulsive hand-washer), drink of water, and cigarette break before returning to answer the next question.

And finished each session more than an hour early.

The first time around, I prayed for a high pass rate. The pass rate was high, but I wasn't among the lucky. My attitude the second time was "I don't care if the pass rate is 1%, just as long as I'm in it." And the pass rate turned out to be the lowest in years, and I was in it.

jennifer rose, Mexico

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I recall sitting next to someone who had been advised to keep his sugar level up during the exam. He believed the fructose tablets would do the job. Given the stress, the extra fructose somehow turned into copious quantities of gas that were expelled during the exam. I kept pretending that it was smelling salts to keep me focused. Not pleasant in that area of the exam room at all!

Bruce Dorner, Londonderry, New Hampshire

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I took the bar exam in Portland, OR in Feb. 2001 when that big earthquake hit Seattle. Nothing like being the little Nebraska farm girl who's never been in an earthquake and isn't sure if it's some kind of crazy super-duper anxiety attack, or whether the earth is actually shaking beneath you! They didn't stop the exam or anything, just announced it at the next break. (it was a relief finding out it wasn't ME)

Adrienne S. Davis, Lincoln, Nebraska

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In MA we have the homeland security touch at the bar exam. We can carry in certain items, for which we are given a specific list in advance, which can be carried in a see-through plastic bag of certain dimensions. And yes, BAR/BRI supplies a "pre-approved" plastic bag with their advertising... And pencils with advertising... I was expecting to be handed a t-shirt next...

William M. Driscoll

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