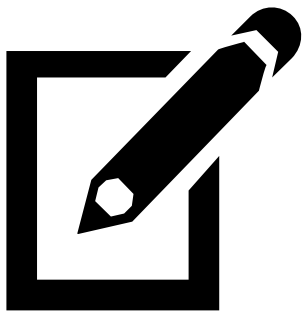


THE COMPREHENSIVE PARALEGAL EXAM PREPARATION MANUAL



INTRODUCING EMOND

In 1978, Professor Paul Emond published the first Emond textbook. It was a casebook on Real Estate Law, and was soon followed by Administrative Law and Constitutional Law casebooks. They were used at the time for classes at the University of Toronto and Osgoode Hall Law School. More than 35 years later, Emond Publishing is one of the leading publishers of casebooks and textbooks used in paralegal programs across Canada. In addition to publishing texts for paralegals, law clerks, and legal practitioners, Emond now offers exam support resources for candidates preparing to write the Ontario licensing exams.

Emond's Paralegal exam preparation resources were first developed in 2015, when the LSO introduced a new substantive Paralegal licensing exam that was significantly more challenging, lengthy, and rigorous. Candidates were faced with the overwhelming task of learning almost 1000 pages of material in only a few weeks, with little guidance or support. Emond Exam Prep offered a way for candidates to connect with one another, and learn from experienced authorities in the subject matter that would be covered on the licensing exam.

Since then, Emond has expanded the scope and depth of the content covered in its courses, making them available online in addition to a detailed substantive practice exam. In recent years, it has become apparent that many candidates would benefit from a resource that clearly summarizes the key facts and strategies that will help them prepare effectively for the Paralegal licensing exam. For this reason, we have published the Comprehensive Paralegal Exam Preparation Manual and made it available to Emond Exam Prep candidates and the public alike. We hope it helps you on the road to success.

<https://emond.ca/Ontario-Paralegal-Exam>

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Emond Montgomery Publications Limited
1 Eglinton Ave E, Suite 600
Toronto ON M4P 3A1

Printed in Canada. We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada.

The Comprehensive Paralegal Exam Preparation Manual
ISBN 978-1-77255-586-8

The Library and Archives Canada CIP record for this book is available from the publisher on request.

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KNOWING WHAT TO EXPECT ON EXAM DAY

A. THE STRUCTURE OF THE ONTARIO PARALEGAL LICENSING EXAM

i. Overview

The Ontario Paralegal Licensing Exam is an in-person, 4.5-hour open-book exam composed of 160 multiple-choice questions. The subject matter tested on the exam is broken down into the following topics and subtopics (view a more detailed list on the [LSO website here](#)):

TOPICS	SUBTOPICS
Ethical and Professional Responsibilities	Ethics and Professionalism
Canadian Law	Jurisdiction and Fundamentals; Evidence
Civil Litigation	Small Claims Court; Torts; Contracts
Criminal/Quasi-Criminal Law & Procedure	General Principles; <i>Provincial Offences Act</i> ; Summary Conviction
Administrative Law	General Principles; Practice and Theory; Workplace Safety and Insurance Board/ <i>Workplace Insurance Safety and Insurance Act</i> ; Landlord and Tenant; Human Rights; Other Specific Tribunals
Problem/Issue Identification Analysis and Assessment	Information Gathering; Case Analysis and Planning; Theory of the Case
ADR	Alternative Dispute Resolution

Litigation Process	Trial or Hearing Preparation; Conduct of the Trial or Hearing; Appeals; Post-Disposition of the Matter
Practice Management	Practice Management Issues

ii. Exam Materials

Candidates who have registered for the exam can have their physical materials shipped to them for a fee. These materials contain all the information required to pass the exam. The LSO-issued materials for the exam ranges in length from 750-1,000 pages. The materials are also delivered electronically to candidates, who can print, bind, and mark up the materials as they see fit. Candidates are allowed to bring supplementary reference materials of their choice alongside the provided LSO materials for the exam. However, it is essential for candidates to ensure that any content resembling practice questions in their materials is removed, unless those questions have been officially distributed by the LSO.

iii. The Annual Licensing Cycle

The annual licensing cycle begins in May of each year. In each licensing cycle, there are three exam sittings: July (first), October/November (second), and February/March of the following year (third). All three sittings use the same set of LSO-issued materials, which are released to candidates approximately 6 weeks before they are registered to write the exam.

SAMPLE LICENSING CYCLE (2024-25)

May 2024	July 2024	October 2024	February 2025
Materials Released (start of cycle)	Licensing Exam (first sitting)	Licensing Exam (second sitting)	Licensing Exam (third/final sitting)

Following the final (February/March) sitting, the materials are revised, reorganized, and updated, then released for the next licensing cycle. If you did not pass in your original licensing cycle—for example, if you wrote for the first time in February and failed—then you will need to re-purchase the LSO materials for the new cycle, and update all your reference materials to correspond to the page numbers in the new materials. For this reason, the majority of candidates choose to write the exam for the first time in July or October/November so they will have at least one opportunity to rewrite using the same materials if they do not pass the first time.

iv. Exam Layout and Question Structure

The licensing exam consists of 160 multiple-choice questions that you will answer. You have roughly 1 minute and 20 seconds to answer each question, so it is important to stick to a strict schedule to ensure that you do not fall behind and miss out on the questions that you could easily have answered.

The exam consists of both stand-alone questions and case-based questions. Case-based questions follow a detailed case scenario/fact pattern. Several subsequent questions relating to both substantive law and professional responsibility will follow, based on that one scenario. Case-based questions usually appear near the end of a topic on the exam.



A Note on Choosing the Correct Answer

The LSO specifies that each question will have one “best” answer which you must select. This means that many questions will have more than one answer choice that is correct in some capacity. The challenge is to assess which answer is the “most” correct. Find that confusing? You aren’t the only one. When in doubt, consider the options from an ethical perspective and choose the answer that is most ethically safe.

v. Exam Results

You can expect to receive your exam results from the LSO electronically six to eight weeks after writing the exam. The only result you will receive is a “pass” or a “fail.” The LSO does

1 THE PARALEGAL LICENSING EXAM: KNOWING WHAT TO EXPECT ON EXAM DAY

not provide your exact score (to you or anyone else), and it does not publicize the score that is required to pass the exam. If you receive a “fail,” you will receive a more formal breakdown of your score that details your performance in each section of the exam. This way you can identify your weak areas and focus on them in preparation for your next exam attempt.

The secretive nature of this information is one of the most unnerving aspects of the exam. Candidates feel that they are entering the exam blindly, without knowing their chances of success, or even how well they need to perform in order to pass. But do not let the lack of information psych you out. You must remain confident and focus on your own performance and understanding of the materials. If you are confident, focused, and well-prepared on the exam day, your chances of passing are high.



Suggested Reading on the [LSO Website](#):

TOPIC	SEARCH TERMS
Licensing Examination Dates	LSO dates, times, and locations
Licensing Examination Rules and Protocol	LSO paralegal licensing process rules and protocols
Guide to the Paralegal Licensing Examination	LSO paralegal licensing process guide examinations
Entry-Level Paralegal Competencies	LSO paralegal licensing process entry-level paralegal competencies

B. LOGISTICS OF THE LICENSING EXAM

The LSO is particular about what items you may bring into the exam and how these items are packaged. Below is a basic list of rules that you should know before entering the licensing exam to ensure that you are not forced to coat-check important items that you expected to have with you during the exam. If possible, try to avoid having to coat-check any items, because the lines can be lengthy and add to the time it takes for you to enter the examination room, or leave the examination centre at the end of the day.

i. Permitted and Forbidden Items in the Testing Area

ITEM	PERMITTED	FORBIDDEN
Beverages	unopened in clear plastic container	opened or opaque containers
Clothing	sweater or cardigan	hoodies, hats, coats, jackets, ponchos, scarves, gloves
Accessories	binder rings, cerlox bindings, binders for print materials, tissues, medication, a disposable bag, identification, wallet, keys and hygiene products	purses, book bags, handbags, suitcases, briefcases, rulers, copyholders, clipboards
Food	snacks either unopened in their original wrapping or covered in saran wrap	foods that are noisy to open/ consume or strongly scented; uncut apples, unpeeled oranges, raw carrots, fish, and nuts.
Electronics	None	watches (of any type), cellphones, calculators, etc.
Writing tools	None	pens, pencils, erasers, highlighters, and binder clips

1 THE PARALEGAL LICENSING EXAM: KNOWING WHAT TO EXPECT ON EXAM DAY

ITEM	PERMITTED	FORBIDDEN
Reference materials	Law Society Study Materials, other study materials, dictionaries, books, texts, and notes, any of which may be bound or loose but none of which may contain Examination Content or be a Prohibited Item	unauthorized sources, any examination questions, answers, or questions and answers, including those marked as “practice,” those created by a candidate or those created by a third party



ii. Other Important Rules to Know

We advise reading the LSO's full list of rules well in advance of exam day. For the complete list, visit <https://lso.ca> and enter "LSO paralegal licensing process rules and protocols" in the search field.

