

THIS IS A
NO NONSENSE
GUIDE TO
THE ONTARIO
BAR EXAM

BY **HARMAN BATH**

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By reading and utilizing the methods contained herein, the reader acknowledges and agrees that they will rely on the methods and tactics contained herein at their own discretion and risk.

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Thank you MJ.

*A special thank you to
Gurpreet Grewal, David Yun, Jaskaran Basuita, Jessica Eruchalu, Sandeep
Patel, Matthew Himmel, Ankit Sareen, Arshad Auckbarallee, and Jaskaran
Grewal.*

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

I knew absolutely nothing about the bar exam at the end of law school. I wrote this book for people like me that could benefit from a comprehensive summary of what the exam entails along with strategies to save you time and energy during your prep.

I cannot thank David Yun, Jaskaran Grewal, Ankit Sareen, Matt Himmel, Sandeep Patel and Akash Bhullar enough for their guidance during this time.

Without a doubt, the bar exam was single handedly the most difficult academic exercise that I have done. I vividly recall the planning, re-planning, stress, anxiety, *inter alia*, associated with the test.

Knowing what I know now, there are definitely things that I would have done differently or things I wished I knew earlier.

This book will make best efforts to share these tips and tricks in the simplest of terms.

Full disclosure, I attended law school in Ontario and wrote the Ontario Bar Exam. *Ergo*, the advice herein will be most applicable to an Ontario Licensing Candidate. For transparency, I was fortunate to pass on my first attempt with approximately six to seven weeks of preparation.

Without further ado, let's get right into it.

Best of Luck,

Harman Bath
J.D., *Lincoln Alexander*
Called to Bar 2023'

1. BAR EXAM EXPLAINED

The Exam

The Ontario Bar Exam is a test of minimum competency for lawyers. While the exam sources questions from several areas of the law, it also tests your ability to quickly find information and think under pressure. It is comprised of two exams: the Barrister and Solicitor exams.

The Barrister Exam tests:

- Professional Responsibility (which include the Rules of Professional Conduct and By-Laws),
- Civil Litigation,
- Criminal Law,
- Family Law, and
- Public Law.

The Solicitors Exam tests:

- Professional Responsibility;
- Business Law,
- Real Estate Law, and
- Estates Law.

Materials

For this open book exam, you will be provided with materials on all the above-mentioned subjects. Exam questions are sourced from these materials. You are allowed to bring printed versions of your materials into the exam. For this reason, candidates have created highlighting and information-finding systems. We will discuss and suggest some similar systems in this book. Note, the LSO does not let you leave the exam room with any materials that you bring in. If they did, it would make for one hell of a bonfire.

Professional Responsibility

As you'll note Professional Responsibility ("PR") is tested on both exams. Your Barrister and Solicitor PR materials are substantively identical. The only

discrepancy is slight variations in page numbers. Past licensing candidates have expressed that PR makes up about 50% of the exam. While the LSO has not confirmed this, this is usually an inference candidates make during their bar prep.

Time Per Question

In Ontario, you have four and a half (4.5) hours to answer 160 questions; you have about one minute and forty seconds (1:40) per question. While this may seem daunting at first, think back to the LSAT, where you were presented with the same challenge and came out successful. To further settle any nerves, questions range in their level of difficulty. As a result, some questions take less than 1:40 to complete, allowing you to allocate that time towards difficult questions.

Passing Grade

I would also note that there is no “**passing grade**” for the Ontario Bar Exam. Successful candidates simply achieve a “**Pass**”. Unsuccessful candidates receive a “**Fail**” and are additionally provided with a summary of how they fared in relation to other candidates. This summary, as I’m told, provides an average score, a range of scores, and your score in relation to the foregoing. Furthermore, the LSO breaks down this summary across all the previously mentioned subjects. This seems to suggest, that the Ontario Bar Exam may be graded on some sort of a curve. In my view, to ponder such things is a waste of your time. Rather, I invite you to read and possibly incorporate the strategies discussed herein into your own plan.

Interlude

In this book, I will walk you through tried-and-true strategies for writing this exam. In addition, I will provide my personal tips and tricks that may assist you in your prep. At the end of the book, I will provide tips from other individuals who successfully passed the bar exam and are now practicing lawyers and articling students.

Please visit the Law Society of Ontario’s [website](#) for more information regarding the Ontario Bar Exam.

2. SCHEDULE

It is vital to make and stick to a reading schedule during your bar prep. David Yun, a friend, generously shared a schedule that Western Law Students used to organize their bar prep. I re-created this schedule for my own needs and design preferences. I invite you to create such a schedule for yourself.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Week	Day	Date	Section	Exam	Page #	Total Pages	Status	Events	
Week 1	Tu	18-Apr-23	Professional Responsibility	S/B	1-34	34	Done		
	W	19-Apr-23	Professional Responsibility	S/B	35-70	35	Done		
	Th	20-Apr-23	Professional Responsibility	S/B	71-114	44	Done		
	F	21-Apr-23	Professional Responsibility	S/B	115-144	30	Done		
	Sa	22-Apr-23	Estate Planning	S	477-514	38	Done		
Week 2	Su	23-Apr-23	Estate Planning	S	515-574	60	Done		
	M	24-Apr-23	Estate Planning	S	575-600	25	Done	* Work on Proposal	
	Tu	25-Apr-23	Will's Exam Review Day						* Work on Proposal
	W	26-Apr-23	Will's Exam Review Day						* Work on Proposal
	Th	27-Apr-23	Will's Exam						* Armada Proposal 12PM
	F	28-Apr-23	REST						* Grad Photos
	Sa	29-Apr-23	Business Law	S	145-210	66	Done		
	Su	30-Apr-23	Business Law	S	211-272	62	Done	* Law Ball	
	M	#####	Business Law	S	273-336	64	Done		
	Week 3	Tu	#####	Business Law	S	337-414	78	Done	
W		#####	Business Law	S	415-476	62	Done	* Special Event	
Th		#####	Real Estate	S	601-668	68	Done		
F		#####	Real Estate	S	669-730	62	Done	* 2 Years Manjo	
Sa		#####	Real Estate	S	731-798	68	Done	* Special Event	
Su		#####	REST						* Special Event
M		#####	Real Estate	S	799-854	55	Done		
Week 4	Tu	#####	Real Estate	S	855-924	70	Done		
	W	#####	Civil Litigation	B	145-210	66	Done	* Get Solicitor Bound	
	Th	#####	Civil Litigation	B	211-276	65	Done		
	F	#####	Civil Litigation	B	277-334	58	Done		
	Sa	#####	Criminal Law	B	335-384	49	Done	* Special Event	
	Su	#####	Criminal Law	B	385-430	45	Done	* Mother's Day	
	M	#####	Criminal Law	B	431-488	58	Done		
	Tu	#####	REST / Admin						
Week 5	W	#####	Public Law	B	621-694	74	Done		
	Th	#####	Family Law	B	489-552	64	Done		
	F	#####	Family Law	B	553-620	68	Done	GET EVERYTHING BOUND	
	Sa	#####	AFFORDABLE BAR QUIZES (FAMILY, CRIMINAL, CIVIL, PUBLIC)					Done	Read Rules and By Laws
	Su	#####	ACCESS BAR PREP FREE QUIZ (BARRISTER)					Done	
	M	#####	EMOND					Done	
Week 6	Tu	#####	Admin / Review Day					Done	Read Rules and By Laws
	W	#####	AFFORDABLE BAR EXAM (BARRISTER)					Done	Read Rules and By Laws
	Th	#####	AFFORDABLE BAR EXAM (BARRISTER)					Done	Read Rules and By Laws
	F	#####	Read PR + Highlight Rules + PR Questions					Done	
	Sa	#####	ONTARIO BAREXAM					Done	
	Su	#####	Access Bar Prep					Done	
	M	#####	REST						
	Tu	#####	Barrister's Exam						
	W	#####	REST						
	Th	01-Jun-23	Estates Summary + Quiz					Done	
Week 7	F	02-Jun-23	Real Estate Summary + Quiz					Done	
	Sa	03-Jun-23	Charts (Estates + RE)					Done	
	Su	04-Jun-23	Business Summary + Business and RE Quizes					Done	
	M	05-Jun-23	ACCESS + review					Done	
	Tu	06-Jun-23	review Access + Tab + skimmed PR + everything you listed					Done	
	W	07-Jun-23	OLE					Done	
	Th	08-Jun-23	review + Re-Read PR + Skim Summaries					Done	
	F	09-Jun-23	EMOND					Done	
	Sa	10-Jun-23	Read PR + OBE					Done	
	Su	11-Jun-23	Read PR					Done	
Week 9	M	12-Jun-23	Finish PR + DTC + Business Index					Done	
	Tu	13-Jun-23	Finish PR + DTC + Business Index					Done	* Special Event

How many pages should I read per day?

Approximately 60.

Reading strategies will be discussed later in this book, however, for now it is important to understand that you want to create a healthy reading syllabus that is tailored to your personal obligations and allows you to attempt practice exams before the actual exam. For context, I dedicated the entirety of my eight weeks to bar prep with a handful of exceptions for a law school exam, a wedding, and some other personal obligations.

For me, a healthy reading syllabus meant reading 60 pages a day on average; some days I read more and other days I read less. For others, it was anywhere between 50 to 100, inclusive. To arrive at your own number:

1. Input the dates for your Barrister and Solicitor Exam;
2. Earmark (ideally) seven days before each exam for practice questions;
3. Input any personal obligations you cannot miss;
4. Count the number of days you have leftover to dedicate to reading and highlighting;
5. Count the number of pages you have to read (approximately 1500); and finally
6. Divide the sum from #5 by the sum from #4.

For example, I had 25 days to read 1500 pages. This meant, I had to read 60 pages a day.

What happens if I don't read 60 pages per day?

If you fall behind on your reading schedule, you will need to either sacrifice a rest day to make up for the unfinished reading or to read more pages on the following day. Neither option is ideal. The best advice I can give you is to stay disciplined on your reading schedule. This may require you to study later into the day than you had originally planned or to start skimming towards the end.

