
How to Write a Bar Essay That Passes

The thing that changed my entire approach was learning that bar graders spend about 30 seconds to a minute and a half on each essay. Sometimes less. Once you internalize that, everything else follows.

Organize for a Speed Reader

The grader is not reading your essay carefully. They are scanning it. So you need to organize with proper headers and very clear IRAC. If your essay looks organized at a glance, you have already cleared a major hurdle. Your analysis section should be visibly longer than the other parts. When a grader scans the page, the shape of your essay matters. A thick analysis section under each issue signals that you did the work.

Rule Statements: Don't Stress

Students feel enormous pressure to write exact rules from memory. But there are so many rules tested that it is very unlikely you will remember them all. You can reverse engineer the rules from the facts. The facts in the prompt are telling you what the rule is about. When you do not know a rule, you do not stress about it. You write a rule statement that sounds mostly right, as long as you spot the right issues that trigger those rules.

Analysis: Use a Formula

I used a kind of formula in my analysis sections that forced me to tie specific facts to specific elements every time:

[Element] was satisfied because of [specific fact from the prompt].

Or: *Due to [specific fact], [element] was satisfied.*

Using these formulas forces you to connect facts to elements. Even if your reasoning is not 100% legally accurate, to a bar grader who is speed reading, you look like someone who can write analysis that passes. The more analysis you can show, the better your essay looks.

Conclusions: Add One More Fact

Instead of writing a bare conclusion like "Therefore, diversity jurisdiction was satisfied," append it with something. Anything:

"Diversity jurisdiction was satisfied because Joe was domiciled in State Y, Sally was domiciled in State B, and the amount in controversy was \$80,000."

That sort of conclusion just looks better as a last sentence. You are adding analysis to the conclusion. It takes five extra seconds and makes the grader see more substance on the page.

The Point

You effectively want your analysis section to look longer than the other sections of IRAC. The more analysis the grader sees, even if it is not perfectly accurate, the more your essay reads like a passing answer. Clear headers, reasonable rules, facts tied to elements, and conclusions that echo the analysis. Do that consistently across every issue.