NINE TIPS FOR PASSING THE ARE 5.0
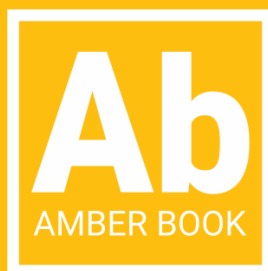
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While architecture licensure requires dedication, there are tricks that you can incorporate into your studying practice to set you up for a higher likelihood of passing.

Our team at Amber Book has compiled a list of the top nine tips for passing the ARE to give you a plan for exam preparation.

1 Content First

There's a common misconception that people mostly fail for three reasons:

- They didn't prepare for the specific format of the exams

- They didn't have access to a secret exam hack

- They didn't have enough emotional support during a problematic testing process

The truth is that people most often fail because they just don't know enough to answer the questions correctly. While you can engage in exam hacks at the margins to get a few extra points, you'll have the best odds of passing — and the most fun studying — by reaching a deep understanding of the material.

And how do you find the best course prep content? Look for the best teacher — no one ever had a bad class with a good teacher.

Just like any other professional test, you can acquire and utilize the best review materials to help you develop a good foundation of knowledge and build from there.

2   Don't Memorize Content, Own It

Of course, there are some notions like 'cement types' and 'number of square feet in an acre' that you'll need to memorize. However, beginning in about 2017, the exam started to phase out "architecture trivia" test items and bid adieu to fact-recall as a mode of testing.

A defining feature of the 5.0 ARE is a focus on "content ownership," which means prioritizing analysis and application.

More and more, you'll need to take your knowledge in each area and apply it to simplified real-life applications. For instance, a single question on the exam might stretch three paragraphs long, and begin like this:

"An owner has hired an architect to design a stand-alone pizza parlor on a sloped site in a warm humid climate. The owner's priority is meeting the construction schedule and … "

Then, the question continues on for dozens of lines, only to end like this:

"What HVAC system type is most appropriate for the commercial kitchen exhaust? Select the best two of the following six choices."

3   Prepare to Pace Yourself

You'll need to know about 1,100 concepts to pass the ARE, and each concept will take you approximately 10 minutes to own if you study from a useful, efficient and engaging resource. If you study from a source with insufficient instructive value, each concept will more than likely take you 100 minutes or more to understand, and you likely won't prioritize the right subjects anyway.

The difference between one resource and another may be equivalent to the difference between your favorite college course and your least-favorite college course's stapled packet handout.

Studying for the ARE requires discipline, patience and a lot of dedicated work hours. With a good study source, you should plan to dedicate at least 180 hours to studying. Any online source that tells you a shortcut exists is simply lying to you.

You can save yourself a lot of pain, tears and time if you find a study source that:

- Knows which 1,100 concepts you need to pass.

- Can efficiently transfer ownership of those 1,100 concepts to you

- Makes studying interesting and fun

- Will make you a better architect on the other side of this lengthy process

That last bullet point may or may not be important to you now, as you're understandably singularly focused on getting through the exams. But our experience suggests that, for most people, leveraging the studying to grow into a better architect gains salience on the backside of this process — after all of the exams are passed, and you ask yourself what all the work was for.

A good teacher makes a considerable difference when it comes to studying and test success. Invest in your future and find a study source that meets this criterion and makes the process more manageable rather than more difficult.

4 Don't Overextend the Timeline

NCARB clocks the average length of time from the first exam attempted to the last exam passed at 2.4 years — and that doesn't include the months spent studying before sitting for that first exam, nor does it account for those who never pass.

In total, we estimate that the average architect spends three years passing these exams.

Three years is about five times too long in our opinion. Shoot for six months from your first study efforts to your last pass. And if it takes longer, don't beat yourself up. Even if it takes a full year, that's far better than three!

With the workload, it can be tempting to take time off after a single exam, but the most efficient way to pass is to just power through them one after another while the material is fresh in your mind.