In either case, with this volume of reading, you do not want your reading arrears to snowball.

However, life happens. In the odd event that you're not able to read 60 pages on Day 1, I would suggest buckling down and complete all the pages in arrears in addition to your Day 2 pages on Day 2. This will likely be a challenging (but doable) task and it may teach you the importance of completing your assigned pages every day.

In the event that you are frequently unable to read 60 pages per day, I would suggest reducing your daily reading volume (at the expense of rest days and practice days).

In my view, it is more important to stick to your reading and highlighting schedule than intimately understanding what you are reading. For this reason, it may be optimal to sacrifice how deeply you are reading for you fast you are reading. Reading strategies will be discussed further in Chapter 4: Reading.

Rest Days

Allocate rest days. It is easy to burnout when reading through dense legal material day in and day out. For this reason, it may be advantageous having a weekly rest (or catch-up) day. In my experience, I had law school exams, personal obligations, and weddings during bar prep. For this reason, I chose to allocate most of my rest days towards these events. I invite you to personalize your schedule to meet your needs.

Furthermore, there were days where I could not get my mind on the material. I recognized this early into that day's prep session and converted a reading day into a rest day. This in turn required me to reorganize my schedule to swap the reading and rest days.

I personally felt rejuvenated after each rest day. When I took a rest day before reading, I observed efficiencies in my speed and cognition. When I took rest days before writing timed practice tests, I found that I did better.

I would now take a moment to underscore that a rest day requires you to create mental distance from the bar exam. This means that you should not think about the exam, feel guilty for resting, or discussing the exam with your family and friends.

Should I read Solicitors before the Barristers Exam

At the very least, you should read one of either Business Law or Real Estate law, in its entirety, before the Barrister exam. The assumption is that you are writing both exams in the same seasonal sitting. There is simply too much material to be able to adequately highlight all the Solicitor's material, re-read important chapters, and practice in the two weeks you have between exams.

Ideally, I would suggest completing all your readings before your first exam. The core benefit is that you will be able to throw away your highlighters and rejoice that all you left to do is focus on learning the material and practicing. In the alternative, if you read some of the Solicitor's materials after the Barrister exam, this material will be fresh in your mind and will perhaps require fewer focused re-reads. Everything regarding reading and re-reading will be discussed later in this book.

What first, Barrister or Solicitor?

When scheduling, I would suggest reading any (or all) assigned Solicitors' materials first. This is because by reading the Barrister materials closer to the exam, said material will be fresh in your mind.

What should I read first?

Professional Responsibility. In this book, I emphasize that PR makes up a large chunk of the Ontario Bar Exam. For this reason, I suggest reading PR multiple times. In addition, PR contains the most straightforward material and makes for the easiest read. *Ergo*, it makes for an excellent segway into your bar prep.

What about the Rules and By-Laws?

PR is the most important subject on the Ontario Bar Exam. The PR materials directly reference the *Rules of Professional Conduct* ("RPC") and the LSO's By-Laws. *Ergo*, when reading PR, you engage with a lot of the material found in the RPC and By-Laws.

I've suggested multiple reads of PR. For this reason, you may substitute one of your PR reads with the RPC and By-Laws. In my experience, the practice exams directly tested from the RPC and By-Laws materials, however, to my knowledge, this was not the case on the actual exams. This could be due to the fact that I either knew my PR materials well or that I missed those questions.

In any case, make a judgement call on whether you wish to incorporate these pages into your reading schedule (they were not incorporated in the 1500 I mentioned above). Furthermore, the Ontario Bar Exam questions change year over year, so just because they were not directly tested in the past does not mean that they will not be tested in the future.

1500 Pages?

Generally speaking, the LSO provides two sets of reading materials: the Barrister and Solicitor materials. Together they comprise of upwards of 2000 pages. Some of these pages are cover pages, blank pages, or appendixes. In my view, based on the sheer volume of readings, it is not a productive use of your time to read the appendixes. Furthermore, since the PR materials are identical, you only need to print and highlight them once. This obviously then requires you to color copy your PR notes for the Solicitor exam.

So, when accounting for all the factors above, your actual reading volume may be shy of 1500 pages. Again, it is important to note that the LSO may change its materials at any point. So kindly take this discussion of how the exam and how the materials are set up with a grain of salt.

3. PRINTING

General

The bar exam is an open book exam. Accordingly, you are allowed to bring your materials with you into the exam room. In preparation of this, you will be reading and highlighting approximately 1500 pages. It is likely that the average licensee candidate will not be able to memorize every concept on these 1500 pages. For this reason, you will most likely reference your highlighted bar materials on the exam.

Since the bar exam is a timed test, you will need to organize your materials in a specific way to be able to quickly flip through them if needed. This entails printing, highlighting, tabbing, and using charts. This chapter will discuss my key takeaways with respect to printing your materials.

Print Double Sided

You will print your materials and then bind them into books based on the subject matter (i.e., real estate, business, etc.). You will want to print your materials double sided since this will result in thinner books. There is the risk that some of your highlights may bleed onto the other side, however, the advice in this book with control for that.

What Not to Print

In my view, you do not have to print the Table of Cases, Rules of Professional Responsibility, and By-Laws sections. Furthermore, you should not print both sets of PR materials (discussed more in the next section).

The table of cases is a list of all the cases referred to in the book. This section does not provide the associated page numbers where these cases appear. In the event that you need to make reference to a case, it will be in the context of a greater concept. Tabbing strategies discussed herein will help you quickly flip to the appropriate section and highlighting strategies will help you to quickly locate the case name. For these reasons, it may not be worth the money to print the table of cases.

1. Section title

1.1 Sub-section title

Random Words. Random Words. Random Words.
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1.2 Sub-section title

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2. Section Title

2.1 Sub-section title

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The *Rules of Professional Conduct* (“RPC”) are verbatim excerpts of all the relevant rules mentioned in your PR book. In my experience, practice questions have directly pulled from the RPC materials, however the exam seemed to focus more on concepts from the PR materials. Personally, I printed and highlighted this section, however, in hindsight, it provided limited returns. One of the core messages of this book will be to read your PR materials multiple times. Since the RPC materials form a nexus with the PR materials, you could substitute one of your PR reads for the read of the RPC materials. I would not recommend this. In the alternative, I would suggest to skim a digital version of the RPC and save the money you would have spent printing, photocopying, and re-printing them (more context on this in the PR section that follows). I would reiterate my comments from the RPC materials for the By-Law materials. Please

note, if you will feel better prepared having read and highlighted these materials, feel free to do the same.

Printing PR

Since the PR materials in the Barrister and Solicitor sections are virtually identical, it has become common practice to print one set of these (either the Barrister or the Solicitor), highlight them, and then color photocopy the highlighted materials so that you have two sets of highlighted PR materials – one for each exam. With this said, use the associated DTOC or Index when trying to locate information in your PR book. More on DTOC and Indices later.

The Remaining Sections

Please print the remaining sections as they are. The LSO provides materials that have blank pages in several parts of the materials. These blank pages ensure that each new chapter starts on the left-side of your book. This tends to be useful as it creates a uniform structure for all your chapters and will aid you when flipping through your materials.

Do Not Bind Your Materials Immediately

Once your materials are printed, consider refraining from binding your materials right away. The rationale will be discussed further in the chapter on “Binding”.

Hole Punching Your Materials

The sole purpose behind hole punching your materials would be to put them into binders while you wait to bind them. I used this approach and it helped me organize and carry my materials around. However, in hindsight, this approach did not provide any additional utility. My prep would have been unaffected had I just left my materials loose-leaf until the binding stage. On this point, I leave it to you to use your better judgement.

4. READING

You will need to read and highlight approximately 1500 pages on the bar exam. As discussed in the previous chapter, consider refraining from binding your materials right away. At this junction, with respect to reading, I have two tips:

1. You can group the pages you need to read for that day and further subdivide them into their respective chapters. This will create a visual cue of how much you have read and how much you have left to read. This may prove useful in controlling any anxieties caused from the reading volume and may further help in securing small wins on a daily basis.

1. Use a clipboard. I would like to thank David Yun for this tip. Reading approximately 1500 pages hunched over at your desk can be strenuous on your neck. Using a clipboard will allow you to lever your clipboard at the edge of your desk and create a better angle for the intensive reading you will be doing during bar prep.

Notes in Margins

While notes may make for a more engaged reading experience, on practice exams and the actual exam, you will not have time to scan these additional notes; your focus will likely be on your highlights. Still if you can find a way to make notes into your materials in a way that allow you to synthesize materials faster when you flip to it, feel free to make comments in your margins.

What Do the Pages Look Like?

Bar materials (as of writing), are “news-paper style”, meaning each page will feature two columns of information organized into paragraphs. These paragraphs are organized under subheadings at various degrees of specificity and all subheadings are organized under headings. All headings are organized into books pertaining to their respective subject matter. Below is a self-created mock-up of what an average page in the bar materials look like:

Pages Per Day?

As discussed in Chapter 2: Schedule, a healthy daily reading volume is about 60 pages a day. This roughly results in six to ten hours of readings.

Pages Per Hour?

Six to ten pages an hour. My colleagues and I yearned to read approximately ten pages an hour. In my experience this was only possible when I “skimmed” the materials. I will describe exactly what I mean by “skimming” later in this chapter. When I was reading for understanding, I found that my pace averaged at about six pages per hour. If your pace is slower than this, you may be reading too deeply. You must realize that when reading 1500 pages over the span of a few weeks, it is difficult to remember what you read in week one when you’ve just finished reading 400 pages in week four. Further, note that this pace accounts for the time it will take you to highlight your materials.

How Deeply Should I Read?

This is the biggest question I had during my bar prep. I was torn between wanting to understand every nuance before moving on and not studying for 18 hours a day. Save for Mike Ross, it is unlikely that the average licensing candidate can read approximately 1500 pages and recount every topic that they studied. Furthermore, I noticed that despite spending hours on understanding certain nuances in Week One, the volume of information I consumed by Week Three hindered my ability to accurately recall said nuances. I was however able to recall the general concepts. At this junction, I realized that a better use of my time would be to create an active skimming technique (discussed next).

