

The Day Before the Bar Exam

1. Focus on readiness, not volume

The final day before your exam is not for cramming. It is a day for organizing your mind and materials. Instead of reviewing large volumes of content, focus on reinforcing the tools you will use during the exam. This includes your index, tabs, summaries, and any cheat sheets you have created. Revisit areas that you already studied and skim your notes. Again, avoid starting any new sections or topics. You are not going to learn new material today. You are preparing to use what you already know under exam conditions.

2. Review your reference system

Also, spend time reviewing mentally how your materials are structured. Make sure you know how to find key topics across your printouts. If you created an index, scan through it. Flip to different areas and test how fast you can reach subtopics. If you have tabbed your LSO materials, confirm that your tabs are clearly labelled and still attached. Efficient navigation will save time during the exam, especially when answering case-based or professional responsibility questions that require quick references.

3. Organize everything you will need for exam day

Prepare all your materials and supplies ahead of time. This includes your LSO candidate card (not mandatory as of 2025), photo identification, your printed LSO materials, your tabbed or indexed notes, water, and any snacks that comply with the exam rules. If you are using a bar exam timing sheet (we include a [free one on our website](#)), print it out and keep it within reach. Do not leave anything to be packed in the morning. A well-prepared desk on exam day will help you begin the exam calmly and with confidence.

4. Map out your time management strategy

Remind yourself of your time allocation plan. You will have 4 hours and 30 minutes to answer 160 questions, which is approximately 1 minute and 40 seconds per question. If you tend to lose track of time, consider breaking the exam into quarters and setting internal checkpoints. Know in advance how you will handle difficult questions. If you do not know the answer immediately, flag it and move on. Every question is worth the same. There is no benefit in getting stuck on one item while others go unanswered.

6. Step away from group chats and social media

Avoid conversations that increase stress. This includes last-minute debates about difficult questions, speculation about what topics may appear, or peer comparisons. These distractions can lead to self-doubt, especially the night before the exam. If you need to connect with others, do so for support, not for analysis. Most candidates do better when they disconnect from unnecessary inputs and protect their focus during these final hours.

7. Do not study late into the night

There is no benefit to staying up late reading more pages. Your memory, attention, and focus all depend on a good night's sleep. Turn off your devices early. Eat a balanced meal. Give yourself time to unwind without legal content. Even if you do not sleep deeply, rest will still benefit your performance. Many candidates who pass the exam do so because they showed up alert and steady, not because they studied the most the night before.

8. Remember what the exam is designed to test

The Ontario bar exams assess whether you meet the standard of *minimum* competence for entry-level practice. You do not need to get every question right. You do not need to finish early. You need to apply legal knowledge, use your materials effectively, and make reasonable, ethical decisions. The goal is not perfection. The goal is passing. If you have prepared with structure and consistency, you are ready to meet that goal.

Day of the Exam

In-Person Exam Day Walkthrough: What to Expect at the Toronto Congress Centre

It's exam day. Writing the Ontario bar exam in person can feel overwhelming if you do not know what to expect. The following explains the full process at large venues like the Toronto Congress Centre so you can focus on the exam itself with fewer surprises. The overall structure is the same across most large test centers in Ontario.



1. Coat Check and Entry

When you arrive at the venue, the first stop is an optional coat/ bag check. You are required to check outerwear such as coats and jackets. Sweaters and cardigans that you plan to wear during the exam can stay with you. Bags, purses, or any personal items not permitted in the exam hall must also be checked. You will place them in clear ziplock bags and receive a numbered claim ticket so you can retrieve your belongings after the exam.

2. Waiting Area and Pocket Check

After coat check, you will be directed to a large waiting area just outside the exam halls. As you move through this area, staff will remind you that you must have absolutely nothing in your pockets. This includes loose papers, tissues, phones, or anything else. You should be carrying only your permitted exam materials and your ziplock bag at this point. Empty your pockets before moving to the next step.

3. Check-In and Hall Assignment

Check-in tables are arranged alphabetically by last name. Find the table that corresponds to the first letter of your last name.

After verifying your identity, LSO staff will give you a seat number and tell you whether you are writing in the left or right exam hall.

This number is important as it tells you where to sit inside the testing room.

