

Long odds, but I passed the February 2018 California Bar.

I am 63 years old.

I don't type really fast, but when mild arthritis began to affect my hands, writing more than a few hours was not going to be possible.

Older eyes and growing cataracts turns reading under the high fluorescent lights of the convention center into a dance of shadows and halos on the page.

My law prep was unaccredited distance learning.

I failed the Bar the first time.

The local attorney that I asked to proctor my law school finals berated me for not taking a Big Box Bar Prep course. "Bar Prep is the *only* way that you will learn what the Bar is all about. Your essays aren't...well, I don't know what to say, and then your school isn't...Your chances of passing the Bar are very, very low. Just how many times do you plan on taking this?"

As many as it takes.

I passed the California Bar on the second attempt, and I do feel vindicated, given the challenges and the 27% pass rate.

Brian's emails have been a help to me, and now it is my turn to share with aspiring applicants some strategies to take on this monster, that is the California Bar:

ATTITUDE

Accept that the California Bar is a marathon run at full speed. It will be uncomfortable physically and mentally. It is an exclusionary test. If you get punched down, get back up. The Bar doesn't care. You must care for yourself.

SUPPORT

Only communicate that you are studying for the Bar with those that actually will support you 100%. No one who has not studied for the Bar understands the huge soul eating challenge this is. Only my immediate family knew about my law studies. After I failed the first time, I did not tell my law school attorney proctor (supra) I was studying for the Bar again (she was real surprised to learn that I

passed). I told others that I had an “time sensitive project” that I was working on to excuse my unavailability.

You do not want the negative energy tendrils of doubt to creep in and erode your confidence. There will be those who are jealous of you potentially succeeding and sabotage your efforts “C’mon, just take the day off, you are working too hard... Oh, isn’t this the cutest puppy? You need a pet to distract you from your worrying..”, and others who genuinely intend well: “Aw, don’t worry, you’ll do fine. You’re smart.” Either way, not helpful, and not necessary, if you keep it a secret. As an attorney, you have a duty of confidentiality to your client. Start practicing it now, on your Bar client, you.

ENLIST

Get people who support you, and whom your study schedule is impacting, to quiz you on rules, look at your essays, give you feedback. If they have studied law, great. If they haven’t studied law, even better, because they will ask you questions that force you to explain the law, and they will be in absolute awe at the scope and detail of all the law that needs to be memorized, which is a desperately needed affirmation for the Bar applicant.

TYPE

Type your exam.

Can’t type? Type slow? When I started typing, I could only type 15 words per minute. I just kept plugging away, and increased my typing speed to 45 words per minute. That is not really fast, so I learned to do my outline directly on the the computer, skipping the paper outline entirely, and then filled it in to flesh out an essay. Type all the issues in caps, then go back and type the rule under each issue. Then analyze each issue, applying the rule, and put a quick conclusion. Mechanical.

ROUTINE

Study daily, the amount that works for you, at the time that works for you. Turn off the phone. You are unavailable during study time.

I was not going to do the insane 10-12 hour study day. I was going to study an average of 3 hours a day, to maintain some balance in my life. That meant spreading studies over a longer period. So, I skipped one Bar administration after my first failure, and studied each day, even Thanksgiving and Christmas. Adds up to a lot of hours.

MBE

Get Finz Strategies and Tactics, the fat book with the 1200+ questions. Finz also has 2 shorter books. Buy all 3.

AdaptiBar

Do the whole bank. Then do it again.

I would also highly recommend [Emanuel's Strategies & Tactics Volume 1 \(6th edition\)](#), which comes with real, previously tested questions and a primer for each subject.

When going through the MBEs initially, both with Finz and AdaptiBar, stop after each question, review the answer thoroughly before going on to the next question. Understand, before working up to speed tests. I took screen shots of the challenging AdaptiBar answers, and made a file of them which I used as a warm up review the morning of the MBE, when I couldn't sleep in the overpriced Oakland Marriott.

ESSAYS

BarEssays

Offer Codes

- AdaptiBar \$30 off: **MTYLT** (not needed for re-enrollment, [special pricing](#) available from AdaptiBar for past users)
- BarEssays \$25 off: **MTYLT25**

What a great site. All kinds of resources. Once you start seeing differences between the passing essays and those not passing, leave those aside and take advantage of the model answers. To maximize your time, as it gets closer to the Bar date, "cook" the essays: Read the hypo, then spend 20 minutes typing out the issues, and rule for each issue, and what you can for analysis. Stop and compare your embryo to the model answer. If you can't recall the rules for the issues, go to your outlines or rule statements and drill those.

I did every single question going back to 2003. Yes, it is a lot. This test requires that kind of effort.

MEMORY

Brain seems at its limit? It's not. There's more space that can be utilized.... this next bit of advice may seem weird/woo woo, but why not use every advantage?

Start to use your non dominant hand whenever possible (but not in a test environment). If you are right-handed, use your left hand to take notes, write grocery lists, work with tools, cut vegetables (be careful). It will be frustrating to feel clumsy and write like a first grader, but keep at it. What will happen is an interesting cognitive shift, and new "shelf space" to store all that law will

become available in the brain. After 3 months of using my non dominant hand, my memory became annoyingly outstanding. Caveat: an unfortunate byproduct of this exercise is the resurgence of old suppressed memories. You will remember the Civ Pro minutia, but have to face those embarrassing/sad/tragic memories in dreams or while awake. Acupuncture helps attenuate the negative effects.

NEVER GIVE UP

There will be many failures on the path to success. Persevere. Never give up. Actively recall those experiences where something looked hard or unachievable, but you tried different strategies or took a different path to success. Move forward. You have the strength in you. And listen to Brian- he has great ideas. Good luck.

Want to make this your last time like Maureen did?

Visit [Make This Your Last Time](#) for actionable, candid, and approachable strategies and resources from the perspective of a second-time passer of the California bar.

Do your best!
Brian