



A Comprehensive Guide to Bar Reciprocity

BY
HARRISON BARNES



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What is Bar Reciprocity and Which States Allow You to Waive Into the Bar?



One of the biggest mistakes attorneys make in their job search is not looking at multiple markets. For most attorneys, we recommend that you **consider multiple markets when you are conducting a job search**—there are lifestyle, prestige, compensation, and many other considerations that make looking at other markets worth your while.

You graduated from law school, passed the bar exam, and have met all other requirements for admission in a given state. Congratulations! You can begin practicing law in that state.

But what if you have not yet passed the bar exam? Or if you want to explore legal opportunities in a state different from the one where you were admitted? Or practice federal law in federal district courts? Are there additional hurdles you will need to overcome?

Keep reading to learn the answers to these questions and more: This article provides an overview of **the bar admission process**—a complicated process that varies from state to state—and **explores ways in which attorneys licensed in one state can practice in other states**. It also covers what to do if you fail the bar exam, how to make use of your J.D. degree without actually practicing law, and the recent trend towards “portability” of bar exam results through state adoption of the Uniform Bar Exam.

Passing the bar is a HUGE accomplishment. All of your hard work has paid off: Getting excellent grades in college, acing the LSAT, churning out the law school applications, braving the Socratic method and final exams of law school, writing onto a journal, competing in moot court—and now the icing on the cake—a passing score on the bar exam!

All that is left is to do is fulfill the few remaining steps for admission in the state where you passed the bar, such as the character and fitness determination. Then you will be off and running in your new career as an attorney.

As you plan your job search, we encourage you to think about applying in several markets. As **legal recruiters** we always explore the benefits of applying in several markets with our clients who are serious about career strategy. Additional markets give you additional options in all kinds of ways including lifestyle, financial benefits, prestige, happiness and other considerations. You may be the perfect fit for a market or job you may not have even considered—and you may be able to land that job without even taking another bar exam. Read on to learn about bar reciprocity which allows you to **pass the bar in one state and work in another**, multiple bar admissions, and other related topics.

A Comprehensive Guide to BAR RECIPROCITY

BAR EXAMS

Pass the Bar Exam in
at Least One State



Different State Bar Exams



Uniform Bar Exam



ADMISSIONS

Multiple State Admissions



Admission on
Motion and Reciprocity

"going through the waive-in process"



Admission Pro Hac Vice

"for this one particular occasion"



Working in a State
Without Admission

"exception for in-house corporate work"



Consider Multiple
Markets for Work



Federal Courts Bar Admissions

"going through the waive-in process"



Passing the Bar Exam in at Least One State

Your future is not doomed if you never pass a bar exam, but your employment opportunities in the legal arena will increase exponentially if you pass the bar exam and get admitted in at least one state. We recommend that you make every effort to do so, even if it means taking the bar exam several times and/or in another jurisdiction with an “easier” bar exam in order to pass.

The reason is simple. Bar admission gives you the “Admitted to the Bar” stamp of approval, elevates your desirability in the eyes of employers, and gives you the ticket you need to make a living.

Without bar admission in at least one state, your resume can work against you. A potential employer will see that you are a J.D. but that you have not passed the bar and wonder why. Employers will often assume the worst—that you are not smart or diligent enough to pass the bar exam—and they will not want to hire you.

Putting aside how you will look to future employers, a bar admission also gives you the opportunity to be your own employer. You can hang a shingle, get clients, and if you are competent and industrious, you will have a means of supporting yourself and your family for the rest of your life.

Because it is so beneficial to pass the bar exam in at least one state, we recommend that people buckle down and take the test as soon as possible after they graduate from law school. You may be exhausted from final exams and want to lie on the beach or play basketball, but most people who take the bar exam after a long hiatus will tell you that they wish they had not done things that way. It is easier to pass the bar exam when you are still in “law student” mode and law school concepts are fresh in your mind.

Also, the longer a person waits to take the bar exam, the harder it might be to study because he or she may get married, have kids, and get into a full-time job where it is difficult to take time off from work to study.

Different State Bar Exams and the UBE Trend

The issue of bar admission is complicated because each state has its own set of laws, **types of bar exams** and bar admission requirements. In order to “practice law” in the courts of a particular state, someone must first be admitted to the bar of that state. An attorney who passed the New York bar exam and is admitted to practice in New York, for example, cannot practice law in California without first passing the California bar exam and being admitted in California. (Some states do allow attorneys to use bar admissions in other states to **“waive” into the bar**. We discuss that option below.)