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A. DEVisING YOUR STUDY SCHEDULE

We suggest reading this section of the manual in advance of receiving your LSO study materials. Draft your tentative study schedule based on generalized information about the length of the study period and the materials outlined in the sections below. Receiving your materials will be the kick-off point for putting your study plan into action. Once you receive your materials, you may need to adjust a few elements of your plan based on the specific number of pages and days that you have, but these adjustments will be minor. Having a pre-established study plan will give you a sense of direction and will motivate you to begin studying right away, rather than procrastinating and losing valuable time.

i. Organizing the LSO Materials

Receiving your materials electronically from the LSO should trigger the start of your study period. By this point in time, you should have a tentative study schedule established. Once you have received your materials, your next step is to organize and bind them in a fashion that is best for your studying habits.

The materials you receive will be divided into sections for each subject area on the licensing exam. It is up to you to decide how you want to organize and bind them. You can use classic three-ring binders, so that you can add pages and dividers as desired, or you can take them to a print centre and have them coil bound and tabbed (recommended.)

Some candidates bind all the materials together with a single binder or booklet, marking the subject areas with different tabs. However, most prefer to bind the materials separately based on subject area—one booklet for civil litigation, another for criminal/quasi-criminal procedure, another for administrative law, and so on. Being organized is highly important because you will likely have to reference your materials to answer most of the questions on the exam. Your goal in organizing your materials should be to make it as easy and efficient as possible for you to find a given subtopic and locate specific content.

ii. Reading the Materials: Suggested Strategies

The most fundamental and important step in your study plan is scheduling time to read through all of your LSO-issued exam materials. More than anything else, preparation for the exam requires a level of discipline because successfully reading through the materials greatly increases your chances of passing the exam. In this section, we look at two suggested study plans for managing all 800+ pages as well as possible variations.

THE LSO'S SUGGESTED STUDY PLAN

The LSO advises that you read the materials three times. The first time, read to establish a general understanding, without highlighting or note-taking. On the second read-through, seek out important concepts in each chapter, highlighting and note-taking as appropriate. In the final reading, review and reinforce the overarching concepts.

Although this approach may be feasible for someone who has weeks to prepare for the exam without any other commitments, most candidates have other responsibilities and time commitments to maintain. In order to read through the materials three times (800 pages x 3 = 2400) in six weeks (42 days), you would have to cover at least 57 pages of material each and every day. This is not a realistic goal for most individuals.

If, on the other hand, you obtain your materials in June because you're registered to write in July, but end up deferring to October, you have significantly more time. In this case, the LSO's suggested strategy is feasible because you'd be able to cover cover 2,400 pages in 120 days by reading around 20 pages per day.

For more details about the LSO's suggested study plan, visit <https://lso.ca>, enter "LSO paralegal licensing process guide examinations" in the search field, and look for "Guide to Licensing Examinations."

EMOND'S SUGGESTED STUDY PLAN


There is no question that you absolutely *must* read through all of the materials at least once before your exam. Ideally, you will have time to go through most sections a second time. The goal of reading should be to understand the “big picture”—focus on grasping the key concepts and comprehending how the pieces fit together.

Don't overwhelm yourself by trying to memorize all the details—the exam is open-book after all. Instead, focus on trying to understand the fundamentals of the law in each area and how the key elements fit together, so that when a question arises, you will know where to look and be able to recognize the answer choices that are blatantly wrong. For example, when a professional responsibility question arises, you should know that the correct course of action is often to determine who your client is and then ask your client for instructions.

There are several factors to consider when devising your study plan:

1. **Other time commitments**—for example, if you work full-time, or must care for a family member.
2. **Preferred learning style (audio, visual, or applied)**—if you are an applied learner, you may want to make notes as you go along, or type up summaries at the end of each section.
3. **Reading speed and attention span**—make sure you take breaks when your attention starts to wander, but stay away from social media and the Internet during these breaks. Instead, go for a walk, make a cup of tea, or do a few stretches. This will ensure that your 5-minute break doesn't become a 50-minute break.
4. **Familiarity with the subject matter**—it will likely require more time and effort to work through sections that you didn't study in school or that don't interest you. Be aware that these days will require more stamina and focus.
5. **Time needed to devise reference materials (indices, cheat sheets, etc.)**—many candidates highlight, tab, and make notes as they move through their readings. If you intend to type up your notes into summaries afterward, ensure that you account for this time in your calendar.

EMOND'S SUGGESTED STUDY PLAN (cont.)

 A single read-through can be achieved in six weeks by reading approximately 20 pages each day until your exam.

We recommend devising a personalized schedule that conforms to your lifestyle—that is, allotting more pages for weekends if you work during the week, scheduling fewer pages the day following an evening event, and planning a day off here and there. It is important to consider your habits and your willpower and to create a schedule that will maximize your strengths and accommodate your weaknesses. If you are most alert and energetic on Saturday mornings, you may plan 50 pages for that time slot. If you are often tired on Sundays and in need of a break, then schedule 10 pages or no pages.

Most importantly, be realistic about what you expect to achieve. Yes, you'll have to be ambitious and push yourself beyond your comfort zone during the intensive studying period before the exam; however, if you don't account for reality then you risk ending up feeling guilty and overwhelmed, struggling to cram hundreds of pages into the last days before your exam. Your study plan should be structured to prevent this.

We suggest scheduling your most ambitious reading goals for early in the study period, during weeks 1-4. Closer to the exam (weeks 5-6), you'll need to have time to reread challenging sections, organize your reference materials, listen to the review videos, and test yourself with a practice exam. The goal should be to feel relaxed, organized, and confident the week preceding your exam. The best way to achieve this is to pull out your calendar and your calculator and physically map out exactly how many pages you need to cover each day during your study period. Then you need to stick to your plan.

iii. Integrating Supplementary Study Aids and Reference Materials

In addition to the LSO-issued materials, many candidates plan to bring additional reference materials into the exam with them. You might choose to make some of these materials yourself as part of your study process. For example, if you retain more information through writing than through reading, you may wish to make topic

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summaries or mind maps as you work your way through the readings. More complex reference materials, such as indices or a detailed table of contents, require time to prepare, and must be scheduled into your study plan. Some supplementary materials can be found online or borrowed from other sources. We will delve into these materials in [Chapter 3](#), but for now, a brief list could include:

- detailed table of contents
- indices
- topic summaries
- exam timer sheet
- relevant statutes and provisions
- calculations cheat sheet
- charts and mind maps
- excerpts photocopied from books

You may choose to keep these supplementary reference materials in a separate binder of their own or integrate some of them into your materials under the relevant subject areas. Think about what will be easiest and most intuitive for you when you are under time pressure on the exam and organize them in this way. Once you've progressed to the point of doing practice exams, you will find out whether this organization of the materials works well for you or whether a few tweaks would make navigation easier.

