

Jessie Zaylía's Law (and Law School) Blog

Beyond the "whats" of law school and law practice more generally, here, the "hows" are explained, whether you need them during law school or many years thereafter.

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Review of BarEssays.com

BarEssays.com found out about by blog (somehow) and asked me to write a review because I mentioned the fact that I had used their services in one of my posts ([here](#)). I agreed to do so, and for the purposes of being upfront and honest, they have offered me some compensation. But just know that I would be happy to review their services even without the compensation because, frankly, I used it the last time that I took the bar, so I know a bit about the good, the bad, and the ugly of this site. I hope that all of you out there will find this review to be helpful.

WHAT THEY DO:

BarEssays.com is essentially a searchable database of actual, graded CBX (California Bar Exam) essays. This includes both typewritten and handwritten essays, and it covers many years of the CBX, both July and February bars.

THE GOOD:

I used BarEssays.com during the study period for the final time I took (and passed) the bar. It was a good experience to be able to read actual exams and try to figure out *why, oh why* they received the grades that they did.

There are some awesome features that this site offers, and they are as follows:

- You can search essays by:
 1. date,
 2. type of writing style (i.e., typewritten or handwritten essays),
 3. score, and
 4. legal topic (i.e., Con Law, Torts, PR, Corporations, etc.).
- They have an outline bank for all subjects.
- On the same page where you find the outlines, there are also checklists for each subject. These checklists consist of single-page outlines of all major issues within a topic. I personally used all of them.

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- It's only \$75. This is far less expensive than nearly all other CBX services available.

I find the sorting feature so great. It's easy and very user friendly. There's no guesswork in how to navigate this site in order to get the essays you need or want to look over. (Navigating for other information, however, is slightly less friendly as discussed below.)

I think that the best way to use BarEssays.com is to do so at two points in your bar studies: at the beginning and toward the end. When I first went on their site, I was just beginning what would be my final studying period for the CBX. Though it was easy to see the difference between a "55" and a "75" score, it was a lot more difficult comparing my own writing to the graded essays. I think that people who are re-taking the bar are too pissed off and possibly too jaded to be very objective about their own weaknesses; this was certainly my issue, so perhaps I'm projecting.

However, when I had completed over a month's worth of studying and practice-test taking, I was able to be far more objective. I would find exams for which BarEssays.com had both good and bad scores, go to the California Bar website (calbar.ca.gov), print out that exam, take it (timed), and then compare my essay to the highest and lowest scores that I could find on BarEssays.com. Now, THIS was helpful!

Now, BarEssays.com has a new feature, which shows certain essays that have been reviewed by prior bar exam graders. This requires a premium membership for an extra \$50. It's a good feature, especially for laptoppers (only typewritten essays are reviewed, and note that only some of them are reviewed). The file needs to be opened with Adobe, and you have to use a browser other than Chrome. Essentially, though, once you get a "review" file open, by mousing over comment bubbles, it's as though you get to see the reviewers' thoughts as they read the essay.

THE BAD:

As I mentioned before, one bad thing was within myself in that it was hard to understand at first precisely what I needed to do to reach the higher scores, especially near the beginning of my study period. However, once I went back to BarEssays.com toward the end of my studies, it seemed a lot clearer, and the grading made more sense to me.

As far as the premium membership is concerned, a significant portion of internet users choose Chrome as their go-to browser. It's not BarEssay.com's fault that the "review" files don't open properly in Chrome, but this is the case. The only place to find this information is by clicking the "Essay Search" tab and then the link toward the top of the page that says, "Search FAQ." It seems like an odd place to have this information; it seems like this information might be better places under one of the two FAQ tabs.

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About Me



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I am an attorney in California. I earned my JD from the University of San Diego School of Law and waited tables for ten years to put myself through school. I have published six scholarly articles on a range of topics and have presented research at nine conferences--including four national conferences and one international conference. At USD, I was the Chief Articles Editor for Vol. 1 of the San Diego Journal of Climate & Energy Law. Feel free to look me up on LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com/in/jessiezaylia>

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I also thought that finding a "review" file should have been another sorting factor, but it's not. Instead, after you sort for the type of essays you want, next to each essay, if it has been reviewed, there will be a review button next to the other buttons associated with those essays.

The only other bad thing is that there are no reviewed handwritten papers. I went through all of the exams myself; it's true. It seems that, by looking at the handwritten graded papers and comparing them with the typewritten papers, there is a difference as to the leniency with which the handwritten ones are graded. I would love to see at least one highly scored, handwritten essay and one correlating poorly scored, handwritten essay reviewed.

THE UGLY:

Ok, I'll be honest. The site isn't the world's most aesthetically pleasing one. But who cares?!?! It's an extremely helpful database, and at \$75 for all of the above, I would recommend it to anyone.

As for the premium membership, I would recommend it for laptoppers. It seems like it couldn't hurt hand-writers, but hand-writers may be disappointed with a premium membership since no handwritten essays are reviewed.

I hope that y'all have found this review to be helpful! :) Until next time...

Posted by [Jessie](#) at [8:03 PM](#)

Labels: [product/service reviews](#), [the California Bar Exam](#)

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