



MSLAW Academic Support

Checklist: What Will You Need for the Bar?

YOU NEED to Know the Basics of Taking the Exam:

- ✓ **When is the test?** Typically, the bar exam is offered twice per year and held during the last week of February and July.
- ✓ **What fees are involved?** Fees for the test vary by jurisdiction. In 2011, it cost \$815 to take the Massachusetts Bar Exam; \$600 to take the Connecticut Bar Exam; \$450 to take the Maine Bar Exam (\$500 for those already admitted in another jurisdiction for at least one year); and \$275 to take the New Hampshire Bar Exam, along with an additional \$275 character and fitness investigation fee.
- ✓ **Where is the test?** In Massachusetts, you can opt to take the test in Boston or in Springfield.
- ✓ **What do you need to have in place before you can take the exam?** In Massachusetts, you need to have: passed the Multistate Professional Responsibility Exam (MPRE) with a score of 85 or above; completed your Juris Doctor degree; completed an application and filed it on time (see detailed component requirements below); and undergone a character and fitness evaluation (see below for more information).
- ✓ **Where can you find more information about each jurisdiction's specific exam?** The National Conference of Bar Examiners (NCBE) has a list of state bar admission offices on its website at <http://www.ncbex.org/bar-admissions/offices/>
- ✓ **Where can you find state-by-state statistics on bar admissions?**
Try <http://www.ncbex.org/bar-admissions/stats/>

YOU NEED to Know How to Apply for the Test:

- ✓ **What information will you need to provide?** The NCBE has a complete list of bar admissions requirements on its website, in its Comprehensive Guide to Bar Admissions Requirements at <http://www.ncbex.org/comprehensive-guide-to-bar-admissions/> The Massachusetts requirements are as follows:
 - A Petition Cover Sheet
 - A Petition for Admission (including your signature and the signature of a recommending attorney)
 - A completed application, including the form Statement to the Board of Bar Examiners requiring your original signature (Note: the application is quite lengthy!)
 - An Authorization Form requiring your signature

- A Law School Certificate form
- Your MPRE Score Report
- Two letters of recommendation
- Your filing fee
- If you're licensed to practice law, a Certificate of Admission and Good Standing from each jurisdiction in which you are licensed
- If you plan to use a laptop to take the essay portion of the exam, you will need to fill out additional documents and may need to pay additional fees

As you can probably guess, you'll need to leave yourself ample time to gather the required documents and fill out and file your bar admission application. Note that the deadline for applying may be as soon as three months before the exam. Check on deadlines early and file your application on time! Also, begin gathering the required documents as early as you can to avoid having to scramble around for them as you get close to the deadline.

- ✓ **What questions can you anticipate on the application?** Depending on the jurisdiction, the Bar Examiners may ask you about any or all of the following (sometimes going back as far as your 18th birthday):
 - Your educational/academic background and history
 - Your employment background and history
 - Your places of residence
 - Any arrests, convictions, and/or criminal conduct
 - Your financial history
- ✓ **What is a character and fitness exam?** Bar examiners consider various factors in assessing a student's character and fitness for the practice of law. Each state is different in the way it approaches character and fitness questions and the information it elicits from applicants, but the following factors are good examples of some of the types of conduct that will be considered in reviewing an application to sit for the bar exam:
 - unlawful conduct;
 - academic misconduct;
 - making of false statements, including omissions;
 - misconduct in employment;
 - acts involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit or misrepresentation;
 - abuse of legal process;
 - neglect of financial responsibilities;
 - neglect of professional obligations;
 - violation of an order of a court;
 - evidence of mental or emotional instability;
 - evidence of drug or alcohol dependency;
 - denial of admission to the bar in another jurisdiction on character and fitness grounds;
 - disciplinary action by a lawyer disciplinary agency or other professional disciplinary agency of any jurisdiction.¹

¹ As published in the Code of Recommended Standards for Bar Examiners, a publication adopted by the American Bar Association, the National Conference of Bar Examiners, and the Association of American Law Schools, Section 13: Relevant Conduct.