Right now there is a trend among certain states to unify the process of bar admission through use of the Uniform Bar Exam (UBE). Massachusetts is the latest state to adopt at least part of the UBE. The other states are Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, Oregon, South Carolina, Utah, Vermont, Washington, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

Missouri and North Dakota were the first states to administer the UBE in February 2011, followed by Alabama in July 2011 and New York, Iowa, Kansas, New Mexico, and Vermont in 2016. Massachusetts began administering the UBE in 2018.

The UBE is a set of three testing devices prepared by the National Conference of Bar Examiners. The UBE concentrates on general legal concepts as opposed to intricacies of any particular state's laws in an effort to provide a uniform way to measure performance across the country.

The UBE is comprised of the Multistate Bar Exam (MBE), which is a set of 200 multiple-choice questions on Constitutional Law, Contracts, Criminal Law and Procedure, Federal Civil Procedure, Evidence, Real Property, and Torts; the Multistate Essay Examination; and the Multistate Performance Test. States can utilize some or all portions of the UBE and set their own scoring criteria. Every state except Louisiana currently administers the MBE portion of the UBE. Some states, like California, administer the MBE together with state-specific essay and performance test features. Policies vary among the state bar associations that allow the transfer of MBE scores from one jurisdiction to another.

In theory, the UBE fosters portability of law licenses, especially with respect to states like Minnesota and Idaho that accept passing UBE scores from any state within a certain window of time (between two to five years). But this practice is limited to a select group of states—and even in those states where you will need to sit for the bar exam or find another way to get admitted if you apply outside of the time frame when your UBE score still counts. Moreover, other states that administer the UBE require applicants to take a separate course and test on state subjects for admittance.

States like California—which has one of the most difficult bar exams in the country—do not use the UBE. If you want to practice in those states you will need to start from scratch (which means you take the whole test or, if you are an attorney who has practiced law in another state for a certain length of time, you take the more limited “attorneys’ exam”). The previous California bar exam was three days long and consisted of six essays, two performance tests, and 200 multiple-choice MBE questions. The exam covered 13 subjects including the MBE “multistate” subjects in addition to state subjects like community property and remedies. The California State Bar Board of Trustees voted to revamp the format and as of July 2017 the California bar exam is now a two-day test consisting of one day of essays and one day of the MBE.

Multiple State Admissions

In order to maximize employability and have the ability to take on clients in different states, many attorneys opt to **take the bar in multiple states** right after law school. This is particularly useful for attorneys who live in metropolitan areas that cover the tri state area of New York (New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut).

Multiple state admission is also a useful strategy for attorneys who live in less populated rural states because it expands the attorney's network of potential employers and clients. States in these clusters generally arrange their bar exam schedules so that people are able to take multiple bar exams around the same time.

Federal Courts Bar Admissions

Even more varied are the rules that govern whether someone can practice federal law in one of the 94 federal district courts spread across the country and U.S. territories. Admission requirements differ from district court to district court, but admission generally involves at the very least paying a fee and taking an oath. Many district courts require an attorney to be admitted to practice before the state courts of the state in which the federal court sits. For example, to apply for admission to the United States District Court for the Central District of California, an attorney must be an active member in good standing of the State Bar of California.

Other districts simply require that an attorney be admitted in any state, or, like the Eastern District of Wisconsin, get an affidavit in support of admission from an attorney admitted to practice before that district court.

Special rules apply for gaining admission to the United States Tax Court to **become a tax attorney** and for becoming a member of the “**patent bar**” to prosecute patents before the United States Patent and Trademark Office.

Admission on Motion and Reciprocity

Some states allow an attorney admitted in one state to “waive” into the bars of their state, which is known as getting “admitted on motion.” To **effectively manage the waive-in process**, it is important to know the **waive-in requirements** for each particular state.

Some states do not allow an attorney to “waive” into their state—no matter how much experience an attorney has—and states that do allow admission on motion have individual criteria, such as the need to be “sponsored” by a local attorney. The District of Columbia allows admission on motion based on criteria, whereas California does not allow it in any situations.

Some states allow admission on motion, but only for attorneys coming from states with “reciprocity” to that state. Therefore, if State A allows attorneys from State B to waive in, then attorneys from State B can “reciprocally” waive in to State A.

Federal district courts have their own rules about admission on motion and reciprocity. Attorneys admitted to practice in 25 of the nation’s 94 district courts are given reciprocity, but that may increase in the future in accordance with the trend towards greater access.