B. SAMPLE STUDY SCHEDULE

The sample study schedule below is for reference purposes only. We suggest exercising your own judgment to create an individualized schedule that matches the specifics of each year’s materials and calendar, as well as your own personal situation.

i. Sample Study Schedule: February Exam Integrating the Paralegal Review Course



[Click here to access the full PDF](#)



[Click here to download the editable Word document](#)

January						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 Finish reading the manual. Devise a study calendar (like this one) & pick up supplies: binders, dividers, coloured tabs, highlighters, and printer paper	2 If you haven't already, pick up or print the LSO Materials ; put in binders and organize with dividers (or take to a printer)	3 Watch the Exam Preparation and Strategy lectures Develop your own study strategy: How do you plan to use highlighters, tabs, and indices to prepare?	4 Watch Paralegal Ethics and Professional Responsibility lecture Read 20 pages, from the Professional Responsibility section	5 Read 30 pages from the Professional Responsibility section	6 Read 30 pages from the Professional Responsibility section
7 Read 30 pages from the Professional Responsibility section	8 Watch the Jurisdiction and Fundamentals of Law lecture Read 30 pages from the Jurisdiction & Fundamentals section	9 Read 30 pages from the Jurisdiction & Fundamentals section Watch the Civil Litigation lecture	10 Watch the Torts, Contracts, and Small Claims Court lecture Read 30 pages from the Civil Litigation section	11 Day of rest	12 Read 30 pages from the Civil Litigation section	13 Read 30 pages from the Civil Litigation section
14 Watch the Evidence Law lecture Read 20 pages from the Civil Litigation section	15 Watch the Alternative Dispute Resolution lecture Read 20 pages from the Civil Litigation section	16 Watch the Criminal and Quasi-criminal Law lecture Read 30 pages from the Criminal Law section	17 Read 30 pages from the Criminal Law section	18 Read 30 pages from the Criminal Law section	19 Day of rest	20 Read 30 pages from the Criminal Law section
21 Watch the Administrative Law and Tribunals lecture Read 30 pages from the Administrative Law section	22 Watch the Residential Landlord and Tenant Law lecture Read 30 pages from the Administrative Law section	23 Read 30 pages from the Administrative Law section	24 Write practice exam & review results, noting down reference materials that would be helpful to have on hand	25 Day of rest	26 Read 30 pages from the LSO By-Laws section	27 Read 30 pages from the LSO By-Laws section
28 Read 30 pages from the LSO By-Laws section	29 Read 30 pages from the LSO By-Laws section	30 Read the Paralegal Rules of Conduct	31 Read half of the Paralegal Professional Conduct Guidelines			

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February						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 Read the other half of the Paralegal Professional Conduct Guidelines	2 Review the table of authorities	3 Day of rest
4 Re-read sections of the materials that confused you the first time	5 Re-read sections of the materials that confused you the first time	6 Write timed P1 practice exam using indices or your own reference materials	7 Review sections that you didn't perform as well on during the practice exam	8 Review and re-read sections of the materials as needed	9 Day of rest	10 Final review of P1 materials
11 Check exam location & rules for exam day Eat well & sleep early Review any last items	12 Day of rest Pack materials, snacks & lunch for exam day; Eat well & sleep early	13 P1 EXAM Good luck!	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28			

3 PREPARING AND TESTING YOUR REFERENCE MATERIALS

A. THE LSO MATERIALS

i. Highlighting and Colour-Coding

Highlighting is the simplest and most efficient strategy to help you quickly recognize important information on a page. It is not a learning tool, but an organization strategy that will help draw your eye quickly to the right places on the page. However, it is useful only when applied sparingly and strategically. When reading through the materials, resist the temptation to highlight gratuitously—if you are highlighting every other sentence, you are overdoing it and defeating the purpose. The key is to highlight only phrases that you think might be the answer to an exam question.

One helpful technique that will keep you focused and help you avoid over-highlighting is to use a colour-coding strategy—for example, use **green** for **formulas/calculations**, **blue** for **time periods/deadlines**, **pink** for **statute names**, **orange** for **exceptions**, and **purple** for **other important items**. You can use the basic **yellow** highlighter to emphasize **headings and subheadings** that you might not notice when quickly scanning a page. Case names are unlikely to be tested on the exam, so do not worry about highlighting these.

ii. Tabbing and Dividers

You can use tabs and dividers to divide the materials in any way you see fit. You can choose to tab rigorously (tabbing every chapter and subsection using a colour-coded system) or sparingly, on the basis of what information you expect will be important. As with highlighting, be discerning about where and how you choose to tab—devise a strategy that will help you locate information efficiently. Too many tabs will likely confuse you, but tidy and strategic tabbing will help you locate content more swiftly. We suggest adding tabs as you make your way through the readings. You can always remove them during your final review if you find that there are too many, but it isn't so easy to add them in the right places at the last minute.

B. STUDY AIDS AND REFERENCE MATERIALS

Candidates can make use of a number of reference tools for the Paralegal licensing exam, and there is a great deal of debate about which is the “best” tool. What works perfectly for one person may not work at all for another. You must make your own decision about what reference materials you will rely on in the exam. Practice exams will help you test and validate this decision, illuminating early on whether you might need to consider a different strategy.

Based on the information below, you should be able to make an educated choice as to what resource(s) will be most helpful to you, and invest your time in preparing those. Consider testing them with a practice exam several weeks prior to the licensing exam so that you have time to adapt, if necessary.

i. Detailed Table of Contents

Your LSO materials come equipped with a detailed table of contents (DTC) that many candidates have found to be a sufficient navigation tool for the exam. The DTC is 20-30 pages long and can be supplemented with annotations in the margins. If you have time, you can even transfer the DTC into a Word document and make your own typed additions to it, then print it out and bring it with you.

Anecdotally, most candidates seem to use the DTC as their primary method of navigation to identify the page(s) that they should reference for a particular question. During the practice exams, you should try using your DTC to see if this method works for you. If you find that you need a more detailed frame of reference from which to navigate your materials, you may prefer using indices for your exam.

Effective use of the DTC requires a familiarization with the materials and the location of information in each section. Some candidates take the time to carefully review the DTC following a detailed read-through of the materials in order to better understand in which sections certain substantive topics of law appear, and how they fit together with one another.

ii. Indices

An index is an alphabetical list of key terms with corresponding page numbers. A set of indices consists of an index for each subject area on the exam. Indices can be 20-50 pages per subject, often totaling over 100 pages. You have likely heard about indices and indexing since indices are the most widespread reference tool that candidates rely on for the Barrister and Solicitor licensing exams. However, this reference tool is less commonly used in preparation for the Paralegal exam, partially because it is not so easy to obtain a completed and updated set.

a. *Why Use Indices?*

Opinions are polarized when it comes to indices. Some candidates swear by them and believe that their indices were the key to their success on the exam. Other candidates find them burdensome or discovered that they had to reference their indices for only one or two questions on the exam.

The benefit of a well-organized and comprehensive set of indices is that you have at your fingertips a simplified roadmap to assist you in locating very specific information in your materials. A good set of indices can save you time that would otherwise be spent flipping through the materials searching for a keyword. However, like using a road map, if you are not familiar with its layout, an index can end up wasting a lot of your time on exam day.

The main drawback of using indices is that they can take weeks to create or update, which eats into valuable study time. For this reason, some candidates try to find indices that were created by someone else—sourced from an online database, or shared by a friend. While this approach saves time, there is an element of risk involved in using somebody else's indices. They might be inaccurate, outdated, or organized in a way that is non-intuitive for you. If you choose to use indices created by somebody else, be sure to write the [practice exams](#) using these indices. This will draw your attention to any inaccuracies, inconsistencies, or issues with organization that would otherwise catch you by surprise on the exam day, when it is too late to make changes.

b. How Do I Find or Create Indices?

If you choose to create your own indices, there are two approaches. You can create your indices from scratch, meaning you decide which key terms you want to include and which you do not. If you are creating from scratch, consider carefully whether you want to create your indices in Word or Excel. You may be more comfortable working in Word; however, Excel has useful sorting functions that come in handy when organizing your indices. The benefit of using Excel is that you can create your indices chronologically as you move through pages in the materials, and then use the “A-Z Sort” function to organize them alphabetically at the end. Keep in mind that creating indices is a time commitment that needs to be included in your study scheduling.

Alternatively, you can save time by using a set of indices from an earlier sitting, or updating a set of indices from the previous year. As you know, the LSO materials are updated each spring, at which time the page numbers change and indices from the previous year become obsolete. Therefore, the process of updating the indices involves going through the key words in the indices and updating the page references to match the new materials.

With either approach, you can greatly increase efficiency by teaming up with other candidates (between 15 and 30 is a good number) and dividing the work between you. Each person can complete a particular subject or chunk of pages, which is much more manageable than trying to update an entire index on your own.

▲ Important Note: Other members of your indexing group may perceive and organize things differently. If you decide to create your indices as a group, discuss strategy and organization at the get-go to ensure that everyone is on the same page. Even then, the indices won't be perfect, and you may find that certain sections cause problems for you. Make sure you write a practice exam using the indices to identify potentially problematic sections before the exam day.