Active Skimming

When I mention “skimming” I mean:

1. Put eyes on each and every word on the pages;
2. Understand concepts but skim caveats (for example: understand and highlight the concept of “bail” but only make highlights for all the small caveats that go into that concept without spending time memorizing them); and
3. Focus on creating quality highlights of your materials that allow you to quickly re-read sections during your prep and on the exam.

Multiple Reads?

I strongly recommend reading your PR materials four times, or as many times as it takes to answer PR questions without looking at your materials. I will discuss this in depth in the Professional Responsibility section.

If you are planning on writing the Barrister and Solicitor exam during the May/June write immediately after law school, complete re-reads of the materials is likely untenable. If you are planning on spreading out your exams, this option may be available to you.

With that said, despite the time constraints and when utilizing the skimming method, you can open up time to re-read pockets of complicated sections in your materials. For example, during my skimming I would make note of sections that were uber complicated and, if I had time, I would re-read them in depth at the end of the study session. Furthermore, when I was doing practice exams, I would identify sections of my materials that were difficult, and when I reviewed my answers (or after the practice exam itself), I would go back and re-read those complicated sections.

Again, some of the materials will be read weeks before the exam. In my view, it's improbable that you will be able to retain that vast volume of information. For this reason, I suggest to initially skim your materials and then follow up with targeted reads of significant chapters or topics.

Pomodoro Technique

Reading and highlighting for six to ten hours at a time is brutal and may even be unproductive. For this reason, I used the 50:10 Pomodoro technique, where I read for 50 minutes and took 10 minutes to scroll my phone or relax. On more difficult days, I used the 25:5 technique whereby I read for 25 minutes and took a 5-minute break. Furthermore, when I had momentum, I chose to work through my breaks. Use this method at your discretion. You can find multiple Pomodoro timers on YouTube or elsewhere online.

Grouping Chapters

At the outset of this chapter, I reinforced my advice about not binding your materials right away. During my prep, I would take out that chapters I needed to read that day and would lay out each individual chapter at the top of my desk. I would place the chapter I'm reading into my clipboard and begin. When I

completed a chapter, I would either put it back into my binder or I would put it somewhere else on my desk. This provided visual cues of what I had done and how much I had left. I found this helpful when I needed to motivate myself to power through a study session.

5. HIGHLIGHTING

Why Highlight?

As I've mentioned already, it's unlikely that you will remember every nuance of information in your materials. *Ergo*, you may need to reference your materials during the exam day. When you flip to a page, your highlighting system will allow you to quickly direct your eyes to the information you need.

Why You Shouldn't Bind Your Materials Immediately

If you over highlight a page, or your highlights bleed onto the other side of the page, not binding your materials allows you to re-print individual pages and re-highlight them without unbinding your materials and rebinding them. Once you're done highlighting, you can then go and bind your materials.

General Highlighting Scheme

Highlighter Color	Purpose
Blue	Timelines and Dates
Green	Amounts, Quantities, etc.
Pink	Name of a Court, Statutes, and Cases
Yellow	General Information
Orange	Caveats and Nuances

Your **blue** highlighter should be used for (1) dates and (2) any mention of a number of days (e.g., 10 days to file XYZ with the court). In my experience, once I located the correct chapter, the ability to focus on only looking for blue in my highlights allowed me to save time when I was searching for the correct answer.

Your **green** highlighter should be used (1) any monetary amounts and (2) any other amounts (e.g., 5 judges sit on a certain court).

1.

Your **pink** highlighter should be used for (1) the name of a court (e.g., Superior Court of Ontario), Statutes (e.g., Land Titles Act) and Cases (e.g., R v Doe). I originally highlighted the name of the Courts in yellow with a red underline. Not only did it make it immensely difficult to parse out this information in a time constraint, but it also required me to spend the extra time to put down my highlighter, pick up my pen, underline the word, and pick up my highlighter again. When reading 1500 pages, this can result in a lot of wasted time.

The “meat” of the topic should be highlighted in **yellow**. For example, if a rule applies in three situations, highlight the rule and the three situations in yellow. You will use this highlighter the most in your bar prep.

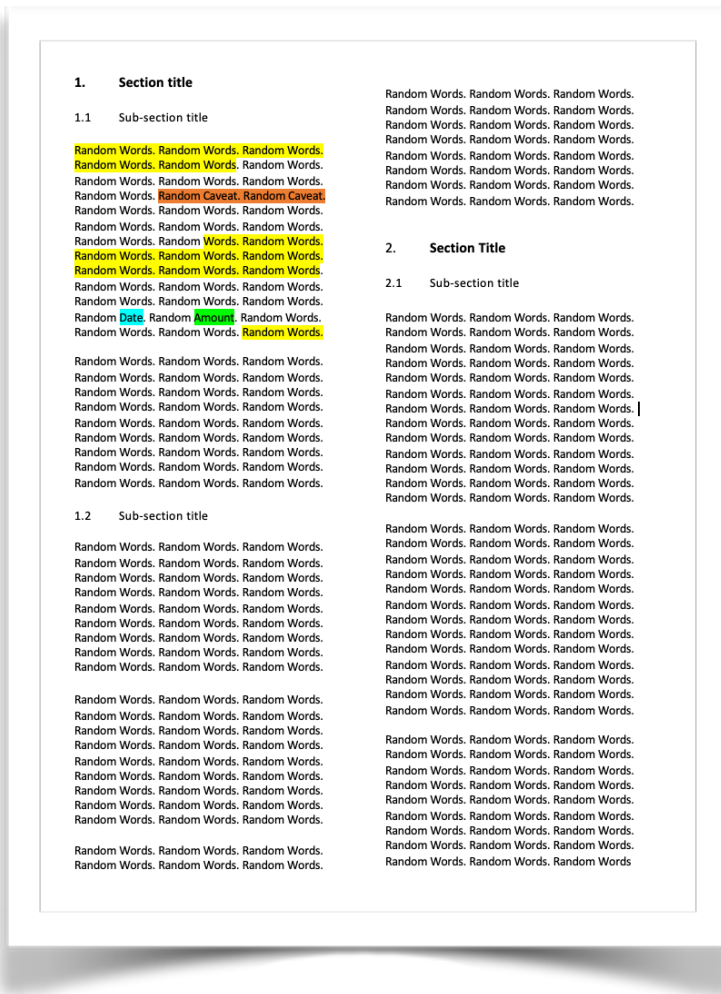
Your **orange** highlighter is for exceptions and caveats. Words like “unless”, “except”, *inter alia*, can indicate when you need to use your orange highlighter. On the exam, you may read the first few sentences of your yellow highlights and believe that you have found the answer. However, an orange highlight will indicate that there is a situation where the general rule does not apply. The exam may contain answers that encompass the general rule and other answers that encompass the exception. In these situations, your orange highlighter will pay dividends. Do not spend too much time deciphering whether information is better suited in orange or yellow. When in doubt, put it in yellow, because you can always use your orange highlighter over the yellow, but not vice versa.

In addition to the above highlighting scheme, at the outset of my bar prep, I used red highlights for things I wanted to emphasize further, purple for titles and definitions, and red and blue pens to take a visual break from my yellow highlights. The red highlighter was unnecessary. Your yellow highlights should cover the main concept and any caveats should be included in your orange highlights. Using more colours means taking more time to switch highlighters and to determine whether the subject material is worthy of an orange or red highlight.

Pastel Highlighters

In my experience, the standard blue, green, orange, and pink highlighters are very dark and can hinder your ability to quickly read what you have highlighted. For this reason, I strongly recommend using pastel colours for your blue, green, orange, and pink highlights. You can use the standard yellow lighter for your yellow highlights.

Example of a Highlight



How Many Highlighters Should I Buy?

Start with a pack of yellow highlighters (approximately five) and one set of pastel highlighters. You can purchase more if needed. On this point, invest in good quality highlighters because your ability to easily read what you highlighted may save you precious seconds on the exam.

Over-highlighting?

At a certain junction of your prep, you may feel that your materials look like skittles. This is not necessarily a bad thing. In my experience, it does not matter if the highlights on the page as a whole are overwhelming. Your DTOC or Index method will take you to a specific section in your notes. When you get there, you need to ensure that the paragraph you're reading is easily navigable with respect to your highlighting scheme. For this reason, when determining if you've over-highlighted, examine whether your highlights allow you to navigate a paragraph easily.

May and Must on PR

In your PR book, you will notice that some rules are required while others are suggestions. I would urge you to circle or underline these keywords as you may be tested on the same.

Other Colours

I would refrain from using other colours in your materials. Opening, using, and closing a highlighter takes time. Unless you want to extend your study sessions, using fewer highlighters allow you to create a robust and dependable system that you can utilize easily.

Pens and Pencils

Other than my comments for the PR section, using pens and pencils to underline words is unnecessary as it will take up more time and will not be easily visible when you're frantically flipping through pages on the exam. The only caveat would be my comments for PR.

Highlighting Keywords instead of Whole Sentences

You need to utilize a balanced approach here. If you can summarize what is being said by highlighting a few words, then solely highlighting keywords may be useful. However, once you begin doing practice exams, you will notice that your eyes are naturally drawn to your highlights and look over the unhighlighted words. For this reason, be careful when skipping words in your highlights.

Skimming before Highlighting

You can highlight as you read, however, I have noticed that not all paragraphs are written point first. In these situations, a more concise summary of the information is found later in the paragraph. This is not the case for each paragraph. In the end, as long as you can understand and quickly pull information from your highlights, even if you miss the concise summary, it is not the end of the world.

Small Subsections

Sometimes a subsection will be so small that if you highlighted it, you would end up highlighting every word in that subsection. When we discuss the DTOC and Index approaches, you'll note that once you find where a subsection is located and in the event that the subsection is very short, it's easy to quickly re-read it on an exam. Not highlighting short subsections will save you time during your study sessions. A degree of discretion is appropriate when deciding what to do with these types of subsections.