- ✓ **Where can you find applications for the test?**
 - In Massachusetts, try: <http://www.sjccountyclerk.com/admissionbyexam.html>.
 - In Connecticut, see: <http://www.jud.ct.gov/cbec/>
 - In New Hampshire, see: <http://www.courts.state.nh.us/nhbar/index.htm>
 - In Maine, see: <http://www.mainebarexaminers.org/>
 - For all other states: check the NCBE link above for a link to the state bar examiners' official websites.
- ✓ Where can you find out if you're eligible to sit for the bar exam in a particular jurisdiction? MSLAW has a listing of jurisdictions in which graduates are eligible to take the bar exam on its website at http://mslaw.edu/About_Accreditation.htm. You should note, however, that the list is not exhaustive and that jurisdictional rules can change; always consult with the state(s) in which you plan to take the exam before you apply.

YOU NEED to Know the Format of the Exam and the Substantive Topics it Tests:

- ✓ **How many multiple choice questions will be on the test?** Massachusetts, like most other states with just a couple of exceptions, administers the Multistate Bar Exam on the first day of the test. The MBE consists of 200 multiple choice questions that must be answered in six hours, with four answer choices provided for each question.
- ✓ **What subjects are tested on the multiple choice portion?** The MBE tests six subjects: Contracts, Torts, Criminal Law/Criminal Procedure, Constitutional Law, Property, and Evidence.
- ✓ **What is the format of the essay exam?** Each state administers its own essay exam, typically on the second day of testing (first day in Maine and Connecticut, however, with the MBE administered on the second day). Essay exams can vary in terms of format and content tested. In Massachusetts, you're asked to answer ten essay questions: five essays in the morning (to be answered in three hours) and five in the afternoon (again, to be answered in three hours.) Connecticut tests twelve essay questions on the second day. Many jurisdictions develop their own questions, while many others use the Multistate Essay Exam questions developed by the NCBE. You can find more information about the MEE at <http://www.ncbex.org/multistate-tests/mee/>.
- ✓ **What subjects are tested on the essay exam?** Each state's tested topics may differ. In Massachusetts, the essays cover the following subjects:
 - Agency
 - Federal Rules of Civil Procedure
 - Business Organizations
 - Mass. Rules of Civil Procedure
 - Constitutional Law
 - Professional Responsibility
 - Contracts
 - Real Property (inc. Mortgages)
 - Criminal Law
 - Torts
 - Descent & Distribution of Estates
 - Trusts

- Domestic Relations
 - Unfair or Deceptive Practices (G.L. c. 93A)
 - Evidence (including Federal Rules)
 - Uniform Commercial Code (Articles 1-9)
 - Federal Jurisdiction
 - Wills²
- ✓ **Are there any other components to the bar that some states have in place?** Yes. Some jurisdictions use a practical exam, such as the Multistate Practice Exam (MPT), or some combination of an essay exam and a practice exam. New Hampshire, for example, administers two 90-minute MPT questions on the second morning of the test, along with six essay questions that afternoon (consisting of six Multistate Essay Exam (MEE) questions, prepared by the NCBE; more information at <http://www.ncbex.org/multistate-tests/mee/>). You should always check the specific requirements of the jurisdiction(s) in which you plan to take the bar ahead of time.