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You may decide that indexing is not the best use of your study time, and try to find a set of pre-created indices to use instead. This can be tricky, as indexing hasn't yet caught on widely within the paralegal community, so there are few available indices floating around. However, it is worth keeping an eye on the following sources:

- [Emond Exam Prep's free indices database](#)
- Facebook and LinkedIn—there are groups/pages where candidates can network and share study resources
- Craigslist or Kijiji—some candidates sell indices for \$20-\$50
- other candidates, friends, or colleagues who have already written the exams

If you opt for this approach, make sure you schedule time to [write a practice exam](#). You absolutely must vet the quality of your borrowed indices to verify their accuracy, familiarize yourself with how they are organized, and make any necessary additions or modifications. Remember—indexing is not straightforward. What one person indices as “Rules—Contracts—*Contra Proferentem*” another will index as “*Contra Proferentem*—Contracts Rules.” These small variations are important on the exam, when every second matters. Taking practice exams is key to familiarizing yourself with the way an index is organized, ensuring that you are able to easily navigate the index during the pressures of exam time.

iii. Topic Summaries

Rather than functioning as a navigation tool, topic summaries can be very helpful while you are doing your readings. Just as you may have written summaries in law school before an exam, you should consider doing the same with your LSO materials as you move through them. Summaries not only help you process the material that you are reading, they also give you a chance to reorganize and recontextualize information in a manner that might make more sense to you. Writing summaries will force you to think about and try to make sense of complex material you might otherwise skim over. Remember, the goal is not to memorize but to develop a thorough understanding of what you are reading.

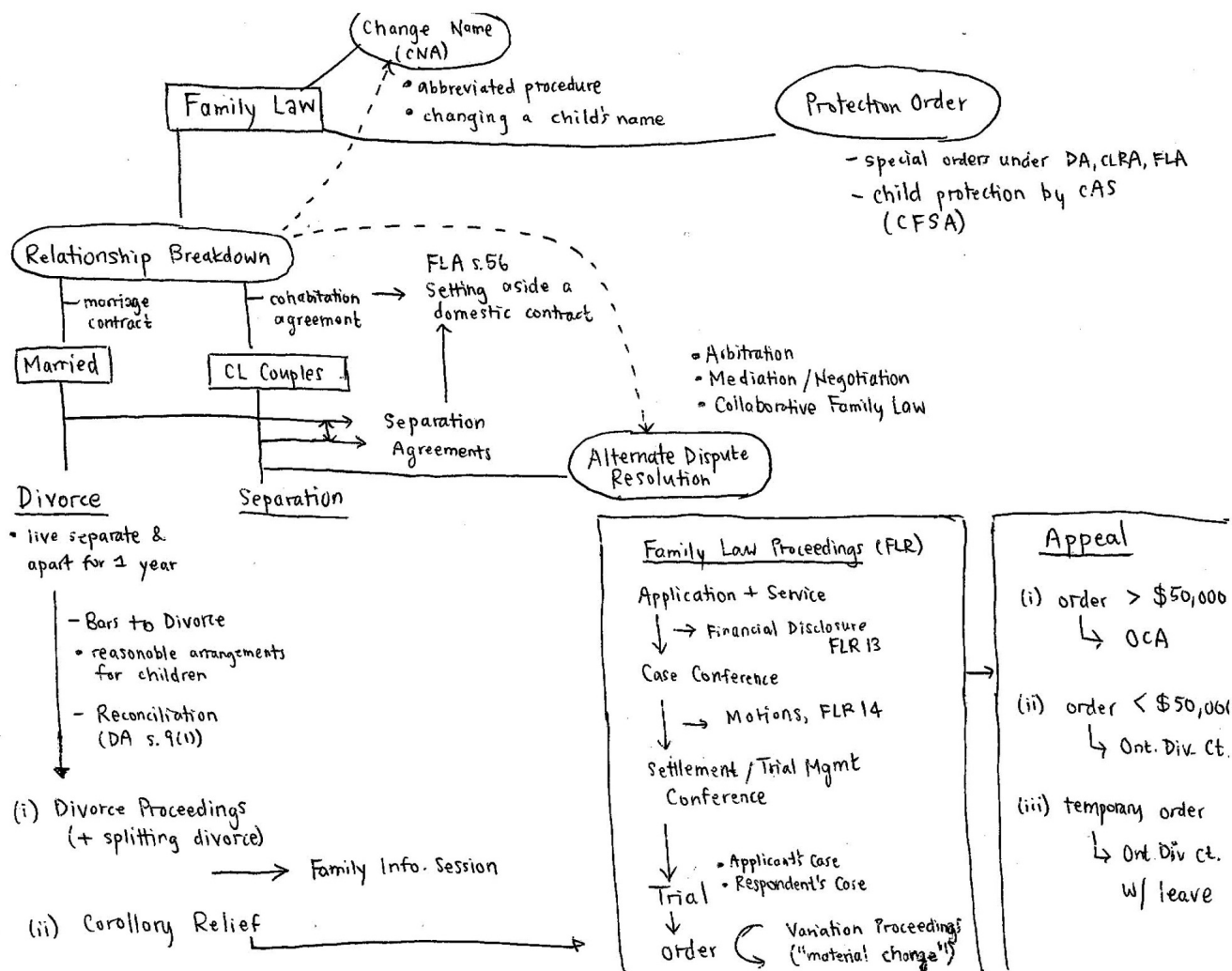
3 PREPARING AND TESTING YOUR REFERENCE MATERIALS

iv. Mind Maps and Charts

Much like topic summaries, mind maps are another study tool that can help you make sense of complex concepts and procedures. Mind maps are similar to flow charts—illustrations that depict different processes using a series of bubbles that branch in different directions. They are most applicable to the procedural components of the material because they can simplify complex timelines and help you follow if/then scenarios from beginning to end. Below is an example to show you how they can be used:



[Click here for the full-resolution JPG of the mind map](#)



v. Paralegal Review Course PowerPoint Presentations

The PowerPoint presentations that accompany the online lectures summarize the key concepts found in the Paralegal exam materials. Candidates can print these powerpoints and bring them into the exam to supplement their LSO materials. Because the instructors focus on key concepts relevant to each subject area, the handouts act as brief and accessible summaries. Having these materials close by during the exam may save you from having to flip through your materials in a hurry.

C. ADDITIONAL REFERENCE MATERIALS FOR THE EXAM

i. Exam Timer Sheet

Ensure that on the exam day you come equipped with an exam timer sheet. This will help you stay on track with timing, so that you know how many questions you should have answered after 30 minutes, 60 minutes, and so on. You can use the exam timer below to begin with, and modify it as you see fit:



[Click here to access a PDF of the Exam Timer Sheet](#)



[Click here to download the Exam Timer Sheet as an Excel document](#)

ii. Calculations Cheat Sheets

In certain subject areas, you may be required to answer questions involving financial calculations. It is a good idea to bring a calculations cheat sheet with you, to demonstrate and explain the calculations you may need to perform and to identify important thresholds or exceptions you should be aware of. This will save you time, draw attention to details that may otherwise trick you on the exam, and give you an opportunity to explain the calculation in a way that makes sense to you. Remember, the LSO will provide you with a calculator.

iii. Important Statutes and Legislation

It may be beneficial to review and photocopy certain statutes or specific provisions that are mentioned in the materials and take them into the exam with you. Doing so may assist you in finding the answer to a question more quickly. When studying, if there are certain provisions that are mentioned frequently or that contain lists or exceptions, you may want to have a copy on hand that is easily accessible, which will save you from having to flip through your materials.

D. PRACTICE EXAMS

i. Should I Write a Practice Exam?

Writing a practice exam is one of the most important steps in preparing for the licensing exam. A practice exam is an invaluable tool that will help you become familiar with the layout of your LSO materials and your reference materials. This is crucial to succeeding on the licensing exam, since you must be able to find the relevant information and formulate your answer in less than 100 seconds per question. If you are not familiar with the layout of your materials or reference tools, you will be at a disadvantage, and may be unable to find the information that you need in the time allotted.

The process of writing a practice exam will also reveal any errors, oversights, and problems with your detailed table of contents and/or indices and give you enough time to address these issues before the actual exam. It may also give you ideas for cheat sheets or other supplementary materials that will help you answer questions more quickly on the exam. Additionally, a timed practice exam will prepare you for the conditions of the actual exam by forcing you to answer mock exam questions under time constraints, which will increase your speed and efficiency.

Writing a practice exam can also help you improve your substantive knowledge, reducing the amount of time it will take for you to come to the correct answer during the actual exam. This exercise will help you identify gaps in your knowledge and allow you to see how the substantive law applies practically to a problem in a given fact scenario. It is one thing to understand the law when you read it passively, but an entirely different thing to analyze how it is applied correctly in different situations.

