

MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF LAW EXAMINERS
LAPTOP USE ON THE MARYLAND GENERAL BAR
EXAMINATION

The Maryland State Board of Law Examiners (SBLE) encourages, but does not require, applicants to use laptop computers on the Maryland General Bar Exam. Applicants wishing to use a laptop for the Maryland General Bar Examination must fully comply with the procedure for registering the laptop for use at the Bar Examination.

Applicants wishing to use their laptops on the Maryland General Bar Exam must use SofTest[®] by ExamSoft (unless SBLE has granted ADA-test accommodations with which SofTest[®] is incompatible.) 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. Copy, cut, paste, bold, italics, and underlining are available. Spell check is not available (except to applicants applying for and receiving ADA test accommodations that include the use of spell check). Answers are printed with standardized font and line spacing, but without change to the content and organization of the answers.

Laptop users must pay a 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.

Before applying to use a laptop for the Maryland General Bar Examination, applicants must read this entire document and should also read the SofTest[®] system requirements and ExamSoft *Frequently Asked Questions* (FAQs) on the "Support" tab at www.examsoft.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.

PROCEDURE TO APPLY FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE LAPTOP PROGRAM

- Timely file a properly completed Bar Application and Notice to Take Scheduled Maryland Bar Examination. **When creating the Notice, select "Use a laptop computer for the written test" when prompted.**
- *(Note to re-takers: SBLE has discontinued use of the written Laptop Application.)*

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.)
 - ExamSoft charges a non-refundable, non-waivable \$50 re-installation fee to register a new laptop.
2. **Registration Period:** SBLE will provide instructions for laptop registration, including the required Application Number and Password to log on to the ExamSoft website, to all applicants who timely request laptop use by email prior to the registration period. **The registration period will open approximately**

three (3) weeks prior to the scheduled examination and remain open until the Friday preceding the exam. All registration and qualification actions must be accomplished at ExamSoft's website during the registration period. Those who fail to register during the registration period will not be able to use a laptop on the Maryland Bar Exam.

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 **\$130** 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. After installing SofTest®, applicants must not alter or change their laptop's configuration and must not use "System Restore" or other means 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 SofTest® for use. 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 will receive email confirmation of these downloads.

b. Complete 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.

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 and then 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 login to the ExamSoft portal www.examsoft.com/mdbar using their registration credentials and click the Manual Upload button at the top of the page.

On exam day, applicants will use the same procedure used to open, type, and upload the Mock Exam. Applicants may download and practice upload of the Mock Exam up to five (5) times.

4. Technical Support: Applicants having problems or questions should first consult the many support topics by clicking the "Support" button 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 contact ExamSoft Support to register another laptop and to download another set of answer files. Re-registration authorization is routinely granted, but ExamSoft charges a non-refundable, non-waivable \$50 fee for re-registration. (*Note: 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, paying the re-registration fee, and re-downloading the SofTest® program. In that event, you will have to handwrite the examination answers. *******

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 in accordance with the arrival time specified in your examination pass/seat number letter to set up the laptop, and initialize the SofTest® program. SBLE will provide written instructions including the morning session password then. General announcements for the examination will begin promptly. 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 the 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, ExamSoft, and all other examination vendors 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 fields 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 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.