

This was originally posted as a response to another member who asked what advice can I give new candidates as they begin this process. I thought it belonged as its own topic so others can post their situations and a dialogue can form that is meaningful to everyone.

Context

Its always good to consider the source, this is a little about me....

Education

B.S. Engineering
M.Arch

Experience

8 years experience in Architecture
Current position: Project Manager

Wife, 2 kids, homeowner, still have student loans....

My Process

This is the exact process I used for all my exams and it has worked so far.

1) Start Here

Go to the ARE Forum for the test you will be taking and surf that forum for a few days, read some reviews, some post test commentary and website references. This will help you understand the environment in which you will be spend the next few weeks.

2) Download everything on the FTP site

its there for a reason, and its probably of some benefit, so download it before it disappears.

3) Go to your office and print everything out.

Get some 3 ring binders and print out everything you have found online, on the Forum and on the FTP site

4) Get the Books and Get organized

Once you have gathered your material, organize yourself. Arrange all your content in some logical manner, tab it if you like, but get it organized. Nothing wastes time like looking for the random chart you saw some place, somewhere in one of your binders..... so get organized.

5) Take inventory and break out a calendar

Figure out how much you have to read, practice and absorb to feel confident about the test. Break it down to hours. As an example, CD took me 60 hours because there was a ton of reading, MM took me 70 hrs (even more reading), but LF took only 25 hours. Then make a realistic schedule of dates and times (schedule it like a class) and see where that puts you as for as a date, then schedule it. This is one of the hardest parts since LIFE HAPPENS...birthdays, the flu, weddings, vacations, holidays, all interfere in this one, but sacrifice is critical and this has to take a higher seat than most during this brief period in your life, so skip the party, take the medicine, send flowers to the bride and hit the books!!!

6) Find a quiet place to Study

This is as important as #5, if you can not concentrate, you are wasting time, find a place that is removed from everything and study, a library, your office or a bedroom are great. for me, my office has been my quiet place. I live close and have everything close to me for reference, and no one is here at 10pm...usually.

7) Support

Make sure your significant others in your life are aware of what you are doing and how difficult it is, this will make them understand (hopefully) how much this means to you and will be supportive when you can not make it to *THIS* event or *THAT* party... I have missed so many family events its insane, but again its for a short period of time...that what I keep telling myself....

8) Take your exam on a Monday

I have said this before in several other posts and it makes sense. You get two days of full time studying and get to catch up on some sleep, sometimes it take two day to do that. What I do is send everyone away the weekend before the test and put myself in lockdown. I study about 8-10 hours a day on both days, rent 2 movies, and get as much sleep as I can, again, I do nothing but study eat and sleep and relax a bit each day watching those two movies. Sleep is critical because these test are tricky and will need your undivided attention, slightly caffeinated helps (just slightly, a grande latte is perfect). Take the day off of work, for gods sake, this is your career we are talking about, its worth one sick day, and schedule it mid morning, you do not want to be rushing or sitting in traffic before your test, allow plenty of time to ease into the day and arrive on time.

9) Relax....

By this time you are ready, put the books away, tuck the flashcards in your backpack and sign in. You are ready. Go to the bathroom before you register, they may want to seat you right away, if you have to go, or think you might have to go, GO! then sign in.

10) EXAM

Read each question carefully. Mark the ones you do not know right away and move one. Mark all calculations for later. Then continue. Go thru all the questions and then go back to the harder ones, keep knocking them out until you are done. then if time permits, go through them again. Trust your first instinct, something deep inside says its right, go with it.

11) Postmortem

Take notes on the areas tested, vocabulary you did not understand and critical areas of the test. Tuck it away in your backpack, you will not need it for 6 months at least (hopefully never again).

12) Start again

Its important to take your momentum and keep going, start with step one and go for it. Take a group of three exams and knock them out before taking any breaks. CD PD and MM are great first exams (in that order) then take a month off and go back to GS LF and ME and do the same.

Seminars, Workshops and Study Groups

I like the first two, I like to study alone, that is my preference but others like the motivation of a study buddy, but its not for me. I do recommend the following: Dorf Seminars for SP BP and BT. Thaddeus for GS and LF as I took both seminars and found them very helpful. Dorfs is a must if you are taking the graphics exams, hands down the best money I spent.

Materials

this process is expensive. Anything you can do to get your firm to help finance this process will help you. Kaplan books alone for all the exams are over \$1000.00 and that is not even enough material. Break out your school books, ALLEN's book for MM is critical, MEEB for ME is a huge resource and Architectural Graphic Standards (\$200) is essential for all the MC exams. Its pricey and there is no way around it, only ways to reduce it.

Persistence

Keep going....do not give up. You may fail an exam or 2 or 3, but keep going.... do not get derailed or depressed by any fail letters, just regroup and schedule it as soon as it fit your schedule. Never Never give up

5-yr Rolling Clock

This does not pertain to you, you will pass these well before the fifth year, just keep going. I am in California but I have noticed that some in other State's have different rules that relate to this clock, I can not speak to those conditions, but I can say that you will pass them if you take them seriously as you do your livelihood...

Conclusion

If you are reading this, you are about to take the next great step in your career, to become an Architect. This process must be taken very seriously and with as much passion as you poured into your favorite studio project in school. The all nighters, the caffeine frenzy, the intensity and passion must be reignited to make this final push toward licensure. Architecture School was hard, fun but hard, but now your world has changed, kids, mortgage, spouse, and full time jobs are part of the equation, it makes it more difficult than ever to get this accomplished. But it takes all the steps above to do it and support being one of the most important. Without that, it will be nearly impossible to achieve your goal. It is not a singular journey, your family is part of you and will need to realize that this IS what make you an Architect, these 9 exams, and never finding the time means never achieving your goal.... **these tests are not hard, but they do require diligent study and that takes time**, you need to carve out that time to make this happen; for you and your family. Make it short, do the steps I outlined, its the fastest way through this. Life gets in the way, sometimes its unavoidable, sometimes its not, you need to realize that sacrifice is part of the game, you will need huge amounts of it to get this behind you.

If you have read this far, you know what I mean. More importantly, you are taking inventory of your situation now and trying to figure out your next move. My advice is to start with those around you and let them know what you are about to do, begin to gather that support, you will need it.

Good luck,

xdesignx

As of 1/3/07

I have passed:
Waiting for results on:
Studying for:

MM, CD, PD, SP, BP, BT, LF
GS
ME