When to Open a New Highlighter

Highlighters that are running out will require you to apply more pressure on the highlighter and will not run as smoothly across the sentences you are highlighting. For this reason, when your highlighter begins to dry out, it is an appropriate time to open a fresh one.

6. COVER PAGES

You may have noticed that each subject tested on the bar exam has its own materials. Furthermore, each set of these materials starts with a page that lists the relevant subject. During my prep, I realized that these cover pages had a lot of un-utilized space. This is when I got the idea to make a high-level table of contents on this page.

Essentially the final product of the cover pages I designed looked something like this (I've redacted the chapter names as its IP belongs to the LSO):

BUSINESS	
16	[REDACTED]
17	[REDACTED]
18	[REDACTED]
19	[REDACTED]
20	[REDACTED]
21	[REDACTED]
22	[REDACTED]
23	[REDACTED]
24	[REDACTED]
25	[REDACTED]
26	[REDACTED]
27	[REDACTED]
28	[REDACTED]
29	[REDACTED]
30	[REDACTED]
31	[REDACTED]
32	[REDACTED]
33	[REDACTED]
34	[REDACTED]
35	[REDACTED]

Next, you would have also noted that both the Barrister and Solicitor materials had a high-level table of contents followed by a detailed table of contents (“**DTOC**”). I took the high-level table of contents and recreated that on my cover page. Then, I placed the relevant pages from my DTOC after my cover page.

The cover page allowed me to first locate the general subject matter being tested by the question. Thereafter, I could flip to my detailed table of contents, arrive at the exact chapter I needed to look at, and find the exact section or subsection that contained the information I required. The page numbers were listed on the DTOC and thus I would quickly flip to the chapter using my numbered tabs (see next chapter) and thereafter quickly to the page I needed to look at.

Furthermore, in the blank spaces within the rows, I would write out sub-topics that I erroneously thought were in other chapters. This was made possible by doing multiple practice exams.

Since DTOCs are long and *detailed*, the cover page would allow me to identify the chapter I needed to focus on in my DTOC. I strongly recommend the use of cover pages in this way. You can create one of these on Word or with a pencil. Cover pages are another reason I do not recommend binding your materials immediately after printing them.

7. NUMBERED TABS

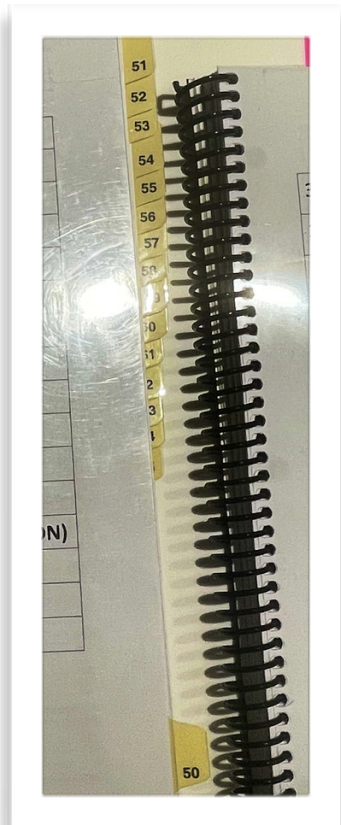
Use numbered legal tabs in your materials. Each chapter in each of your different books are uniquely numbered. You can purchase two sets of numbered tabs (from 1 to 100) on Amazon for your Barrister and Solicitor materials, respectively.

When combined with the cover page and DTOC approach, numbered tabs will allow you save time when flipping to the appropriate chapter.

If you use legal numbered tab (see image below), then place each tab directly above the relevant chapter. This way, when you pull the tab, all the previous chapters will be moved to you left, leaving you on the first page of the relevant chapter. If you decide to use stick tabs, place the sticky tab on the page immediately before the page you want to flag. If you place the stick tab on the first page of the chapter, when you pull the tab, you will arrive on the second page of the chapter.

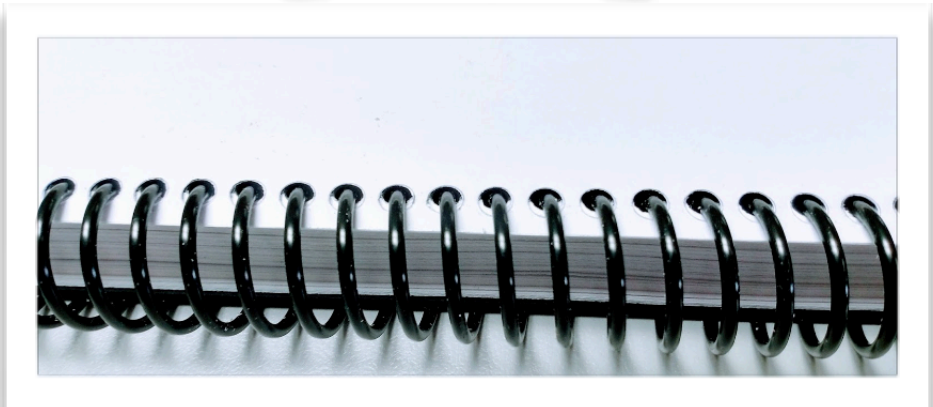
Since you will need to purchase numbered tabs and insert them into your materials, refrain from immediately bounding your materials after printing them.

The final product will look something like this (see the picture to the left):



8. BINDING MATERIALS

As mentioned, several times in this book already, I suggest refraining from immediately binding your materials after printing them. “Binding” is simply using a cerlox binding (see images below) to create different books. You will want to bind all the different subject separately.



A well bound book will allow you to smoothly flip through the pages on exam day. Any printing shop will be able to help you with this. In the image above, you will notice a comb binding (left) and ring binding (right). I suggest the use of ring binding. Ring bound books seem to be stronger and allow you to flip through materials faster. With a comb bound book, you run the risk of having to fix a comb that has come undone. This is the last thing you want on exam day.

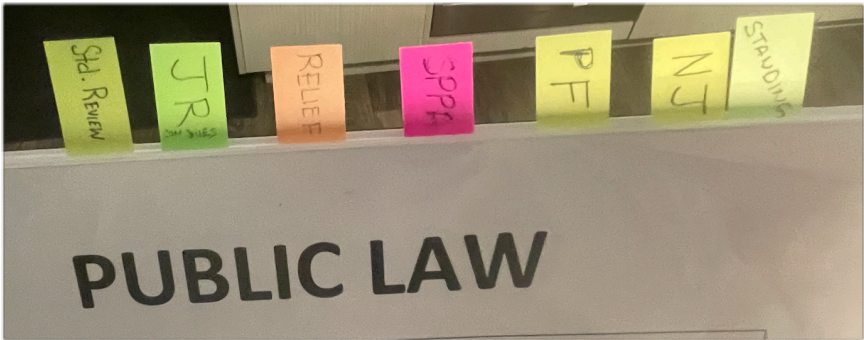
When binding your books, follow the following process:

1. Start with your cover page;
2. Insert the relevant pages from the DTOC (you may need to reprint some pages as some pages feature the DTOC for different subjects);
3. Insert all your numbered tabs in their appropriate places in your materials (see the previous chapter for directions on the same);
4. Insert your materials; and finally
5. Hand your materials, organized as noted in Steps 1 through 4, to the print shop.

Finally, ensure that your books have a clear plastic front. If the front cover of the bound book is opaque, you will not be able to use your cover page without opening the book.

9. ADDITIONAL TABS

You may find value in using additional sticky tabs after your materials are bound. The final product may look something like this:



When doing practice exams (or while reading), you may identify certain sections that provide robust summaries of the legal concept, sections that are difficult to find, or sections that are being tested frequently.

In situations as noted above, or in any other situation that you find appropriate, it may be a productive use of your time to add tabs.

Write what the tab is referring to on the tab. You may not be able to write the entire concept, so identify short forms that make sense to you and can be easily identified on the exam.

Since your numbered tabs will run along the right side of the book and your cerlox binding will be on the left, you will have to put these tabs on the top of bottom of the book.

When writing on these tabs, I recommend writing all your tabs in a way that can be read at the same angle. For example, the bottom of each letter I wrote on the tabs was towards the cerlox binding. This would allow you to rotate the book to the left to quickly read all your tabs.

Place the tab on the page before page you are trying to tab. When you do this, pulling the tab will allow you to arrive to the exact page with the information. To be clear, do not tab the page that contains the information you're trying to flag, instead tab the page immediately before that page.

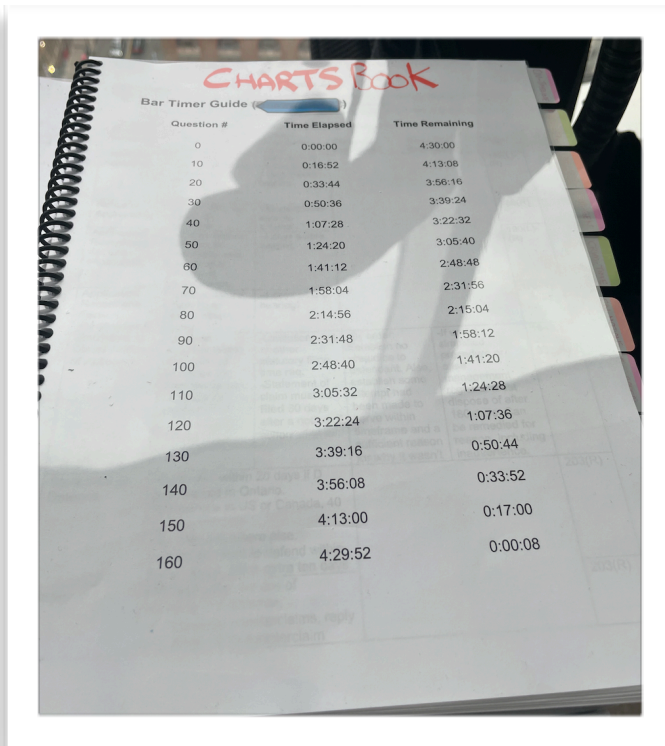
Finally, I also tabbed the page before my DTOC. This allowed me to quickly flip to the DTOC and hence I did not waste time fumbling with the clear plastic front of the bound book.