▲ Important Note: It is critical to understand that any practice exam you take will be different from the actual licensing exam. No past LSO licensing exams have ever been published, and the LSO does not make sample exams available. As such, most commercial companies rely on research, anecdotal evidence, experience, and candidate feedback to develop their practice exams.

3 PREPARING AND TESTING YOUR REFERENCE MATERIALS

A good practice exam will still challenge you, teach you to navigate your materials, and prepare you for the time limitations you will face on the actual exam. Furthermore, with certain topics of substantive law, you will find that practice questions gauge essentially the same knowledge as the Paralegal exam itself.

There are several companies that offer practice exams of varying lengths and price points. Choose carefully by considering the source of the questions, and whether they are being offered by a verifiably qualified source. Some practice exams include special features to enhance the experience—for example, [Emond Exam Prep's practice exams](#) include:

- a flagging feature to mark the questions that you want to double-check before submitting, just as in the actual exam experience
- subject performance analytics to help you identify your strongest and weakest subject areas, thus targeting your studying more effectively
- a detailed exam review section that displays the answer you selected, the correct answer, and a detailed explanation
- up to four attempts so that you can experiment with different strategies and reference materials
- exam questions that have been vetted by two lawyers and proofed in-house by Emond Exam Prep's editorial team
- renewed access to the exam free of charge if you do not pass your licensing exam

ii. When and How to Write a Practice Exam

Depending on which company you choose for your practice exam, different access periods and exam attempts will be available. Research them in advance, and do not hesitate to get in touch with a company if you have questions regarding their policies.

We suggest taking your initial attempt at a practice exam after you've completed your first reading of the materials. Taking it earlier may be demoralizing, and if you wait too long, you won't have much time left to study weak areas or make adjustments to your reference materials. Ideally, you will complete your first reading and practice exam around three weeks in advance of the exam date, giving you plenty of time afterward to focus on areas in the materials where you performed poorly on the practice exam. You can use your subsequent attempts closer to the exam date once you have had time to review the challenging areas and adjust or supplement your reference materials as needed.

3 PREPARING AND TESTING YOUR REFERENCE MATERIALS

It is a good idea to treat the practice exam as though it is the actual licensing exam for at least one of your attempts. Have your reference materials in front of you, stick to the time restrictions (~100 seconds per question), and stay off the Internet. You may choose to take the opposite approach with one of your other attempts, taking it slowly and using all of the resources at your disposal (including the Internet) to answer the questions. The benefit of this approach is that you may stumble on helpful study resources online that you can print and bring into the exam with you.

iii. Evaluating Your Performance on a Practice Exam

Once you complete and submit a practice exam on [Emond Exam Prep](#), you will receive your overall score as well as a breakdown of how you performed in each subject area. Note these results and spend more time reviewing the areas you performed poorly in. Consider renting the substantive review videos on these subjects (see next section).

You should also review all the question explanations and try to identify patterns in the types of questions you answered incorrectly—for example, ask yourself these questions during your review:

- Did I struggle with questions involving calculations?
- Did I score better on seemingly straightforward informational questions, or on scenario-based questions?
- Were there key words (“must,” “may,” “should,” “can,” “except,” and “unless”) that I missed, which could have indicated the right answer?
- Was I tricked by details or exceptions that I didn’t notice when quickly scanning through the materials for the answer?
- Were there questions that I got wrong simply because I didn’t read the question carefully enough?

4 EMOND'S ONLINE PARALEGAL REVIEW COURSE

A. PARALEGAL REVIEW COURSE SUMMARY

The [Online Paralegal Review Course](#) consists of a series of video lectures captured in the webinar Paralegal Exam Review Course. Each lecture has been developed and delivered by an instructor who has substantial expertise instructing or practicing in that area of law.

The overall format of each lecture involves a detailed review of the subject matter, with a focus on key exam points and challenging topics, and intermittent question and answer periods throughout. Many instructors include sample exam questions in their presentations to demonstrate the application of important concepts and to illustrate the types of questions you might face on the exam.

Each lecture is up to or around 3 hours in length, with greater coverage of subjects that will be important on the exam. In total, the course contains 18 hours of video, and individual lectures are available separately for those who do not wish to commit to the full course.





A Note Regarding the Online Course Materials

The PowerPoint presentations accompanying the online lectures are available to all course purchasers as downloadable PDFs. You will be able to download them when you access the course videos.

B. RECOMMENDED VIEWING STRATEGY

Candidates commonly request guidance on how to move through the course videos and how to integrate them into their study plan. The course is self-directed, since the ideal approach depends on factors such as your study plan, time available, and comfort level with the materials. Some candidates choose to start their study process by watching the videos first, creating a foundation for their subsequent readings. Others choose to watch the videos at the end as a final review to reinforce the materials right before the exam.

We suggest that you complete your first full reading of the LSO materials before watching the substantive video lectures. The exam preparation and strategy videos can be watched at any point, but we recommend watching them early in the process because the strategies they discuss will benefit you during your studying. After you have completed your first reading of the LSO materials, follow the checklist below and read each corresponding section of the LSO materials either immediately before or immediately after watching the relevant video.

C. PARALEGAL SUBSTANTIVE REVIEW COURSE VIDEO CHECKLIST

#	SUBJECT	DATE	NOTES
1	Professional Responsibility		
	Drew Samuels, 2023-24 (recommended)		
2	Criminal and Quasi-Criminal Law		
	Tanya Domize, 2023-24 (recommended)		
3	Administrative Law		
	Liz Nastasi, 2023-24 (recommended)		

4 EMOND'S ONLINE REVIEW COURSE

#	SUBJECT	DATE	NOTES
4	Civil Litigation		
	Angelika Mitchell, 2023-24 (recommended)		

5 EMOND'S ONLINE PARALEGAL EXAM PREPARATION COURSE

A. PARALEGAL EXAM PREPARATION COURSE SUMMARY

The Paralegal Exam Preparation Course was developed to teach effective study and exam-taking strategies that will equip candidates to succeed on the Paralegal licensing exam. The course consists of approximately two hours of lectures and six hours of interactive practice exam question exercises. It covers suggested reference materials, how-to's for studying and learning, and advice for correctly answering multiple-choice exam questions.

The Paralegal Exam Preparation Course comprises two key components:

- 1. Instruction:** Liz Nastasi (LLB) and Deborah Pressman (LLM) walk through the different elements of a strong study plan, providing advice and guidance for paralegal candidates;
- 2. Practice Questions:** Chunks of mock exam questions are interspersed throughout the course, giving candidates an opportunity to test themselves

The course is delivered by Liz Nastasi and Deborah Pressman. They begin the course by reviewing the LSO Paralegal competencies and the content that will be tested on the exam. They discuss the best ways to organize study materials, explain what to expect in terms of exam format and requirements, and the key rules to be aware of on the exam day. They examine the different types of multiple-choice questions that the candidates will encounter on the exam and introduce strategies to help the exam-takers answer these questions correctly. Integrated throughout the course are several mini mock exams that challenge the candidates to test the different exam-writing strategies. This is designed to help each candidate find the approach that works best for them, and practice applying it before the exam.

B. PARALEGAL EXAM PREPARATION COURSE OUTLINE

SECTION	SECTION TITLE
Section 1	Introduction
Section 2	Getting Started—Study Smart
Section 3	Your Exam—LSO Competencies
Section 4	Organizing Your Study Materials
Section 5	The Exam - Intro
Section 6	Answer Strategies
Section 7	Question Types
Section 8	Content of Questions
Section 9	Introduction to Online Practice Questions
Section 10	Practice Test: Looking Up Every Question Using Your Materials
Section 11	Practice Test: Looking Up Half the Questions Using Your Materials
Section 12	Practice Test 1 Hour Timed
Section 13	Half Point Check In
Section 14	Study Tips & Strategies
Section 15	Exam Format & Content
Section 16	Mini-Mock Exam
Section 17	Feedback from Mini Mock
Section 18	Full Mock Practice Exam - 3.5 Hours
Section 19	Feedback on Full Mock & More Emond Questions
Section 20	LSO Rules - Know Them
Section 21	More Tips & Good Luck

6 EXAM WRITING AND TIME MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

A. OVERVIEW

Before entering the exam, spend some time considering the tactics you will employ to maximize your time and correctly answer as many questions as possible. There are several aspects of preparation to consider: logistics (being equipped with food, water, and adequate clothing); time management (planning how quickly you need to move through the questions and how you'll achieve this); reference materials (knowing your indices, DTOC, summaries, and PowerPoints); and exam strategy (how you'll approach and analyze the questions).

B. STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

i. Logistics

[Chapter 1](#) of this manual contains a detailed outline of what to expect in terms of logistics on the exam day. We suggest reviewing this section prior to your exam and paying special attention to the LSO rules and restrictions. Smart candidates aim to organize their materials, meals, and anything else they will need in advance to ensure they are not rushing and can easily get settled for the beginning of their exam.

It is important to understand that you will be facing a long and difficult day. We can't overemphasize this enough—one of the most common things we hear from candidates after the exam is how shocked they were by the physical and mental strain. Many candidates reported that they took days to recover afterward. The exam is intended to challenge you, confuse you, and exhaust you. It is both mentally and physically grueling. Don't be surprised if, by the end of exam day, you are having trouble thinking, sitting up straight, and staying positive. These are all normal symptoms of exhaustion.

Fortunately, there are ways to prepare for and counteract this. First, ensure that you are stocked with water and high-sustenance protein-based foods. We advise preparing your own ready-to-eat lunch. By the time you are dismissed, you may not have the full half hour for your lunch break and will likely not have enough time to make anything to eat. Try

to avoid heavy or high-carb foods that will weigh you down and make you feel sluggish in the afternoon.

Additionally, prepare food and beverage items you know will help you along throughout the day—whether it’s a series of easy-access snacks to fuel yourself, a caffeinated beverage, or something sweet as a reward (keeping in mind that these must also be in a clear container). As long as you are aware of the risks of caffeine and sugar (the period of energy they supply and the energy slump that follows), you can strategically maximize their benefits and minimize the impact of their drawbacks. Have a sweet (but small) snack to perk you up for the very last hour. Although staying hydrated will help you think clearly and stay alert, remember that increased beverage consumption will lead to more bathroom breaks, which can add up to a surprising amount of lost time.

The importance of a good breakfast at the beginning of the day cannot be overstated. While you may have an abundance of snacks, the time-sensitive nature of the exam means that you may not have a lot of time to access your snacks. Beyond food, it is important to dress comfortably and have a sweater or cardigan available to you, and an Advil or Tylenol in case of a headache.

▲ Key Things to Note: Prepare a high-protein lunch and snacks; use caffeine and sugar strategically, keeping them to a minimum if possible; bring a clear empty beverage container into which you can pour your drinks.

ii. Time Management Tactics

When you enter the exam, you should be equipped with your [exam timer sheet](#). Try to adhere to this schedule with the knowledge that you will dedicate more time to some questions and less time to others. When you are allowed to start the exam, be sure to first go to the last page in order to see how many questions your exam paper has. The timer sheet is generally primed to an exam with 120 questions, but often the exam consists of fewer questions than that, giving you slightly more time per question.

Several time management strategies can work on the exam day. These are summarized below:

Basic: The most basic approach is to take the exam at face value, reading each question and its accompanying answer choices and answering each one to the best of your abilities (with reference to your materials if necessary) before moving to the next question. The advantage of this strategy is that you will have an accurate idea of how many questions you have answered at any point in time. The drawback of this strategy is that you might fall behind on time while struggling with challenging questions, possibly missing out on easy questions near the end that you could have answered correctly.

Strategic Flagging: This approach is the opposite extreme. It involves reading through each question and set of answer choices, answering questions you are 80 percent sure of on your Scantron, and then using one of two flags to mark each question you don't know the answer to on the exam sheet. The first flag (such as an "x") indicates that you think you can find the answer to the question relatively quickly in your materials. The second flag (such as an "o") indicates that the question is more complex, or requires referencing multiple locations in your materials, meaning it will take more time to solve. On your second time through the questions, answer all the questions marked with an "x." On your final time through the questions, answer all the questions marked with an "o." The advantage of this method is that it ensures you gain all the "easy points" possible from the questions you can easily answer, progressively working toward the hardest questions, thereby maximizing the value of your knowledge and time. There are two drawbacks to this approach: first, you become more susceptible to errors by rushing your reading of the questions and answers; and second, you lose some time reading the questions and answers two to three times, which can be problematic unless you are a quick reader with high reading comprehension.

Combination: The most balanced approach, which many candidates opt for, combines elements of the two strategies above. With this approach, you move through the exam question by question, answering those that you can deduce independently and those that require only quickly referencing your materials. When you encounter a more challenging question that you suspect will require more than two minutes to answer, flag the question to return to at the end. You may venture a guess at an answer for the question, just in case you don't have time to come back to it afterward. This way, you will still gain all the easy-medium points possible, without having to skip around too much or lose time rereading the questions three times.

▲ Important Note: Whichever strategy you choose, ensure that you **do not** submit **any questions unanswered**. If you are down to the last two minutes, then guess. A 25 percent chance of a correct answer is better than a 0 percent chance.

Remember that with any of the above strategies, you are reading every question and answer choice during your first time through the exam. You therefore have the opportunity to strike out any blatantly wrong answer choices, even for questions that you have flagged to return to later. This way, if you do run out of time, at least your answer choices will be narrowed to two or three possibilities, a 33 to 50 percent chance of success if you must guess.

Because it is difficult to know which strategy will work for you, and how these theoretical strategies will actually play out in practice, you must try applying them with a [practice exam](#) well before the exam day. Doing so will help you accurately gauge whether flagging will work for you, or whether you'll run out of time before reaching the end. You'll see in real time whether it takes you 20 seconds to read a question and all the answer options or whether it takes you 40 seconds. You will be able to adapt your strategy according to what you discover, and improve your speed with practice.

iii. Reading and Comprehending the Question

You might not think this deserves its own category, but believe us when we assure you that it does. Failure to understand and properly apply this part of the strategy is what most often sabotages a candidate's success on the exam. If there is one fundamental piece of advice that you take from this manual, it should be this:

▲ Important Note: Carefully read and absorb every word of the question, and every word of each answer choice before turning to your reference materials or selecting an answer.

People have different levels of reading **speed**, **focus**, and **comprehension**, three factors that can make or break your success on the exam. In the previous section, we discussed speed and time management. Here we want to emphasize the importance of focus and comprehension. Make no mistake—language is hugely important on the exam. Small phrases like “cannot” versus “should not,” “may” versus “must,” and “including” versus “except” can entirely change the crux of a question. Pay attention to these words when you see them, especially in the ethics questions. If you miss a word like “except,” you're guaranteed to end up with the wrong answer. If you jump too hastily to one answer choice before reading through all the other answer options, you can miss a small variation that renders your another answer “more” correct.

We cannot overemphasize how important **focus** is in succeeding on the exam, because we witness it firsthand with our practice exams. It is not uncommon for us to receive frantic emails the week before the exam from candidates who are convinced that a particular question on the practice exam is erroneous. Sometimes they are correct; but more often, they have overlooked a key word or nuance in the question. For example, the following question from our Barrister practice exam has come under debate in this way:

Lilly, who lives in Florida, was served with a child custody application at her home. How long does she have to file her answer?

- a) 30 days
- b) 10 days
- c) 20 days
- d) 60 days

Correct Answer: a) 30 days

Explanation: Under s 10(1) of the *Family Law Rules*, an answer to an application must be filed within 30 days after being served if the respondent is served within Canada or the United States.

The student was convinced that 60 days was the correct answer, citing this excerpt from their materials:

If the application is served outside Canada or the United States, the time for filing an answer is 60 days (r 10(2)).

Because Florida is located within the United States, their point was moot, and they realized how obvious the oversight had been as soon as we pointed it out. And that's the key lesson—in the stressful and high-pressure atmosphere of an exam (even a practice exam) it can be easy to accidentally misread or skim over something of importance, *even when it should be obvious*. Avoid this trap by consciously trying to stay focused while you write your practice exams.

During your practice exam review, try to identify instances in which you *did* accidentally overlook something of importance that should have led you to the correct answer. This will help you become aware of the types of oversights you are susceptible to so that you can counteract this tendency during the exam.

There is also a correlation between **reading comprehension** and success on the exam. Reading is not the ideal learning style for everyone, and many of us learn better through audiovisual means. This is why we offer preparation courses. However, while a preparation course will help you learn your materials and develop the knowledge base to succeed on the exam, it cannot write the exam for you. Therefore, you must prioritize the development of strong reading comprehension skills. The following tactics will aid you both in your preparations prior to the exam and during the exam:

- While writing the practice exams, exercise your ability to identify the key facts, subjects, and concepts embedded in the question. See if you can identify any red herrings—information or answer choices that are not relevant in determining the answer.

