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HOW TO SELF-STUDY THE CALIFORNIA BAR EXAM

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JULY 2012 BAR EXAM

BarEssays.com

by MOTHER GOAT on JULY 6, 2011 · [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)

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July 4th has come and gone. This holiday seems to mark the spot in bar prep where you all of a sudden feel the full force of bar exam pressure bearing down on you. Before the 4th you feel as though it is still a little way off and you have time to get those loose ends wrapped up. July 5th, however, is a different world. You may be thinking that you have too much material to work through, too many things yet to accomplish, etc. Most people spend the last 7-10 days before the exam doing pure memorization. So that means you will want to make the absolute most of this next week or so.

If you are doing practice exams (as you should be), you may be interested to see what a good answer to your practice question looks like. Sure, you may have a Barbri "model" to look at, and you can even check out the released answer, but what would those essays REALLY score? If it seems like it'd be impossible to know what a good essay answer actually looks like, then [BarEssays.com](#) is for you my friend!

If you've never heard of [BarEssays.com](#) before, it is simply a website that has compiled graded CA essay and PT answers. Similar to my [Sample Essays & PTs](#) page, but way, way bigger. Gil Peles, who created and owns the site (and who is also a CA lawyer), has done a great job of collecting these essays and PTs over the years. It's really quite a brilliant business idea – there is an obvious need for this type of information among bar examinees, and he has done the work to compile it in one place for us all to enjoy.

What I Like About BarEssays.com:

1. There are A LOT of essays on the site – about 1,400.
2. There are essays for the last 80+ bar questions, so you are bound to have examples for every CA bar topic out there.
3. It only costs \$75. There are few bar resources available that provide this much value for such a reasonable price. You can't even buy your flashcards for that price, or even most bar exam books.
4. You get full access/use of the site until the bar exam. So if you sign up in March, you get until the end of July to use the site. If you sign up in August, you get until the end of February. That's tons of time to make the absolute most of the website.

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5. You can sell your old essays. If you have taken the CBX before, and kept your old essays/PTs, you might be able to sell them for \$60-\$75. In essence, you can “trade” your old exam for a free membership if they buy the essays from you. It is unclear how it is determined which essays they want to buy, and how much they will pay, but it is certainly worth a shot.
6. They have PTs!!! So many people think that the PTs are a crap-shoot. First of all, stop thinking that! Second, use this service to find out what the graders like to see on the PT.
7. There is a great search function which allows you to get the exact results you are looking for right away. You can search by: subject area, scores, exam year, exam month (Feb/July), and handwritten/typed exams. It makes it super-easy to filter through the hundreds of essays to get what you want right away.
8. For each essay/PT, you can look at: (1) the graded answer, (2) the question, and (3) the answers released by the CA Bar Examiners.
9. There are A LOT of high scoring answers – much more than I expected! For example, I just did a quick search for Community Property essays. There are 19 essays that scored 70 or higher (4 were an 80 or higher!). I was really impressed at how many good answers there are available.

Here’s a screen shot of the search function (and there are a few search results peeping in, too).

Year	Month	Format	Score	Subjects
2007	July	Typed	80.0	Community Property
2008	February	Typed	80.0	Community Property
2009	February	Handwritten	80.0	Community Property
2010	February	Handwritten	80.0	Community Property, Wills

What I Do NOT Like:

1. I personally do not like that there are low scoring essays/PTs. I know there are tons of people out there who want to see them, but I truly think they are not useful. Like I’ve mentioned before in previous [posts](#), I think that trying to learn how to write a good essay answer by looking at bad answers is a fool’s errand. I don’t know how to be any more clear than this. If you want to learn how to be wealthy, don’t spend your time with the beggar on the corner. It is the same principle with many things in life. Learn from those who are where you want to be and have done what you want to accomplish. So this might not really be a knock against [BarEssays.com](#) since it is really up to you how you use it. But this is the reason why I do not post any answers that received a score of less than 70 on my [Sample Essays & PTs](#) page.
2. I wish there was a way to choose which range of scores you want to see instead of using the drop-down menu. I know this is really picky and really not something to deter anyone from using this website, but it is a small bit of functionality that I personally would appreciate. The way it is set up, you can choose essays that score 57.5 and below, 60 to 62.5, and 65 and above. I think it would be nice to be able to choose only essays that scored from 75 and higher, for example (or whatever scores you want). But like I already said, this is pretty nit-picky, especially since the search results are ordered by score (highest to lowest), so it is really easy to find exact scores you are looking for.
3. I honestly can’t think of anything else that I don’t like. As you can tell from the

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[Practice, Practice, Practice](#)

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above points, my dislikes were really picky. I want to give a good pro/con list for you, but had a hard time with the cons. I suppose cost could be a con since it is one more thing to pay. But since there is nothing else around like [BarEssays.com](#), I think the price is actually really reasonable. With no competition, Gil could demand much more (and probably get it), but he doesn't. So I think the price is fair if you think seeing graded essays and PTs would help you on the exam.

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