10. CHARTS

Charts can take many forms, but in short, they are summaries of certain concepts that are otherwise scattered in your materials but are now in one convenient place. I used some of the free charts made by the University of Toronto students on the Barrister exam, and I made charts of my own for the Solicitor exam.

During the Barrister exam, you may see questions that require you to determine the appropriate Court for a certain appeal. A chart can summarize all the variables involved and provide you with a quick “cheat-sheet” of what the appeal route is. The same can go for any calculations on the Solicitor exam, *inter alia*.

I bound my charts in a separate “Chart Book” and used stick tabs to quickly flip to the one I needed. See picture below:



I had friends that bound the relevant charts with their main materials. You may want to add or amend your charts as you move through your bar prep. For this reason, I recommend binding your Barrister and Solicitor charts in two separate books. For me, I did this a few days before I started doing practice exams.

In addition, I also made highlights in my charts to help my eyes move through the material. I would recommend doing the same.

11. SUMMARIES

In addition to their charts, the UofT students (and some bar prep companies) provide summaries of the bar materials. I would be careful when using these tools. Be aware that someone else has made these and they may or may not be accurate.

I do not recommend making summaries of your own. This is time consuming task and does not let you practice the most important skill on the bar exam: flipping through your materials.

The primary use of a summary could be to quickly skim over the topics you studied on any given day or to skim the night before a practice exam. In any case, I would recommend leaning on your actual bar materials because that is what you will be tested on.

If you do need to review a topic, I recommend skimming your highlights or re-reading sections. This will not only allow you to refresh your memory on the subject, but it will also help you become better acquainted with your bar materials.

12. NOT A CNTRL+F EXERCISE

Past licensing candidates have shared that in previous years, the bar exam was a CNTRL + F exercise. To be more precise, the questions on the exam would feature answers choices that could be found verbatim in the materials. Thereby, the exercise was identifying the concept, finding the appropriate section in the materials, and matching the text of the bar materials with the correct answer choice.

A few years ago, there was a cheating scandal, after which it seems that the LSO has changed directions. Anecdotal accounts reflect that the exam has changed and has become more difficult. I went into my prep for the Barrister exam thinking that the exam was still such a CNTRL + F exercise. In my view, the exam was not such an exercise.

Instead, the correct answer choice reworded the content from the bar materials. This means there may now be an additional step when answering the question: critically examining and understanding the material.

Now, we must read the question, read the answers, locate the information in our materials, read the material, and match the underlying concept with one of the answer choices.

There is no need to fret over this change as it seems to be the direction the LSO will take moving forward. However, this does mean that understanding the material is a vital component of bar prep. You may now be thinking that this conflicts with the discussion of “skimming” I mentioned earlier. I reiterate that skimming is still a productive use of time. In addition to active skimming, candidates must also take time to robustly highlight their materials in a way that can be easily understood and applied during the exam. For topics that are more complex and would require reading multiple paragraphs, candidates may benefit from closely re-reading those passages to understand the concept.

13. DTOC VS INDEX

I would suggest using your DTOC and reserving an Index as a method of last resort, if at all.

At various junctions in this book, I referred to flipping through your materials. Since you will be tested on material across approximately 1500 pages, it may be the case that you will have to refer to your materials on exam day. However, parsing through 1500 pages to find a very specific nuance is a daunting task. Accordingly, past candidates adopted one of two approaches: (1) DTOC and (2) Index.

Indices are Inferior

The detailed table of contents or DTOC can be found in the first few pages of both the Barrister and Solicitor materials. It is a table of contents that lists the relevant page number for chapters, sections, and subsections at various degrees of specificity.

Indices have been created and updated each year by the students at the University of Toronto and various bar prep companies. These are an alphabetized list of keywords. The intention is to identify a keyword in the question, find the word in the index which will state the pages and side of the page the information can be found, and then flipping through your materials to arrive at the information.

The issue with indices is that they are made by other people. The keywords used are known and make the most sense to those who created the index. For example, you may refer to a concept by a certain term, but the drafter may use a different term. Furthermore, indices are not always comprehensive. In my early days of doing practice exams, I found myself having to scribble in several keywords that were missing from the index. Further still, since indices are several hundred pages long, finding a word in them can be a time-consuming exercise. Finally, since the Ontario Bar Exam is no longer a CNTRL+F exercise, the words used in the prompt may not be the same word used in the materials. Point being, in my experience, indices have not been the most reliable tool to find information on the bar exam. I would caveat my comment by stating that indices may be a useful last resort if you are completely unable to locate the information with the DTOC.

How to Use a DTOC

In my experience, and many of my peers would agree, the DTOC is the superior information finding system on the bar exam. I've listed the No-Nonsense way of using a DTOC below:

1. Glance at your cover page and locate the correct topic;
2. Confirm the associated chapter number from the cover page;
3. Turn to your DTOC and flip straight to the identified chapter number;
4. Scan the DTOC for a section or subsection that most likely (or definitely) contains the information you are looking for;
5. Use your numbered tabs to flip to the chapter;
6. Flip to the correct page and use the section or subsection number from your DTOC to zero-in on the correct part of the page;
7. Use your highlights to quickly decipher the relevant parts of the section or subsection; and finally,
8. Find the information and apply it to the question.

If at Step 7 you are not able to find the information you are looking for, restart the process from Step 2 or 4, whichever is most appropriate, and try again. If you are still unable to locate the information, turn to your index and try looking for the correct key word.

Tabbing Indices

Indices are alphabetized. *Ergo*, if you want to easily flip through your indices, you will need to tab them alphabetically. For transparency, I purchased lettered legal tabs and added blank pages to my indices to ensure each new letter started on the left side. In hindsight, this was a waste of time and money. Since indices are a last resort approach, I would recommend purchasing a pack of sticky tabs that either already have letters on them, or tabs that allow you to write the letter on the tabs themselves. Remember to put the tab on the page directly before the page you are trying to tab.

Highlighting Indices

You will notice that indices may have hundreds of entries for a generic word like corporation, but each entry may be referring to something about the generic word. For example: Corporation – Amalgamation, Corporation – By-laws. I chose to highlight the first instance corporation was mentioned and thereafter to highlight each time the first letter of the qualifying word changed. This way I could find where “Corporation” and related words began, and then I could quickly skim through the index to find the section that contained the qualifying word I was looking for. In hindsight, this was also a waste of time. However, if you need a break from studying but still want to be productive, perhaps this can be of some use.

14. PRACTICE EXAMS

Similar to the LSAT, practice exams are a vital aspect of bar prep. However, unlike the LSAT, licensing candidates do not have access to past official bar exams. Instead, there are a number of bar prep companies that have created practice exams at varying difficulty levels.

Where Can I Buy Practice Exams?

There are a variety of companies that sell practice exams. In no particular order:

1. Ontario Law Exam (OLE),
2. Emond,
3. Access Bar Prep,
4. Ontario Bar Prep,
5. Affordable Bar Prep, and
6. Bar Exam Crackers.

Personally, I used all the above except for Bar Exam Crackers. There was no particular reason for not using Bar Exam Crackers, I just had enough practice exams.

If you only have time to do a few bar exams or are budgeting, I would recommend the following in order of most to least useful:

1. Emond,
2. OLE,
3. Ontario Bar Prep.

I would further make the following comments about the bar prep companies:

- Access Bar Prep provided two mini (80 Questions) exams. You can then purchase their Barrister and Solicitor exam. In addition, they also offer additional PR questions for purchase. Note, the answers for Access Bar Prep are only available in the window that appears after you submit the exam. Once you close this window, you no longer have access to the answers.
- Affordable Bar Prep provided quizzes for each of the subjects.
- Emond provides the most comprehensive solutions.
- OLE provided 220 questions (80 more than the actual exam). For this reason, it is ideal to begin your prep (untimed) with OLE. Exposure to this volume of questions will help you familiarize yourself with your materials and practice your DTOC method.
- Ontario Bar Prep breakdowns your results by subject and some subtopics. It further indicates how you fared against other individuals that have completed Ontario Bar Exam's practice exams.

Difficult of Practice Exams

None of the practice exams mirror the actual Bar Exam. Furthermore, some exams are outdated. Finally, the actual bar exam seems to lean heavily on PR. With all this said I would breakdown the practice exams, with respect to difficulty, in the following descending order:

1. Emond and OLE (most difficult)
2. Access Bar Prep and Ontario Bar Prep and finally,
3. Affordable Bar Exam.

Cost of Practice Exams

When I wrote the bar exam, the prices and value prospects of the various companies mentioned above were as follows:

OLE (includes free indices)	\$250
Affordable Bar Prep (included quizzes and indices)	\$99
Ontario Bar Exam (this is for four exams)	\$250
Emond	\$200
Access Bar Prep	\$50

Test Conditions

I recommend taking all your practice exams (save and except for OLE) under test conditions. This means:

1. Wake up whenever you would on exam day;
2. Start at 10:00 AM;
3. Time yourself;
4. Do not stop your timer for washroom breaks;
5. Only use your printed and bound bar materials;
6. Pretend to fill in a scantron after each question;
7. Simulate a hard stop at 2:30;

Reviewing Practice Exams

Similar to the LSAT, there is value in reviewing your practice exams. First it allows you to practice your DTOC method again. Second, it allows you to trace where your method or thinking went wrong and control for the same on future exams. Third, it allows you to highlight information that should be sticky tabbed. Fourth, it allows you to read the correct answer to a question, which

hopefully will help you if you ever come across a similar question. Finally, it will identify sections of your materials that you should re-read.

Your review should be untimed, and you should be updating your tabs and highlights wherever necessary. I would suggest spending the first half of your review days reviewing the practice exam and the second have updating your materials and re-reading.