- While writing a practice exam, try reading the questions and answers out loud. This may help you focus.
- During the actual exam, identify the important elements of the question, including names, keywords—“except,” “must,” “may”—statutes/legislation, and timelines. This will help you to both focus and identify important elements that you don’t want to overlook.
- Throughout the exam, but especially with respect to the case-based scenarios, you will be inundated with the different names of the people involved in a situation. It is important to clearly distinguish between each person, because answers with regard to questions involving conflicts of interest can often hinge on the names of different people.
- Keep track of the ages of the subjects in the question along with the jurisdiction in which they are located because this can have a substantial impact on the application of certain laws—for example, limitation periods.

Above all, try to stay calm and confident, even if you feel nervous about your reading speed, focus, or comprehension. Do what you can to improve but remember that this manual is about fostering your self-awareness so that you can make informed choices about how best to prepare yourself for the exam. It may illuminate weaknesses, but this is normal—everybody has weaknesses, and you can’t address all of them. As long as you address the ones you can, you will vastly improve your chances of success on the exam.

iv. Use of Reference Materials in the Exam

As addressed in [Chapter 3](#), you will be allowed to use a variety of different materials during the exam to assist you, ranging from the LSO-issued study materials to indices to a detailed table of contents (DTC). Decide in advance what your first recourse will be when you need to look something up—will you turn to your index, DTC, or cheat sheets, or go straight to the LSO materials? Doing practice exams should give you a fair idea of which reference approach works best for you. Many candidates use the DTC as their first point of reference, utilizing their indices only if the DTC fails them. Ensure that your materials, whatever they may consist of, are organized, legible, and easy to navigate.

v. Mental and Physical Preparation

The week preceding the exam is a very important time. Do not stay up late every night, trying to cram in as much studying as humanly possible. This will create a negative sleep cycle, stress you out, and reduce your memory retention. By now, you have probably read through all the materials at least once, and your remaining time is best spent organizing your notes, reviewing tough areas, and writing practice exams. During this time, you must focus on three things—getting enough sleep, eating healthily, and cultivating a positive mindset. The habits you set seven days before your exam can either help or hurt you on the exam day, so be conscious of your choices during this time.

Invest time each day preparing healthy meals and snacks consisting of whole foods that will sustain your body and mind. Eat at regularly scheduled times, and choose foods that will enhance your brain function and improve your mood. High-fiber and high-protein foods will keep you feeling full and energized for longer. If possible, reduce your intake of sugary foods and drinks and heavy or processed foods. These foods contribute to energy spikes and crashes that can slow you down physically and mentally.

Setting aside enough time to get a good sleep each night is equally important. Sleep is a critical factor in the development and retention of memories and affects the speed and accuracy with which information can be recalled. Much of the learning that you do actually occurs *after* you're finished reading, while you sleep that evening. If you are a night owl, take steps to foster a more productive sleeping schedule the week prior to your exam. Turn off screens and bright lights at 9:30 p.m. and get ready for bed. If that isn't possible, use a screen dimming app to reduce the blue light emitted from your devices. If you still feel awake and alert, try relaxing with a novel or magazine, or listen to a podcast—something that will engage you while easing the transition to sleep.

During this stressful period, caring for your mental health is as important as caring for your physical health. The attitude with which you enter the exam will have an impact on its outcome. If you are a nervous wreck, it will be hard to focus and perform well. Convincing yourself that you are going to fail will only set you on the road to do so. Your expectations and attitude matter, and they are within your control—so choose positive self-talk instead and have confidence in your ability to pass.

Of course you will feel some nervousness and anxiety leading up to the exam—that is natural. However, you must put effort into keeping your thought patterns positive, and take steps that will help relax you and clear your mind. Do not indulge in failure fantasies or bring yourself to tears imagining the worst-case scenarios. When your mind begins to drift this way, actively try to divert it to more positive thoughts—focus on your accomplishments and progress instead. If you can't quell the physical feeling of nervousness, try meditation or yoga and practice measured breathing.

The day before the exam will be the time that you experience peak nervousness. Do not worry about doing substantive studying for the exam that day; instead, try to relax and prepare yourself mentally for the upcoming exam. To help distract yourself and allay the nerves, be productive—prepare and pack everything that you will need the next day.

Prepare your meal, snacks, and water bottle. Lay out the clothing you plan to wear, remembering to layer so that you'll be comfortable in varied temperatures. Prepare tissues, aspirin, a cardigan, and your exam materials. Prepare the coffee maker so that you can start it with the push of a button the next morning. Set your alarm—and a backup alarm on another device (just in case).

Ensure that you have read the [LSO rules for exam day](#) and have prepared everything in accordance with the rules. Do not indulge in alcohol that evening, because even one glass of wine consumed up to four hours before bed can interfere with your sleep quality, slowing your brain function and leaving you groggy the next day.

vi. Common Mistakes to Avoid

The previous sections covered most of the key information you need to know, and the pitfalls that catch unwary exam writers. Below are six common mistakes that you would do well to avoid.

1. NOT READING THE MATERIALS FULLY

While you undoubtedly have a friend who assures you, “I passed without even reading all of the materials!”, we strongly advise against this. The exam will test you on subjects that you may not have taken in school, and reading the materials is your best shot at developing at least a fundamental understanding of them. Even if you were to read through all the materials and understand only 30 percent of them, at least you will have developed an idea of where the different topics and subtopics are located in the materials. This will help you when you’re searching for information under time pressure on the exam. Knowing where the information is and being able to find it is one of the keys to success on the exam. Read the materials not to understand them completely, but to know the general area of the law and have a cursory awareness of the issues that can arise.

2. BRINGING DISORGANIZED MATERIALS

As addressed previously in this manual, it is important to organize and bind your materials—both your LSO-issued materials and your reference materials, such as indices—in a way that will make them easy and efficient to navigate. To be on the safe side, invest in having them coil-bound. The last thing you want is your pages slipping out of your binders and getting mixed up while you frantically try to locate information.

3. RELYING ON UNFAMILIAR INDICES WITHOUT PRACTISING WITH THEM FIRST

If you have created your own indices, there’s an excellent chance that they will be organized in a way that is intuitive to you, and a 100 percent chance that they will be up-to-date, mostly accurate, and complete. However, many candidates will not have the time to create their own indices and instead opt to update an old set or inherit or purchase someone else’s set. This is perfectly fine, but you must practice with your inherited indices because they are likely organized in a way that is *not* entirely intuitive to you. There’s also a chance that they aren’t up-to-date or accurate, and if you find out once you’re in the exam room, you’re out of luck. How do you practice with your indices? Some candidates will think up possible exam questions to see how quickly they can

locate the answers in their materials. While this no-cost solution is better than not practicing at all, we suggest investing in a practice exam so that you can become accustomed to using your indices in a realistic and time-constrained environment. Practice exams also test your knowledge and help you learn the answers to questions that you might otherwise have gotten wrong.

4. SPENDING TOO MUCH TIME TRYING TO ANSWER ONE QUESTION

It's simple math—if you start letting yourself spend more than three minutes on each question, you will run out of time well before you finish the exam. If you spend eight minutes on one question, you've just sacrificed your opportunity to answer four other questions correctly. Bring an [exam timer sheet](#) and stick to it—even when you are tempted to spend five minutes rifling through your materials to find the formula that you could swear you jotted down in the margins somewhere. Move on, and come back at the end if you have time.

5. SKIMMING THE QUESTIONS AND ANSWER CHOICES

While studying and reading through your LSO materials before the exam, you might skim here or there. That's fine, but do not try “skimming” on the exam. You must read every word of every question and answer choice if you want to have the best chance at success. Some questions are specifically designed to trick you if you skim too quickly, with a buried key word (e.g., “not,” “did,” “or,” “will”) that controls the entire question, and if you skim too quickly, you'll miss it. As mentioned above, some of the key details that can help you to properly answer a question can be found in the name, age, or jurisdiction of the subject of a question. It is important to read these carefully in order to arrive at the proper conclusion. Certain questions will have answers that are quite similar and differ only in the name of the subject that is addressed in the answer. Clearly discerning the subjects in both the questions and answers will vastly improve your chances of getting the correct answer to the question.

