

The Silver Bullet - ACTIVE STUDY FOR THE TEST versus Passive Study for the Courses Tested

Dear NWCU Student/Graduate,

I agree with bar examination experts who assert that the absolute best way to study for the bar exam is to read and practice with Multiple-Choice, Essay and Performance Questions and Model Answers. In my opinion, there is no better way to success on the bar examination, PERIOD!!!

There is no 'Silver Bullet' for passing the California Bar Examination. Yet, there is something that comes very close. It involves the reality that there is a direct relationship between the type, quality and quantity of study done by you and the chance of your success on the exam.

Those who study hour after hour and day after day in the many weeks and months before the exam have a great chance of passing it. Those who do not study that way and instead try to 'wing' the exam without diligent and very intensive study have little, if any, chance of passing it.

The harder, longer and smarter you work, the better will be your chance of passing. In that regard, I submit that the ACTIVE learning approach is the best. It involves reading actual exam questions and answers and the taking of practice exams, giving you the opportunity to discern what you know from what you don't know. It is an especially useful method when you are provided with information that you need to make necessary additions and corrections to your knowledge.

Many students engage only in "passive study" for the courses tested on the examination. They do so by simply reading and highlighting written law study materials or by watching course videos and listening to law review recordings, thinking that this approach alone will help them pass. While the passive study method of preparation is relatively easy, since you just sit and read, or watch, or listen, it takes a lot of time and, unfortunately, does not help you quickly reach the level of mastery that you need for the bar exam. Passive study is useful and better than not studying at all, but does not work well when it comes to quick learning and the swift making of modifications to knowledge already obtained.

Therefore, my advice is that you do much more ACTIVE studying than passive studying, as you prepare for the bar examination. It is fine to divide your work somewhat between active study tasks and passive study tasks, but you should spend much more time in ACTIVE study than passive study.

Reading practice multiple choice questions and answers is a very good idea. It is a wonderful way to ACTIVELY learn important nuances in the law that will help you on both the multi-choice and essay portions of the bar examination. Going over hundreds and hundreds, to a thousand and more of them can really do wonders if you, indeed, are

ACTIVELY involved selecting answers and then ACTIVELY compare your answers to the ones that are identified as correct.

For the essay and performance portions of the examination I highly recommend that you ACTIVELY read a very large number of past bar questions and selected answers to those questions. Eventually, select certain questions and then, in self-timed sessions, ACTIVELY write answers to them and later compare your answers to actual answers written by students taking the bar examination.

Incidentally, be sure that you answer all essay questions with analysis and argument because that will get you much higher scores than answers that provide nothing more than good definitions of key law terms and only simple, non-analytical references to, or quotations from, the facts of the questions. Good analysis and argument will get you many more points than good definitions. While knowing the definitions is crucial to being able to identify issues on the bar examination, it is analysis and argument that will drive up the points earned on the essay portion of the exam.

Here is the URL to the 'Jump Page' that I created for you to use for ACTIVE STUDY purposes as you prepare for the California Bar Examination:

http://www.nwculaw.edu/bar_preparation.html

My hope is that you will place a connection to the 'Jump Page' on the desktop of your computer so that you can go to it daily between now and the completion of your study for the bar examination. On it are links to material that you can use for an ACTIVE STUDY approach to passing. I am convinced that that type of study will help you pass the bar examination more than anything else. It is an excellent and rather enjoyable way to study.

Using the material that is available to you via the links on that page for focused study for **5 HOURS TO 10 HOURS A DAY** each and every day for the duration of your weeks and months of preparation will help you immensely.

Best wishes,

Michael Clancey, Dean

Northwestern California University