15. APPROACHING A QUESTION

You have approximately 1 Minute and 40 Seconds per question on the exam. Any time you save on a question can be used towards other questions, washroom breaks, or re-attempting difficult questions. I would suggest the following approach:

1. Start by carefully reading the question prompt.
2. Read through the answers and eliminate obvious wrong answers.
3. Try to recall your materials to see if you can answer the question, with confidence, without referencing your materials.
4. Use the DTOC Method.
5. Close your book so that your cover page is facing up again
6. If Step 4 fails, determine if there is any use in using the index. If there is, use your index.
7. If Step 6 fails, make an educated guess and move on.

Remember, every question is worth 1/160 marks. A difficult question will not increase your chances of passing the bar, it will only take away precious time from you. When in doubt, make your best guess and move on.

Buying Back Your Time

One of things I focused on during practice exams was buying back my time. Some questions are simple and straight-forward. You can complete them in 20 or 30 seconds. Other questions are difficult and may require upwards of two minutes. For this reason, once you've exhausted your materials and have come across what seems to be the right answer, it is time to move on. Failing to do this and instead "confirming" the right answer will be a poor use of your time. I would only suggest doing the same if you are ahead on your time sheet (discussed later in this book).

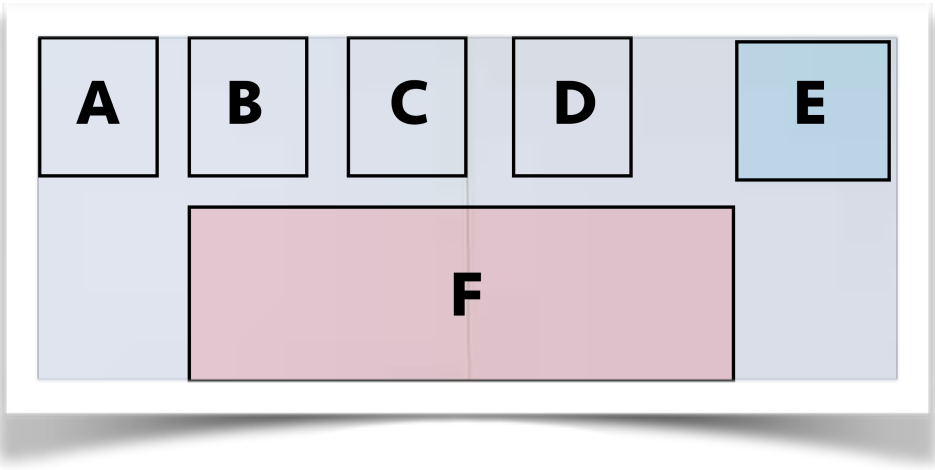
16. DESK SETUP

All questions on a certain subject will be asked together. Once you finish all the questions on a certain subject, there will be no additional questions on that subject. For example, you will answer all your Business questions. Once that section of the exam is done, you can put your Business materials to the side and start working on all the Real Estate questions, and so forth. The only caveat here is that PR questions are asked throughout the exams. Furthermore, the order that the subjects are tested in is identical to the order that they show up in the materials. To clarify, on your Solicitor exam, Business will show up first, then Real Estate, and finally Estates (with PR throughout). I am not saying that the questions are asked in order of the table of contents.

On the day of the bar exam, you will be provided with a folding table as shown below:



I would suggest setting up desk in the way described in the picture below:



Section A can be used to place all the books you are done with. For example, once you finish all your Business questions, your Business materials can go here.

Section B is where you want to keep all the books that are yet to be tested.

Section C is where you want to keep your chart book.

Section D is where you want to keep your PR materials.

Section E is where you will keep your LSO ID Card and your snacks.

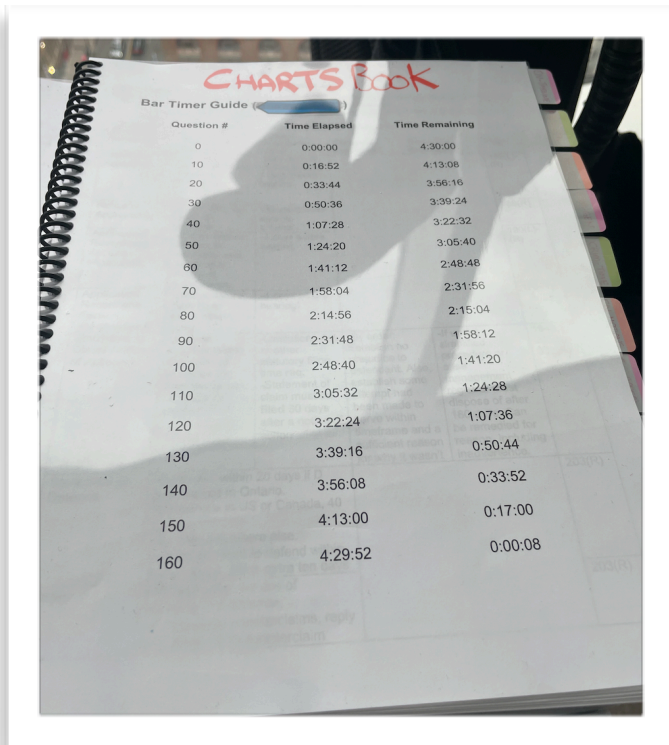
Section F is your workspace. If you are doing Business questions, keep your Business materials on the left-hand section of this space. Your exam question booklet would be in the centre of this space. Finally, your scantron can be kept on the right-hand side of this space. A little tip for those of you that are reading this book closely: keep a couple sheets of blank paper under your scantron, which will make filing in a circle easier. The folding table has small bumps and may cause unnecessary hindrances during the exam.

17. TIME SHEETS

Since the bar exam is under time constraints, it is vital to keep track of your time during the exam. The best way to do this is to use a time sheet. Essentially, this is a table that lists both how much time should have passed and how much time should be left when you arrive at a certain question number. Question number benchmarks can be arranged every five or ten questions.

I strongly suggest using a timer sheet during your practice exams as well. A prop tip would be to make this the first page of your chart book. As discussed in the previous chapter, this will sit right in front of you and is easily glanceable during the exam.

The timer sheets may look something like this:



18. CONTROL VARIABLES

The bar exam is a stressful and difficult exercise. For this reason, make best efforts to control for anything that can hinder your prep or exam day. For example:

1. Let your loved ones know you will be busy for the next six weeks;
2. Do not make any lifestyle changes that will hinder your bar prep, save these for after the exam;
3. Practice getting a full night of sleep;
4. Arrange your ride to the exam;
5. Consume the same snacks and drinks that you will consume on exam day when you do practice exams;
6. Add 30 seconds to walk to and from your desk if you take any washroom breaks during practice exams;
7. Plan for any birthdays, life milestones, or special events that will occur during your bar prep;
8. Ignore negative people that continuously complain about the difficulty of the exam or how poorly they are doing on practice exams – this added stress is not necessary; and
9. Practice sitting for 4.5 hours at a time.

Separation is in the preparation. Thus, identify any issues that may arise on exam day and take active steps to address them several weeks before the exam.

19. RE-ATTEMPTING QUESTIONS

On practice exams and the actual exam, you may have some time left over. You can use this time to review some of the questions you found difficult.

I would recommend making a list of a maximum of three questions that you will attempt reviewing if you have the time. You've likely already attempted to find the answer to these questions on your first pass. Odds are that you will approach the question in the same way and search for the answer in the same places. Since you have the time, you may attempt searching for the answer in different and less conventional areas of your materials. Perhaps you may even employ your index here. This is all time consuming, and, in my experience, you will only have enough time to review three questions. If you have 20 or more minutes left over, you can attempt revising more questions.

I would suggest revising the questions from backwards (from question 160 to question 1). This is because the book you used to complete the last section of the exam will be near you, and the other books are stacked in a way where the first book you used is at the bottom of the pile.

20. PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

While there are no means of confirming what will and will not be on the bar exam, several anecdotal experiences have identified that PR appeared heavily on both the Barrister and Solicitors exam. One rationale for this may be that the LSO wants ethical lawyers above all else. Some have gone as far to say that the exams were 50% PR. If PR supposedly comprises of such a large proportion of the exam, it follows that a chunk of our bar prep should be earmarked for learning the PR materials.

Personally, I would recommend getting as many reads of the PR materials as possible. More specifically, I would suggest reading PR at least four times; twice before the Barrister and twice before the Solicitor.

Your first read should be to skim and highlight the PR materials. In this book I've recommended to start your bar prep by reading PR. Since PR may be the first time you use your highlighting system, it will also be the book that may be severally under-highlighted or over-highlighted.

Your second read should be within the days you are doing practice exams. First, you will be busy reading all your other materials in the days prior. Second, a read several days before the actual exam will keep the materials fresh in your mind. If you're able to squeeze a third read in, I would suggest doing in the day before or two days before the actual exam.

For transparency, I read the PR materials three times before both exams. The goal was to be able to answer 90% of all PR questions without looking at the materials. I also found that I performed better on practice exams when I had read my PR materials the night before.

Your subsequent reads can be done in the hours after you write your practice exam, after you review your practice exam, or you can wholly replace a review day with a read of PR. In my view, re-reading PR pays greater dividends than reviewing an exam.

Your subsequent reads will also be faster than your first read, as you will be focusing on your highlights. You should be able to re-read your PR materials in approximately two or four hours. I would further suggest reading your PR book

front cover to back cover on your first subsequent read, and back cover to front cover on your second subsequent read.

As a final point, I want to underscore that PR seems to make up a large proportion of the exam. I would stress the importance of memorizing the materials contained therein.

21. DAY BEFORE THE EXAM

Should I Study Before the Exam?

On the day before the exam, you should either

1. Do nothing, or
2. Re-Read PR and your DTOCs.

I did nothing on the day before Barrister exam, however, I re-read PR and skimmed my DTOCs before the Solicitor exam. In hindsight, I would err on the latter. A mental break has its advantages on the exam. However, I do recall the panic I had on the day of the Barrister as I felt I forgot how to use my DTOC method. Then, when I arrived at the testing centre, I quickly skimmed all my DTOCs.