6. COMING WITHOUT ADEQUATE FOOD AND SNACKS

Bringing adequate food and snacks is a simple precaution to take, and failing to do so can be disastrous. The exam is long, gruelling, and physically as well as mentally taxing. You will need snacks throughout the day to keep you going. Pack a healthy and substantial lunch, and bring a plethora of snacks to keep you sustained throughout the day. Nothing crunchy though—for example, carrots or whole apples—because noisy snacks will be confiscated.

7 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

A. WHAT ARE SOME OTHER USEFUL SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT PREPARING FOR THE EXAM?

See the following websites for useful sources of information about preparing for the exam:

- [LSO website](#)
- [canlawforum.com](#)
- [emond.ca/Paralegal-exam](#)
- [Paralegal Scope](#)

B. HOW CAN I CONNECT WITH OTHER CANDIDATES WHO ARE ALSO PREPARING FOR THE EXAM?

There are several places where you can connect online with other candidates who are also preparing for the exam. You may want to visit [canlawforum.com](#) under the “Paralegals” section.

C. WHAT IS THE PASS RATE FOR THE LICENSING EXAM?

The LSO does not publish an official pass rate, nor does it release information about the success rate for each exam sitting. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that the annual pass rate is somewhere in the range of 70%-85%. It is worth noting that this does not refer to first attempts/sittings, as in some cases candidates fail their first attempt but go on to re-write and pass later in the same cycle.

D. WHAT IS THE PASSING SCORE ON THE LICENSING EXAM?

The LSO does not publish any information regarding pass scores or grading. Although there is much speculation about bell curves and pass scores, sources suggest that the exam is graded in accordance with the [Angoff Method](#). This means that there is no solid passing score of 50 percent; rather, the passing score may change from year to year depending on the difficulty of the questions on the exam.

E. ARE COPIES OF PAST LICENSING EXAMS AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW?

No—the LSO does not publish any past exams. In fact, most of the strict rules surrounding the licensing exam are in place specifically to prevent the dissemination of past exam questions.

F. IF I TAKE A PREPARATION COURSE, DO I STILL NEED TO READ ALL OF THE LSO MATERIALS?

Yes. The most crucial and basic part of your study process should be reading the LSO materials, at least once, all the way through. A preparation course (or other supplementary study strategies) will help to enhance your study process; however, nothing can replace the fundamental requirement of reading the materials. A preparation course will deliver the information in a different and more engaging style, reinforce the key concepts, and help clarify parts of the materials that are difficult to understand. However, if you do not read the materials fully, you risk missing out on details that fall outside the scope of the preparation course. Again, the point of reading the materials is not to memorize their entire contents, but to know the general outline of the materials and how the law fits together. The licensing exam is not a test of memory; rather, it is a test of how quickly you can recall where the information is located and apply it to the question.

G. WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE FOR ANSWERING ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY QUESTIONS ON THE EXAM?

Ethics and professional responsibility questions compose about 20 percent of the exam. Although these questions incorporate scenarios from all different areas, there are significant similarities and strategies that you can apply to increase your chances of success on them.

number covers. When interpreting the exam questions, read the question and each answer choices carefully. Words like “should,” “may,” or “must” can govern the outcome of the question. Often, the correct answer will be the most conservative answer, the one that *doesn't* involve you acting prematurely on behalf of your client, even if your client would benefit from said action. When in doubt, remember that you most likely need to seek instructions from your client before doing anything else.

Furthermore, you may encounter some ethics and professional responsibility questions with more than one correct answer. Try to think of the “most ethical solution” and pick the answer that best corresponds to it.

H. I AM FEELING VERY NERVOUS ABOUT THE EXAM: SHOULD I DEFER IT?

There is no single right or wrong answer to this question, and it relies very much on your individual circumstances. If you have a good reason for deferring—for example, illness, bereavement, or unexpected new responsibilities—or know that you will not be able to read through all the materials before your exam date, then yes, you should consider deferring. Similarly, if you have studied adequately but performed very poorly on your practice exams (scoring less than 50 percent consistently), then you might benefit from additional time to strengthen your weak areas and improve your exam-writing strategy.

If, on the other hand, you are feeling nervous, stressed, or exhausted, but have already committed weeks or months to studying, you might want to ask yourself why you really want to defer. Are you just tired of the stress and afraid that you'll fail despite all the effort you've put in? Do you just want to give up and push the problem further into the future so that you don't have to think about it for a while? Is insecurity getting the better

of you? If these are the real motivators, then we suggest pushing through and attempting the exam. It is extremely difficult to overcome the negative emotions that can precede an exam sitting; however, if you have read through all your materials, studied thoroughly, and performed well on your practice exams, then you are likely in a good position to pass, even if you don't feel that way emotionally.

One other element to consider is timing. If this is your first time writing, remember that you have at least two more attempts in which to succeed. Failing the first time might actually benefit you for your next writing—at the very least, you'll have an idea of what types of questions to expect and what subject areas tripped you up in your first attempt. Also, consider the exam cycle, consisting of the July, October, and February sittings. All three sittings utilize the same LSO materials—meaning you can bring the same indices, table of contents, and study aids to all three exams. If you end up needing to write your exam three times, ideally all three sittings should fall within the same cycle so that you can use the same materials. However, if you defer your first exam in July, and then fail at both the October and February sittings, you'll have to purchase the new LSO materials and redo all your indexing in order to write the exam following August.

Overall, we suggest making your decision on the basis of logic, not emotion. If you are on the edge of a major breakdown, then by all means—defer your exam. However, if you know that what you're experiencing is just temporary discomfort, nerves, or insecurity and you've prepared adequately for the exam, then our advice would be to power through and write the exam. There's a good chance you'll pass, and never have to worry about it again.

I. WHAT IF I FAIL THE EXAM?

We'll say this first, even if you don't believe it—failing your licensing exam is *not* the end of the world. Many notable figures failed their licensing exams the first time around and went on to lead illustrious careers, including Michelle Obama, Hillary Clinton, Brian Mulroney, and Franklin D. Roosevelt, to name a few. Many more have failed their first time and passed on the second or third, suffering nothing more than a bruise to the ego in the

7 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

long term. That being said, it is a terrible blow at first, especially after all the time and effort spent preparing.

When you first get the bad news, it will be deeply demoralizing. Allow yourself to feel the sadness, anxiety, and disappointment. Writing the exam again is initially going to seem overwhelming, so you need to properly process your emotions before moving forward. Take the time you need to do this, so that you can be in a clear and positive state of mind when you get into gear for the next attempt.

Once you've allowed yourself enough time to mentally prepare, create a strategy for the rewrite. Figure out whether you want to take the exam at the next sitting or whether you would prefer to wait. You can look into taking an [exam preparation course](#) to boost your confidence and to help structure your studying methods more efficiently.

It is important to identify your areas of weakness so that you can rectify your study methods accordingly for your second attempt. This is easier said than done for the Ontario Paralegal licensing exam, which relies heavily on strategy and time management to succeed. Review the scoring profile that the LSO sends you to see which areas could use further improvement.

There are a few common stumbling blocks for candidates, and chances are that one of the following mistakes held you back:

1. You didn't manage your time well on the exam and spent too long on certain questions, which caused you to run out of time.
2. You didn't read the LSO materials fully (or at all.)
3. You didn't take any practice tests or develop an exam-writing strategy.
4. Your study aids—for example, indices and notes—were of poor quality, or you didn't spend time reviewing and practicing with them.
5. Your reading comprehension suffered under the pressure, causing you to skim over key details or misinterpret what the questions were asking.
6. You were in a poor state of mind for personal reasons, such as illness, family issues, financial issues, anxiety, or grief.
7. You accidentally missed a line in your scantron, and your answers weren't aligning with the right questions.

7 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Also consider the free tutoring service, for up to five hours, that the LSO offers to candidates who have failed an exam. These tutors are people who have had experience with the exam and may be able to help you identify useful studying techniques that you might have overlooked the first time. Some candidates seek support on [canlawforum.com](https://www.canlawforum.com), where others can relate to the difficult experience and provide valuable advice.

It is important to look after your mental health at this time. Failing the licensing exam will injure your confidence, and it is important to be aware of this so that part of your strategy includes stress-management activities. As mortifying as it might seem, reaching out for support is a good idea. You'll be surprised by how many intelligent, accomplished people you know and respect had to take the licensing exam more than once. With some effort, assistance, and strategizing, you can and will pass the rewrite.

**LAST BUT NOT LEAST,
GOOD LUCK!**





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ISBN 978-1-77255-586-8



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