

MARYLAND GENERAL BAR EXAMINATION

LAPTOP USE

Applicants wishing to use a laptop for the Maryland General Bar Examination will be permitted to do so, space permitting, provided the applicant files to sit for the examination, properly completes and files the attached application to use a laptop, and fully complies with the procedure for registering the laptop for use at the bar examination.

Laptop users must pay the required fee directly to ExamSoft, SBLE's software vendor, for use of its proprietary software, SofTest[®], and for access to an electric outlet at the exam site. Payment must be made on-line, by credit card, at ExamSoft's website when registering the laptop. The laptop fee is entirely **non-refundable**. Applicants retaking the Bar Exam must register and pay to use SofTest[®] for each successive exam even if he or she previously installed and used SofTest[®] for another Bar examination.

SofTest[®] is licensed security software designed to provide a basic word processor while locking out access to all other programs resident on the computer during testing, including Internet access. SofTest[®] is designed to be familiar to users of Microsoft Word and WordPerfect. Copy, cut, paste, bold, italics, and underlining are available. Spell check is not available. Answers are printed with standardized font and line spacing, but without change to the content and organization of the answers.

Before applying to use a laptop for the Maryland General Bar Examination, applicants must read this entire document and also read the ExamSoft *Frequently Asked Questions* (FAQs) on the "Support" tab at www.examssoft.com/mdbar. The FAQs contain important information about how to avoid conflicts between SofTest[®] and other software running in the background on your computer, such as anti-spyware, firewalls, and other security software.

Information on application and registration fees for upcoming exams may be viewed by linking to the appropriate exam-specific document at: www.mdcourts.gov/ble/laptopuse.html.

PROCEDURE TO APPLY FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE LAPTOP PROGRAM

- Timely file a properly completed Bar application and Original Petition (for first time takers) or a Retake Petition (for repeaters).
- Complete the Laptop Application Form and submit it to SBLE's office so that it is received not later than the Petition deadline for the exam you intend to take (May 20 for July exams and December 20 for February exams. The laptop application should be submitted in a separate envelope from the Bar application and Petition.
- The laptop application is located at the end of these instructions.

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PROCEDURE TO REGISTER AND QUALIFY YOUR LAPTOP FOR USE

1. Number of Laptops: Applicants may register one (1) laptop computer for the examination. Once registered, applicants cannot change to another laptop without authorization from SBLE. (Authorization is routinely granted in cases of lost, stolen or damaged laptops leading up to the exam.)
2. Registration Period: SBLE will provide all applicants who timely file their laptop application with instructions for registration and qualification of their laptop by email not later than 25 days prior to the scheduled examination, including the required Application Number and Password to log on to the ExamSoft website. All registration and qualification actions must be accomplished at ExamSoft's website during the registration period. **This registration period will open approximately 3 weeks prior to the scheduled examination and remain open for 2 weeks.** Those who fail to register during this period will not be able to use a laptop.
3. Registration and Laptop Qualification Procedure:
 - a. Register and Install Software: Log on using the Application number and Password provided by SBLE and follow the instructions on the "Exam Takers" tab at ExamSoft's website (www.examsoft.com/mdbar). Pay \$125 by credit card to ExamSoft when registering. Pre-install SofTest[®] software specifically for the scheduled Maryland bar examination you intend to take (even if SofTest[®] was previously installed for another examination) on the laptop to be used at the examination.

Applicants must not disable or tamper with SofTest[®]'s security features. Any attempt to do so will be viewed as cheating and may result in the applicant's disqualification for admission to the Maryland Bar. Applicants must not alter or change their laptop's configuration and must not use System Restore to revert to an earlier restore point after completing the registration process.

Once properly registered, applicants will receive confirmation from ExamSoft that they properly downloaded and installed SofTest[®] and registered your copy of SofTest[®]. At the same time, applicants should automatically receive a download of the Mock Exam (see below) and the two actual examination answer files for use on Essay Day. Applicants should also receive email confirmation of these downloads.