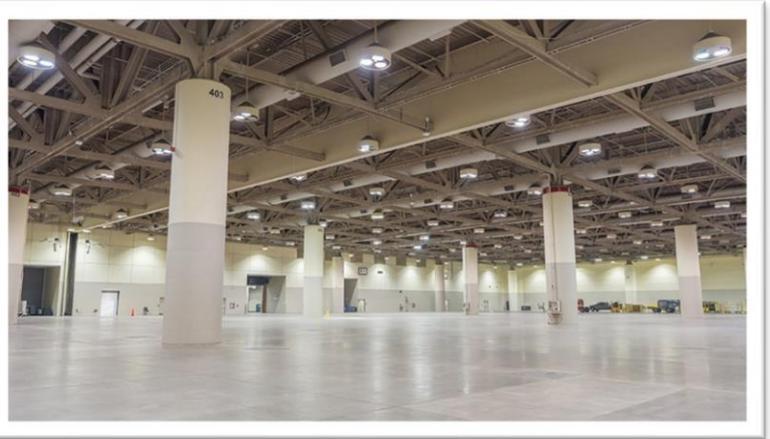


4. Security Screening

Once you have your seat number, you will move to a second line for full security screening. Each side of the exam area will have several screening tables.

When you reach the front of the line, you will place all of your permitted materials on the table. A staff member will go check your belongings for compliance with exam rules.

Once your materials are cleared, you can proceed into the exam hall.



5. Entering the Exam Hall and Finding Your Seat

The exam room is very large with hundreds of desks arranged in numbered rows.

Signs will help you find your section and your assigned desk. Each section contains about 15 to 20 desks, and each section is monitored by its own invigilator.

When you arrive at your desk, you will have time to set up your books and materials. You will usually have about 15 to 30 minutes before the exam begins.

You may have time to use the restroom or stretch before the exam begins, but follow all instructions from the staff. Washrooms are usually located inside the exam hall and do often get busy just before the exam begins.



6. Getting Ready to Begin

As the exam start time approaches, invigilators will instruct everyone to return to their desks. They will then hand out the exam booklet face down, along with a Scantron sheet.

You are not allowed to flip the booklet or start reading until instructed. At the front of the hall, a large digital timer will be projected on the wall showing four hours and 30 minutes.

A lead proctor will then read the official instructions and rules in both English and French.

This process usually takes a few minutes. Once complete, the proctor will announce that you may begin.

7. Writing the Exam

The timer will begin as soon as the exam starts. You are allowed to drink water and eat snacks at your desk as long as it does not disturb others.

You are also permitted to remove or put on a sweater as needed, but it must be placed directly under your chair and not on the table. If you need to use the washroom during the exam, raise your hand and wait for your assigned invigilator to escort you. You will not receive any extra time to make up for a bathroom break. Staff will continue to monitor the room throughout the exam.

8. Finishing and Exiting the Exam

When the countdown reaches zero, the proctor will announce that time is up. You must immediately stop writing and wait at your desk.

Do not touch your materials. Your invigilator will collect your Scantron sheet and exam booklet. All printed materials, binders, books, and boxes are to be left at your desk.

You may only take your ziplock bag, your coat check ticket, and your sweater. After the collection is complete, a proctor will read the exit instructions and begin dismissing students in order by zone and section. Follow the instructions and exit through the same entrance you used at the start of the day.

9. After You Exit

Once you leave the exam hall, you can return to the coat check area to retrieve any personal items left there prior to the exam. Be mindful not to talk about exam questions while at the venue. Discussing exam content is a violation of exam rules. Give yourself some time to rest, hydrate, and reset. At this point, you deserve it!



Legal Disclaimer

This document is intended solely to support Ontario bar exam candidates in preparing for the logistics and general experience of in-person Licensing Examinations administered by the Law Society of Ontario (LSO). All information provided herein is based exclusively on publicly available LSO materials (including the Rules and Protocol for Licensing Examinations and the Guide to Licensing Examinations) and general, observable procedures experienced by candidates at exam venues.

*This document does **not** disclose or reference any Examination Content as defined by the LSO, including exam questions, topics, fact patterns, answers, or evaluation methods. It also does not share any confidential or proprietary information relating to LSO security measures beyond what is already disclosed publicly on the LSO's official website. Any descriptions of the examination process (e.g., check-in, screening, seating, timing) are included for the purpose of candidate preparedness and reflect only what is reasonably visible to all attendees during the administration of the examination.*

This is not an official LSO document. Candidates are responsible for reviewing the most current and official LSO rules, policies, and communications through their [LSO account](#) and should contact the Law Society directly with any specific questions or concerns regarding examination procedures or accommodations. This original work is provided free of charge by PassTheBar.ca for informational purposes only; reproduction, distribution, or commercial use without express written permission is strictly prohibited.