I find that keeping your mind active before the exam can help retain the skills you have crafted during your bar prep. However, I would strongly advise against doing a practice exam the day before the exam, as this would be overly strenuous. A skim of your PR highlights and your DTOCs is sufficient. This way, you can study during the day and use the late afternoon and evening to relax.

LSO ID Card

You will require an LSO ID Card (or government issued ID card) to write the exam. This LSO ID Card will be mailed to you in the days before the bar exam. When you sign up to be a licensing candidate, you fill out a questionnaire. The LSO will use the information from this questionnaire to create your LSO card. This means, once you've received your materials, there is nothing further that you have to do to receive your LSO ID Card.

22. DAY OF THE EXAM

When should I arrive?

The bar exam usually starts at 10:00 AM, however candidates are asked to arrive to the testing centre by 8:30 AM. I chose not to arrive right at 8:30 for three reasons. First, I did not want to wait in line and risk losing my focus by casually chatting with other candidates. Second, I did not want to hear all that “doomsday” chatter from the people around me. Finally, I wanted a couple extra minutes of sleep in the morning.

I chose to arrive at the testing centre around 8:50. I found that I had sufficient time to check in, go through security, find my seat, use the washroom, pray, and mentally prepare for the test ahead.

What is the testing centre like?

Speaking from my own experience, I wrote the bar exam at the Toronto Congress Centre. There were ample parking and signage to direct you where to go. When you walk in, you’re greeted by attendants that point you to the coat check and candidate check-in stations. I took my materials to the check-in station provided them with my LSO ID Card and was directed to which room I would be writing the exam in.

Right before you enter the room, you must go through security. Here, attendants will check everything you bring into the exam room to ensure you are following the LSO’s guidelines. Once you walk in, there is another attendant that directs you to the seating chart, from where you find the seating section assigned to you. Once you arrive in the section, you look for your table number and you sit down.

The exam room is a huge convention centre with hundreds of folding tables. There is a stage at the front of each exam room where you will receive the exam instructions and prompts to start and stop writing. There are also washrooms on site.

Use a Bankers Box

If possible, acquire two bankers' boxes and put all your materials in them. It was much easier to carry a banker's box than holding all your books and it was more organized than a bag. Note, you will have to leave your banker's box in the exam room so prepare for that. If you're summering somewhere, see if you can get a couple of banker's boxes from your firm.

Time

On exam day you may be up as early as 5:00 or 6:00 AM, depending on how long it takes you to get ready and commute. The exam will run from 10:00 AM to 2:30 PM. The attendants will then require an additional 30 minutes or so after the exam to collect everyone's exams, submit them to the LSO representatives, and dismiss the candidates.

23. DAY AFTER THE EXAM

After Barristers

After your Barristers' exam, I suggest taking one complete day off before resuming prep for the Solicitor exam. Your mind will be exhausted from the day before.

I Feel Like I Failed

Good, this is normal. In my experience, the bulk of students left the exam room feeling devastated. They were used to being uber prepared for any test and leaving the test knowing whether they knew the right answer or did not know the right answer. The bar exam does not afford you this luxury. Take solace in the fact that majority of your peers are feeling the same way.

Delayed Gratification

Practice exams provide immediate results; they provide instant gratification (or dissatisfaction). For the actual exams, you will need to wait six to eight weeks for your results. Waiting to know whether you will have to retake the exam during this time is a taxing endeavour. I simply mention this here so that you can manage your expectations after exam day. You will be used to knowing exactly how you did after a practice exam. Do not expect the same from the actual bar exam.

24. ADVICE FROM OTHERS

In this chapter, I have curated advice from some of my peers. See below:

David Yun

Congratulations on graduating from law school; this is a momentous achievement that warrants celebration. Graduation, however, serves only as one third of the Ontario lawyer licensing process: the next two steps involve completing the articling process and passing the bar examinations. This segment will centre around the latter.

My recollection is that the LSO study materials include almost 2000 pages of content. You are not expected to memorize every word. In fact, attempting to memorize every word is a counter-productive exercise unless you have a photographic memory. **There are no shortcuts.** You will have to read every word on every page at least once in order to retain the content.

The Ontario bar examination is not a memory test. It is not a knowledge test. I would say that it is a timed test of preparation and familiarity with ones' study materials. In this sense, it is an appropriate gauge of suitability for legal practice. The following tips are tailored with this characterization of the examination in mind.

You need to be honest with yourself. If you have discipline, had good study habits and were a diligent student in law school, these tips will seem like common sense. Already, you have a baseline for success. You should be fine. If, however, you are like me and lacked the study habits and relied on an above average memory and summary surfed your way through law school, you will need to introspectively think about your strengths and weaknesses. I decided that I needed to rely on my friends to hold me accountable and keep my figurative legs churning forward.

Assuming that you have already secured an articling position or have enrolled for the LPP, this examination represents the final obstacle prior to becoming a lawyer. Undoubtedly, this has required tremendous self-sacrifice and dedication. You are almost there, it will require dedication but you can do this.

My last tip is that it does not help to be frugal with this examination. As stated above, this is the last obstacle to be hurdled prior to your call to the bar. You want to make sure that you are well prepared. Spend where it is necessary (practice questions, durable binding, durable biners) and save where you can (bar exam prep courses and name brand highlighters)

Preparation

Contrary to what you may have heard, the LSO provides ample time to celebrate your graduation and have study breaks while studying for the bar. You should be prepared to ‘block off’ three months of your life and dedicate approximately eight to ten hours daily six days a week to studying. I am religious. If the Lord can rest on the seventh day after creating the Earth, you can afford to rest on the seventh day when preparing for the bar exams. Your brain will need it, both psychologically and physiologically. Schedule in a rest day on the weekend.

The LSO does not provide candidates with much guidance. Accordingly, success will involve self-discipline. I hope that you have built dedicated study habits throughout your law school career. It is my understanding that this publication will include study guides and materials. I will arrange for a study schedule to be included within this package.

You do not have to follow this schedule to the letter but it is recommended that you form a study group, create a study schedule together and adhere to this schedule. If you know that you lack personal discipline, rely on your study group for accountability. If there is one tip that you take away from reading this chapter, I hope it is: **DO NOT FALL BEHIND**. Refer to the study schedule included in this package. You will notice that the schedule calls for a daily average of 80 pages. Do not underestimate this number.

You will notice that the study schedule calls for completing your read through of both the solicitor and barrister materials prior to sitting for your first examination. There is a reason for this. Some of your classmates may have received advice along the lines of “there is enough time between exams to read through the solicitor’s materials because the barrister’s exam is first”. If you are anything like me, there is an incredible demotivating factor that kicks in after having written the first exam. The solicitor’s material is both longer and more challenging. You will not be able to rest and complete your read throughs in those two weeks.

“I know how to read, 80 pages is no big deal”

Wrong. You cannot treat the bar prep materials like you treated your property law textbook in 1L. There are no summaries. There are no free study aids. The “pay for play” bar examination prep courses are a tremendous waste of money. These sessions amount to meaningless talk therapy and adherence to a schedule. If you have been able to pass your law school examinations without paid assistance, you should be able to write and pass the Ontario bar examinations without paid assistance. If you paid for help during law school, this guide is not for you.

If your goal is 80 per day and you complete 60 per day for a week, you’ve already added an additional day + twenty pages of reading to your schedule to the end of your schedule. Be disciplined, power through.

Some may tell you that you can be well prepared for the examinations after having read through the materials once. Ignore this advice. You should be prepared to complete two full read throughs. I stacked my read throughs, meaning that I completed two read throughs of each page when going through the daily schedule. The first read was for completing highlights and familiarizing myself with the material. This was faster than the second read through, which was more meticulous and thorough.

Colour Coding and Highlighting

As stated, this exam tests test takers’ familiarity with their prep materials. The goal of highlighting is twofold: (1) memory retention and (2) efficient information location. If you can efficiently locate the answer to a given question by referring to your notes, table of contents, index, or memory, the colour coding system will save valuable seconds by directing your eyes to the location on the page with the answers.

Here is a suggested colour coding system that I used to great success:
Yellow for the general rule, general concept or key word

- Pink for exceptions and circling with blue pen the word IF for
- Blue for anything related to time such as deadlines, time periods, limitation periods or anything that might give an answer to “how long/when”
- Orange for anything related to jurisdictional issues or court rules
- Blue pen underline for cases (helpful for crim)

Do not waste your money on name brand highlighters. You will likely run through dozens. I found that the Dollarama highlighters were just as effective as the name brand highlighters. That being said, if you don't like the smell of plastic that greets you as you walk into Dollarama, or you need ergonomic highlighters, suit yourself, it's your bar exam.

Professional responsibility appears on both exams. Only highlight one section, then do a high fidelity scan of your study materials and reprint these materials to save valuable time on highlighting. **This does not mean skip the second read through.** The LSO deems Professional Responsibility important enough to appear on both exams and spends a considerable amount of questions mixing in PR questions. Be familiar with this section.

Practice Exams

Within your study group, create a plan to purchase practice exams. Most practice exams allow for multiple users to attempt a given practice exam. The questions are the same. Save your money and group purchase.

With these savings, I recommend that you purchase practice exams from numerous sources as some are far too easy and instill a false sense of confidence whereas others are incredibly difficult and are discouraging.

Once you complete a practice exam, **make sure** that you review every answer. It is not enough to review the incorrect answers. Perhaps there were questions that you guessed and got correct, these should be reviewed.

Indexes

When purchasing your practice exams, some sites will include indices. That's great, but I don't recommend using them. Each year, the University of Toronto has a group that creates indices and releases them for free to every candidate. This can be easily found on Facebook. Use these indices. Check them to make sure that there are no mistakes. If you find a mistake, be a team player and alert the UofT Law team.