- b. Practice the Mock Exam:

Applicants must complete the Mock Test to fully qualify their laptop for use during the exam. The purpose of the Mock Exam is to confirm that the registered laptop is compatible with SofTest[®] and to familiarize the applicant, prior to the Bar examination, with how to open an answer file, write an answer using the proprietary word processor, and upload completed answer files via the Internet.

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There is no question provided with the Mock Exam. The content of the Mock Exam answer is the applicant's choice. It is helpful to practice typing in the Mock Exam file for a period of time sufficient to verify that the SofTest[®] installation will work properly for the actual duration of the bar examination, but, the duration of the Mock Exam practice is strictly up to the applicant.

Applicants should complete the Mock Exam off-line and then connect to the Internet and upload the Mock Exam answer file to the ExamSoft website. During the upload process, applicants will see a visual status/progress bar. A "success" message displays when the upload is complete. An automatic email confirmation of the answer upload will be sent to the email address provided during registration. Applicants not receiving the automatic confirmation email should re-launch SofTest[®], click "Exam History," and enter their login information to view the download/upload history and confirm that the answer was uploaded successfully.

The procedure used to open, type, and upload the Mock Exam is the same procedure to be used on exam day to open, type, close and upload the morning and afternoon files of the Board's Written Test. Applicants may download and practice upload of the Mock Exam up to five (5) times.

c. Additional Practice with SofTest[®]: A SofTest[®] icon will appear on Windows desktop after registration. There is a practice exam built into the software. Double click the SofTest[®] icon. Click "Launch SofTest[®]." When SofTest[®] opens, click the "Practice Exam" button. The purpose of the Practice Exam is to familiarize users with the SofTest[®] exam environment and word processing features. Practice exam answers cannot be saved or uploaded to ExamSoft. Applicants may use this Practice Exam as many times as they wish.

4. Technical Support: Applicants having problems or questions should first consult ExamSoft's "Frequently Asked Questions" web page on the "Support" section at www.examsoft.com/mdbar. The "Support" section provides for help by Live Chat, email, or by phone toll-free at 866-429-8889 or fax at 954-429-0733. **SBLE does not offer technical support for SofTest[®].**

5. Procedure For Applicants Experiencing Laptop Problems after Registration: Applicants whose laptop computer becomes inoperable (or lost/stolen) after registration must obtain authorization from SBLE to qualify another laptop and to download another set of answer files. Applicants will not be permitted, under any circumstances, to register a "backup" laptop.

*******Do not copy the ExamSoft program from one computer to another. You will receive an error message at the outset of the bar examination if you attempt to use a laptop other than the one on which you initially completed the qualification process without receiving authorization from SBLE and re-downloading the SofTest[®] program. In that event, you will have to handwrite the examination answers.*******

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EXAMINATION DAY PROCEDURES

1. **Permitted Items:** Bring your registered and fully qualified laptop and the compatible power cord. A 6' power strip/extension cord is permitted. Fully charge the laptop's battery in case there is a power interruption. Applicants may bring and use a compatible mouse and/or full-sized keyboard, both of which may be wireless.

2. **Prohibited Items:** Backup laptops are prohibited. External hard drives, floppy diskettes, flash drives, CDs, DVDs and all other removable media are prohibited.

3. **Start Time:** Arrive in the designated examination room not later than 8:15 a.m. Essay Day to set up the laptop, and initialize the SofTest[®] program. SBLE will provide the morning session password then. General announcements for the examination will begin promptly at 8:45 a.m. The examination time will commence at the conclusion of the general announcements (approximately 9 am). **Late arrivals will not receive extra time. Applicants unable to successfully launch SofTest[®] by the commencement of the examination are strongly encouraged to handwrite their answers. No extra time will be granted to applicants using examination time to seek support from ExamSoft. NO EXCEPTIONS.**

4. **Execution of Waiver of Liability:** During startup period prior to the general announcements, each laptop user must execute a Waiver of Liability. In signing the Waiver, each applicant confirms compliance with the conditions for using a laptop, acknowledges the option to handwrite the exam if problems arise with the laptop, and releases SBLE and ExamSoft from any liability in the event of a malfunction of the software, the hardware, or the electrical service.