YOU NEED to Know What Resources You'll Use in Preparing for the Exam:

- ✓ **What materials are offered by the NCBE?**
 - The NCBE's Multistate Bar Exam page offers subject matter outlines, an information booklet, study aids, and answers to frequently asked questions and "myths." See <http://www.ncbex.org/multistate-tests/mbe/>
 - The NCBE sells practice MBE exams on its website.
 - The NCBE's MPRE page offers a description of the MPRE, a listing of key words and phrases, an information booklet, and a practice exam. See <http://www.ncbex.org/multistate-tests/mpre/>
- ✓ **What materials are offered by state bar examiners?** Massachusetts releases previously tested essay questions on its website at <http://www.mass.gov/bbe/essayquestions.htm>. Connecticut does the same at <http://www.jud.ct.gov/cbec/questions.htm>; in addition, Connecticut makes available sample answers, which you may order at \$25 per set.
- ✓ **What types of commercial bar prep courses are available?** There are many, so choose your study plans carefully! Commercial bar preparation services include live lecture courses, online courses, review outlines, practice multiple choice and essay questions, flash cards, audio lectures, and more.

YOU NEED to Have an Organized Study Plan:

Developing a comprehensive and organized study plan and study schedule is completely up to you and should be customized according to your own needs, goals, circumstances, and preferences. Among other questions, you should consider the following:

- ✓ **How much time do you realistically need to spend on bar prep/bar study?**
- ✓ **When should you start studying?**
- ✓ **What subjects will you need to review in order to prepare?**

² <http://www.sjccountyclerk.com/examinfosubjects.htm>

- ✓ **What specific review materials will you use to best fit your study style?**
- ✓ **What substantive areas need your attention more so than others?**
- ✓ **How will you create a comprehensive study plan and schedule?**
- ✓ **What else can you do to prepare?**

YOU NEED to Plan for the Day of the Exam:

- ✓ **What will you bring with you?** Plan the essentials that you need to have: pens, for example; identification; lunch or money for lunch; earplugs; keys; wallet; medications. Also plan for what you're NOT allowed to have with you at the exam site! In Massachusetts, for example, the Examiners strictly prohibit headphones, personal electronic devices of any kind, highlighters, and scrap paper. See a full list of security instructions at <http://www.mass.gov/bbe/security.htm>
- ✓ **What arrangements or accommodations will you need to make beforehand?** Think of some of the practical considerations that you'll need to have in place on the day of the exam, such as your transportation, lodging, food, and arrangements for your other responsibilities in your professional and personal life. Make those arrangements as early as possible so that your day flows as smoothly as possible when it's time to take the biggest test of your life.

YOU NEED to Plan for After the Results:

- ✓ **When do you find out your results?** According to the Massachusetts Board of Bar Examiners, "The results are released approximately three months after the examination is taken. The results from the February exam are generally released in mid-May. The results from the July exam are released in mid-November."³
- ✓ **What happens if you pass the bar?**
 - In Massachusetts, after bar exam results are released, the names of bar passers are publicly posted.
 - After the public posting period expires and the Board of Bar Examiners recommends your admission, you must be admitted to the Bar, either through formal admission or alternate admission procedures. You **MUST** be admitted to the Bar in order to practice law—note that you cannot call yourself an attorney or convey that you are an attorney until after you've been formally admitted.
 - Once you are admitted to the Bar, you must register within 90 days with the Board of Bar Overseers. You'll receive a BBO registration number, along with annual invoices for your bar registration fees.
- ✓ **What happens if you fail the exam?**
 - In many states, you may retake the bar exam as many times as necessary. Before you take the test, you should check with the jurisdiction's bar examiners to make sure this is the case.
 - If you fail the exam, you'll receive an itemized account of your scores in each MBE subject and on each essay question.

³ <http://www.sjccountyclerk.com/faqbarreapp.html>

- You should first gauge whether your scores indicate a deficiency on either the MBE or the essays, so that you can best determine what you need to practice extensively.
- You should then gauge whether your scores indicate a deficiency in any particular subject area(s), so that you can best determine where you need to focus and re-focus your studies.
- If possible, you should also request a copy of your essay answers (be mindful of the deadline for doing so and send in your request with the appropriate fees,) and you should consult the MSLAW Academic Support Office for help with bar essay writing.
- Make a comprehensive study plan and study schedule for retaking the test; give yourself ample time to prepare; and seek out help, resources and guidance when you begin to study.

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