Preparing Materials

Purchase different coloured binders for every section and/or note the section on the spine, front and back with Sharpie. Make sure you purchase

binders with plastic sleeves on the front. You do not want to waste time in exam conditions looking for your materials. By the time you write the exam, you should be well acquainted with your materials. They should look like they've been used.

Purchase sticky tabs and tab your index alphabetically. Tab your study materials by page number. I recommend tabbing every 25 pages. Create a sheet in Microsoft Word that lists out the section, section title, and page number in bold. Stick this sheet into the front sleeve of your binder. If your binder does not have plastic sleeves, you did not adhere to the advice in this manual. That's fine, staple or tape your sheet to the front. You want to be able to, at a glance, quickly find your materials.

Two timer sheets will be included with this publication. One that shows how much time is remaining. The other corresponds to question number and shows what time should be on the screen when you reach that question.

The Examination

YOU MUST REVIEW THE INSTRUCTIONS ON THE LSO WEBSITE. The LSO has very detailed and strict rules as to what can or cannot be brought into the examination room and which containers are permissible. From time to time, the LSO changes these instructions. Do your due diligence.

Bring lots of snacks, again adhering to what is a permissible snack on the LSO website. Anything that makes a noise is not allowed. I unwrapped Starbursts and brought them in a clear Ziploc bag.

When attacking a question, if you immediately know the answer based on memory? Excellent, you prepared well. Select that answer. Do not spend more than thirty seconds validating your answer.

The breakdown is something like 1 minute 45 seconds per question. This does not seem like a lot of time but if you have prepared, many of the questions will be self-evident on the first read through.

Here is a recommended attack plan with rough time estimates:

1. **15 seconds:** reading the question carefully
2. **60 seconds:** using your index and materials to find the answer
3. **20 seconds:** internal debate on what is the correct answer
4. **5 seconds:** bubble in your answer, do not save it for the end

If you still don't have an answer with five seconds remaining, guess and move on, come back to it at the end if you have time.

Bubble in your answers as you go. Every year, there is one candidate who runs out of time at the end and has to submit an empty Scantron. Usually, they are in hysterics and are very upset. I empathize to a point. Do not be this person and bubble as you go.

This is not a particularly difficult exam based on subject matter but if you underestimate it, it is very easy to fail. You may be told that failing is ok, you can always write it again. This is true but do you want to rewrite? That's what I thought. Take the time to prepare diligently and test day will be manageable.

Good luck.

Jaskaran Basuita

1. The exam does not test what you can remember about the materials, but it tests how fast you can find the answer. As such you should focus your efforts less on "memorizing" or even "understanding" and more on keeping a roadmap of where certain concepts are in the materials, so you know where to locate them. Relatedly, the time pressure is real so the faster you can track down an answer the better off you will be.
2. Be intentional with highlighting and comments in the margin. The purpose of both these things should be to assist you in quickly identifying a subject matter once you've flipped to the correct page. If everything is highlighted or if you have comments that are so long that they are paragraphs themselves, this is not likely to be helpful.

3. Try out what works for you. Some will find indexes helpful while others will use the table of contents. Give yourself ample time to try doing practice tests with both so you can figure out what works best for you.
4. Be prepared to do analytical thinking on the exam. One of my biggest takeaways from my bar exam was that it included more analytical questions than expected. By this I mean that questions you might come across on practice tests such as “what is the service deadline for a statement of defence” were virtually nonexistent. They were more nuanced than this and as such, I strongly recommend reading the questions closely, so you know exactly what is being asked.
5. If tax is not your strong suit, you can afford to spend less time on it as the exam itself is not tax heavy.
6. Practice tests are your best friend. The more you practice the more familiar you will become with your index/table of contents/the materials themselves. Practice tests will be the biggest assist in getting better at the bar exam.
7. Prepare a time sheet for exam day that tells you how you should allocate your time per question. Time is everything and the last thing you want to do is drain a bunch of time on answering one question because you “don’t want to accept defeat” - law students and lawyers are stubborn so this is something you might have to practice...if the answer doesn’t come to you within the allocated time, skip it and move on.

Jessica Eruchalu

1. Reading the summaries before diving into the original material to give yourself context.
2. Diving into the bar material and connecting the large concepts discussed in the summaries using the TOC or noting them on the pages to “magnify” the important concepts.
3. Having clear strategies for finding timelines and rule references (for barrister materials).

Sandeep Patel

1. If you decide to use the detailed table of contents for your exam, annotating the table of contents to include notes identifying specific concepts could be helpful. For example, for the real estate section on the solicitor exam, there was a significant amount of information on individual's access/control rights to bodies of water in the cottage section of the real estate book. Noting something like "water" next to the cottage could help associate concepts with chapters.
2. For the solicitor exam, create a formula page on a separate piece of paper that includes formulas of calculations that have regularly appeared on past exams. This could help save a lot of searching time on exam day.
3. Not all students will have enough time leading up to the exams to do this. However, if you do have some time, reviewing each book at a high level alongside the detailed table of contents could help with understanding where information is located and which subjects are covered.
4. You should become comfortable with both the table of contents and the indices, but place greater emphasis on understanding the detailed table of contents. You should rely more heavily on the detailed table of contents during the exam. Use the index only as a last resort or in situations where you are confident that a particular word associated with the question would be included in the index.

Matthew Himmel

1. Buy or create a good index. Majority of the test will be flipping through it to find the right page. It's probably the most important item you'll have with you.
2. A "good" index is all relative. All that matters is you know where and how to find the topic as efficiently as possible. The bar is more a test of time than knowledge
3. Do as many practice tests as possible. The bar material is dense, you will never learn and understand it all. It's more important to know how the test operates and where and how to find everything.

4. Do a few practice tests freely/un-timed just to get the feel of it. Then focus on timed tests.
5. Relax. The pass rate is high. Majority of those that fail are stupid or kids that got their law degrees in other countries. The pass rate for students from Canadian laws school is very high so the odds are in your favour

Ankit Sareen

1. Don't be anxious. It's just an exam. Being calm will allow you to think clearly and rationalize your thoughts better;
2. Try to read and understand the materials without jumping into practice exams;
3. Get a good study group and create a cheat sheet, especially when dealing with planning act matters as it would allow you to understand it better;
4. Be strategic. You don't need to know everything. You just need to know enough to be able to pass. So it's okay if you skip a question or two. And if you can't get through all the material. Focus on bigger topics on the bar exam rather than being so focused trying to understand nuanced items that you may never encounter in your practice.

Arshad Auckbarallee

Preparing, studying, and writing the bar exam is a timely and long process. Hopefully, the following tips will assist in making it more manageable.

1. Time management: it is crucial to develop a timeline that you are able to follow when studying. As there is a large amount of material to get through, set realistic page goals and adjust accordingly. As I was studying for 8–10 hours a day, I found that 40-60 pages was a manageable expectation of what to study. Some days I was able to hit my goal, other days I was able to surpass it, and, as expected, there were days when I didn't come close to hitting it. That's okay - at least having a timeframe will allow you to make the necessary adjustments.

2. Detailed Table of Contents: as you read the material, have the Detailed Table of Contents (“DTC”) nearby, and follow the chapters as if they are a flowing narrative. Read the material like a ‘story’, as it’ll make understanding the connections between sections clearer. At first, the information may fly right over your head, but the DTC will assist when you’re reviewing and/or re-reading.
3. DTC vs Index: this is my opinion - in sum, my advice is to use the DTC, but to have the index there as a back up. The bar exam was much more application based than the practice tests. As such, the DTC helped frame concepts in a way that allowed me to identify where the answer could be in the materials based on what I thought the essence of the question was. Having a table of contents is a great back up, which I definitely used a few times on the exam.
4. Review: make sure you have time set aside for reviewing the materials before the practice tests. Since you’ll be reading a large amount of information, the review will help you remember concepts that you may have read earlier on in your studies. Practice tests, along with the review of materials, is a great way of ensuring you’re on top of the content after having read it.
5. Difficult sections: it is normal to come across sections of the material that may be difficult for you. Don’t waste too much time reading the same thing a hundred times. Make a note of it and move on, and then come back to it when you review. Don’t worry - there are many chapters (or maybe even entire sections) that may seem foreign and difficult to you. This is NORMAL and expected. As you’ve given yourself time to review, you’ll be okay.
6. Marathon - not a race: sustain yourself. Don’t drain yourself. You’ll need to push through these 2-3 months. Do not procrastinate. Buckle down for this short period of time and focus. Ensure that you’re taking breaks and says off (I would take the weekends off).

Jaskaran Grewal

The bar exam process seems far more daunting and overwhelming before you dive into it. It’s stressful hearing about the exam, whether it’s from other people, prep classes or zoom panels, before you’ve begun to unpack and engage with the materials yourself. Start to familiarize yourself with the process early (this book is a great example) - you’ll draw more value from the insights

that will be shared as you get closer to your exam dates. Also, when the anxiety inevitably hits, remember it's not just you, everyone's feeling it.

Do the readings. Don't expect to retain everything (or much at all really), but also don't underestimate the value of the peace of mind and confidence that comes from knowing you've at least seen the material once. Skipping readings can cause a lot of anxiety that creeps up on you when you pass the point of no return (not having enough time to read anymore). Being confident in yourself also means you'll manage your stress and time better during the exam.

Focus on yourself not other people. You should know what works and what doesn't work for you by now with respect to studying and test taking habits. Be open to trying new strategies but don't rock the boat if those methods don't align with how you work. It's easy to get lost in the "right" way to prepare for the exam and you might be too late into your prep before you realize something isn't working. Consequently, test your comprehension early and often. Save actual practice exams for last - you'll get the most value out of them by simulating a real exam.

NEED MORE GUIDANCE

The aim of this book and the No-Nonsense series is to provide mentorship, but ultimately, it is you who has seek it. It's been three years since I released the No Nonsense Guide To Getting Into Law School. I still get LinkedIn messages from prospective law students, and I am always happy to help. Should you have any further questions, do not hesitate to to contact me VIA email at harmanbath.law@gmail.com, or on [LinkedIn](#).

Best of luck!