5. Examination Steps

a. Applicants will use the morning session answer file for the MPT question and essay questions 1 through 3. The answer fields are captioned at the top. Be careful to insert each question in the section designated for the question (e.g., Question 1 in the section for Question 1; Question 2 in the section for Question 2, etc.). **Regardless of how the answer files are numbered, the MPT answer goes in the first answer field, which will be captioned as such.** Use the afternoon session answer file for essay questions 4 through 10. Examination questions will be distributed to laptop users in the same hardcopy format used by hand-writer applicants.

b. Applicants must carefully follow the instructions provided at the examination. Use great care while editing to avoid deleting any part of the answer.

c. ExamSoft provides on-site support engineers for technical support during the Bar exam. Prior to the start of testing, the engineers will provide support at an applicant's seat. Once the examination time begins to run, applicants may take their laptops to the ExamSoft site engineer's table for assistance. Applicants are responsible for deciding whether to take time to

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work with the ExamSoft engineers or to begin handwriting. No extra time will be granted for laptop users who have problems with SofTest[®]. **NO EXCEPTIONS.** Applicants who are unable to resolve any problem occurring with SofTest[®] should handwrite the remainder of their answers.

6. After the Exam

a. Applicants may upload their answers to ExamSoft via Internet at the exam site. If unable to upload at the exam site, applicants must find another Internet connection after leaving the examination site and upload their answers by 11:59 p.m. on Essay Day. Applicants should receive a confirmation email automatically from ExamSoft upon a successful upload. Applicants not receiving the email must follow instructions that will be provided at the exam to manually confirm successful upload of answers.

b. SBLE will print all uploaded answers at its office using a standard format for line spacing and font. The content and organization of answers will not change during printing.

c. If there is a problem printing your answers, SBLE may require the applicant to bring his or her laptop to SBLE's office to retrieve the encrypted copy of the answers from the laptop's hard drive. **APPLICANTS MUST NOT REMOVE SOFTEST[®] FROM THEIR LAPTOPS UNTIL THEY HAVE RECEIVED THEIR EXAM RESULTS.**

d. SBLE will grade your printed answers using the same procedures employed for grading handwritten answers.

**Laptop Application Form
for the Maryland Bar Examination**

The State Board of Law Examiners **must receive** this completed form at the Board's Administrative Office, 2011-F Commerce Park Drive, Annapolis, MD 21401 **no later than:**

- **May 20th for the July bar examination**
- **December 20th for the February bar examination**

Include a self-addressed postage paid postcard if you wish the Board to confirm receipt of your laptop application. You may access eBar to see if your Laptop Application has been granted.

I hereby request to use a laptop computer to type the essay portion of the Maryland Bar Examination for July or February of _____.

Full Name of Applicant: _____

Full Street Address: _____

City, State, Zip Code: _____

Email Address: _____

Daytime Telephone Number: _____

Last 4 Digits of SSN: _____

I hereby apply to use a laptop computer to type the written portion of the Maryland Bar Examination. I affirm that I have read the guidelines for participating in the laptop program. I understand that there is a \$125 laptop registration fee that must be paid directly to Examsoft by credit card when registering my laptop and that the fee is non-refundable and non-transferrable. I understand my responsibilities for registering my laptop, following all of the procedures for recording my answers, and uploading my answers via the Internet by the end of the essay day (11:59 pm).

I hereby release the State Board of Law Examiners, its staff, Board members and proctors, and ExamSoft, its staff and site engineers, from any and all liability arising from or arising as a consequence of a software or hardware malfunction, power failure or other disruption or preclusion in connection with my use of the SofTest software, including any loss of an answer or inability to login to use the software program. I understand that, should I experience a software or hardware malfunction during the bar examination, I will have to complete the written test by handwriting the remainder of my answers. I understand that I will not receive a grade for any answer which is lost and cannot be recovered, regardless of the reason for the loss.

Applicant Signature: _____ Date: _____