5 Study for Construction Contract Peculiarities Before Bending Moment Calculations

To some testers' surprise, the ARE includes less quantitative structures content and more professional practice content (accounting and law) than they might have predicted or been told by senior colleagues.

6 Plan for Content Overlap

The licensure exam comes in six parts or "divisions":

1. Practice Management (PcM)

2. Project Management (PjM)

3. Programming & Analysis (PA)

4. Project Planning & Design (PPD)

5. Project Development & Documentation (PDD)

6. Construction & Evaluation (CE)

Compared to previous versions of the ARE, the ARE 5.0 has far more content overlap between its exam divisions. You'll want to think of these six divisions as one long exam taken over six days.

We've helped more than 16,000 testers study for the ARE. We try to get folks to adopt a study-for-all-six-and-take-all-six mindset. We find that adopting this approach will reduce your total study hours by 50%, reduce your total months to licensure by 75%, and make it 20% more likely that you'll pass each division.

But of all our tips, this is the one that typically scares people the most, and if you wish to study for one exam at a time, that's fine too. No matter what, we'll support your studies at whatever pace feels most comfortable to you.

7 Failing a Licensure Exam Isn't Really Like Failing a Regular Test

Failing is a feature — not a bug in this process. You're no longer in high school where failing a big exam can potentially hold you back a year or haunt your report cards. Like the NBA, a missed three-point shot is just a part of the game. Next time you're open, take a deep breath and take another shot. Your goal isn't to make that single shot — it's to win the game.
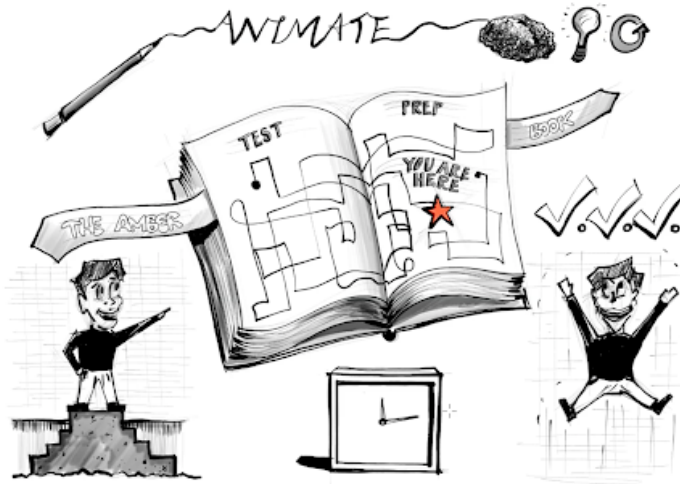
8 Silence Your Socials

If you don't absolutely have to, don't publicly tell anyone you're studying for the ARE and don't post your study plans on social media. We've found that when people overshare their exam ambitions online, they also over-study to avoid the embarrassment of having to publicly explain a failure. Given that you have X hours to study, it is better to spend that time right — right-sized studying for two exam divisions rather than overstudying for one.

Instead of sharing your plans, put your head down, study hard, surprise your colleagues with a passing score on an exam that they didn't even know you sat for and go celebrate your success with them afterward. If you fail, no one has to know that you even took the exam.

9 Practice Retrieval Makes Perfect

Cognitive scientists tell us that the act of putting concepts into your own words makes the concepts stickier. Practicing retrieval of those concepts gives you long-term recall. That's why highlighting text in a book has never really helped you learn anything, but creating and testing yourself with flashcards is more consistently effective.

Pass the ARE with Amber Book

Created by licensed architect Michael Ermann for future architects, Amber Book is a course that has been taken by over 16,000 enrollees and is designed to help people become licensed architects as efficiently as possible through the use of high-quality animated videos and study materials.

Amber Book is a partner to help guide you through the heavy preparation and will advise you during the examination process with 50+ hours of animated instruction, 500+ practice problems with detailed explanations and 1,000+ digital flashcards.

Enroll in the course today to take the next step in your career and tackle the ARE. If you're not thrilled with the course, we'll give you 100% of your money back, no questions asked