

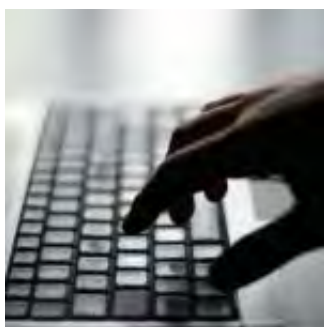
[Bar Exam Toolbox](#)

All the tools you need for bar exam success

- [Home](#)
- [About Us](#)
- [California Bar Exam Tutoring](#)
- [Tools for Bar Exam Success](#)
- [Law School Toolbox](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

June 5, 2012 By [Lee Burgess](#) [Leave a Comment](#)

Tools for Bar Exam Success: BarEssays.com



Today, I want to share with you a resource for those studying for the California bar exam, specifically. Last week, I was introduced to [BarEssays.com](#), which is an online essay question and performance exam/answer database for the California bar. BarEssays.com was nice enough to give me a login to check out its site and share with you how I think it may add value to your bar study.

The site is a large compilation of essay questions, performance exams, and real graded answers (including more than 1500 graded essays). How did BarEssays.com get all of those answers? By [buying real answers](#) from bar examinees (who got their questions back because they didn't pass the overall exam). There are answers at all levels on the website, which can be searched subject by subject, question by question, performance exam by performance exam to find examples to review. Both handwritten and typed essays/performance exams are included.

Let's say you purchase this product; what would you use it for?

Well, for practice! You can learn a lot from looking at both high- and low-scoring answers.

So let's talk a little about that:

- **Low-scoring answers:** First, please, please, please do not look at low-scoring answers to see **what you can get away with**. That really isn't the point! When I show my students low-scoring answers, I encourage them to identify the reasons for such a low score. Did the test-taker miss issues? Have inadequate analysis? Lack headers? It is great to use these answers to see how one can lose points—**so you don't make the same mistake!**

- **Mid-scoring answers:** I would say these are 65s. Now if most people get a 65, you might be thinking, “Yes! On my way to passing the bar.” But remember, statistically speaking, to pass most people need to *average* about a 65 on *all* the written portions. Therefore, you don’t want to look at a 65 as a “model” answer. You just want to look at it for its strengths and weaknesses. For example, I think most 65s are presented professionally, have headers, and do a pretty good job of issue spotting, but often they don’t have enough analysis. Check out some 65s—what do you think?
- **High-scoring answers:** I would say these are 70s and above. These are answers that you want to use for comparison. One of the messages I get from my students is that they are very frustrated by the sample answers provided by the bar because they are too perfect. They feel there is no way they could re-create that answer in an hour. But BarEssays.com allows you to compare your answers with real student answers that did get the scores you are looking for. So, can you try to re-create those answers (while still remaining critical of them and taking every opportunity to make them better)?

How is BarEssays.com different from the State Bar of California’s past exams page?

If you are studying for the California bar exam, you likely know that the state bar publishes all the essays, performance tests, and two student answers for each question. These can be found on the [bar website for free](#).

But anyone who has used this website knows that going through the exams to find a given question on a given subject can be, well, frustrating and time-consuming.

In the alternative, the search engine set up on BarEssays.com allows you to search by subject and year so you can easily pull up the exam question without hunting through tons of PDFs. This will definitely save you time. Also included are the released bar sample answers, so the website is pretty much a “one-stop shop” where you can access essays, performance tests, sample answers from the bar, *and* real student answers.

Another way in which it is different from the state bar website is that it includes scanned copies of handwritten answers. I don’t recommend that my students write their answers by hand. But if you do, you need to be well prepared in order to gather as many points as possible. Using the tips I listed above when reviewing answers, you can determine what works and what doesn’t with handwritten exams.

There is also a premium version of membership that allows you to see student essay exams with commentaries by a past bar grader. For some students that may be a useful option and help identify what is working and not working on a given answer.

Is there anything I should keep in mind while using this product?

One thing to remember about all student essays (whether from the state bar website or a service like BarEssays.com) they are not to be seen as “model” answers. Also, they likely have mistakes, as they were written under testing conditions. Always double-check the law and think critically as you review student answers.

Reviewing past answers is a great study technique—one that I think can benefit many students preparing for the bar exam. But never think that studying or reading sample answers can replace actual practice.

There is no substitute for practice. You are simply using this tool to help you *write the best answer you can write!* That is where you find exam success.

Thanks to BarEssays.com for offering fans of the [Bar Exam Toolbox a special on membership!](#) Email [us](#) to get the coupon code.

Have you used BarEssays.com? If so, please share your experiences in the comments below.

Want more useful bar exam advice? Sign up for our [free mailing list](#) now!

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About Lee Burgess

Lee Burgess, Esq. is the founder of [Amicus Tutoring, LLC](#), a company she started to help students find success in law school and on the California bar exam. She is also the co-founder of the [Law School Toolbox](#), a resource for law students that demystifies the law school experience. Lee is also an adjunct member of the faculty at the University of San Francisco School of Law and Golden Gate University School of Law, where she teaches classes on study skills, exam preparation, exam writing, and preparing for the bar exam. You can find Lee on Twitter at [@amicustutoring](#) and [@LawSchoolTools](#).

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