Take a look at the following charts that cover reciprocity, comity, and attorneys' exams in all 50 states and the U.S. territories:

Reciprocity, Comity, and Attorneys' Exams

Jurisdiction	Admission on motion is based on reciprocity		Attorneys initially admitted by diploma privilege are eligible for admission on motion	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Alabama	X			X
Alaska	X			X
Arizona	X			X
Arkansas	X		X	
California				
Colorado	X		X	
Connecticut	X		X	
Delaware				
District of Columbia		X	X	
Florida				
Georgia	X			X
Hawaii				
Idaho	X			X
Illinois		X	X	
Indiana		X	X	
Iowa		X	X	
Kansas	X			X
Kentucky	X		X	
Louisiana				
Maine		X	X	
Maryland		X	X	

Jurisdiction	Admission on motion is based on reciprocity		Attorneys initially admitted by diploma privilege are eligible for admission on motion	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Massachusetts		X	X	
Michigan		X	X	
Minnesota		X	X	
Mississippi	X		X	
Missouri	X		X	
Montana		X		X
Nebraska		X	X	
Nevada				
New Hampshire	X			X
New Jersey	X			X
New Mexico	X			X
New York	X		X	
North Carolina	X		X	
North Dakota		X	X	
Ohio		X	X	
Oklahoma	X		X	
Oregon	X			X
Pennsylvania	X		X	
Rhode Island				
South Carolina				
South Dakota	X		X	
Tennessee		X	X	
Texas		X	X	
Utah	X			X

Jurisdiction	Admission on motion is based on reciprocity		Attorneys initially admitted by diploma privilege are eligible for admission on motion	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Vermont		X	X	
Virginia	X		X	
Washington		X	X	
West Virginia	X		X	
Wisconsin		X	X	
Wyoming	X			X

Jurisdiction	Offers an Attorneys' Exam		Attorneys must be from an ABA-approved school to qualify for the Attorneys' Exam	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Alabama		X		
Alaska		X		
Arizona		X		
Arkansas		X		
California	X			X
Colorado		X		
Connecticut		X		
Delaware		X		
District of Columbia		X		
Florida		X		
Georgia	X		X	
Hawaii		X		
Idaho	X		X	

Jurisdiction	Offers an Attorneys' Exam		Attorneys must be from an ABA-approved school to qualify for the Attorneys' Exam	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Illinois		X		
Indiana		X		
Iowa		X		
Kansas		X		
Kentucky		X		
Louisiana		X		
Maine		X		
Maryland		X		
Massachusetts		X		
Michigan		X		
Minnesota		X		
Mississippi		X		
Missouri		X		
Montana		X		
Nebraska		X		
Nevada		X		
New Hampshire		X		
New Jersey		X		
New Mexico		X		
New York		X		
North Carolina		X		
North Dakota		X		
Ohio		X		

Jurisdiction	Offers an Attorneys' Exam		Attorneys must be from an ABA-approved school to qualify for the Attorneys' Exam	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Oklahoma		X		
Oregon		X		
Pennsylvania		X		
Rhode Island	X			X
South Carolina		X		
South Dakota		X		
Tennessee		X		
Texas [†]		X		
Utah		X		
Vermont		X		
Virginia	X		X	
Washington		X		
West Virginia		X		
Wisconsin		X		
Wyoming		X		
Guam	X		X	
Northern Mariana Islands	X		X	
Palau		X		
Puerto Rico		X		
Virgin Islands		X		

[†] Texas has adopted the uniform bar examination to be administered beginning in February 2021

Additional Information about Reciprocity and Attorneys' Exams

While the **American Bar Association (ABA)** promotes guidelines for reciprocity or admission on motion among **U.S. states**, each state is free to accept or disregard those suggestions and make their own rules.

Therefore, certain jurisdictions have unique requirements for reciprocity and attorneys' exams, which are detailed below.

Admission on Motion Based on Reciprocity:

Colorado applicants from non-reciprocal jurisdictions and/or graduates from non-ABA-accredited law schools may petition for a waiver of the requirement under C.R.C.P. 206.

Connecticut provides for reciprocal jurisdiction in a process called "Admission Without Examination." Attorneys who would like to waive in must have practiced law in a reciprocal jurisdiction as the primary means of their living for 5-10 years immediately preceding the application for admission.

Georgia provides reciprocity in a process called "Admission on Motion Without Examination." Attorneys must have been admitted by examination in another United States jurisdiction that has reciprocity with Georgia and practiced law, for the most part, for 5-7 years immediately preceding application. If the reciprocal jurisdiction possesses stricter rules and limitations, the attorney will be governed by that reciprocal jurisdiction's rules. Georgia also offers the Georgia attorney's exam for those licensed in other jurisdictions who do not meet Georgia's bar reciprocity requirements.

Mississippi has reciprocal jurisdiction so long as the laws from the state from which the applicant comes grant similar privileges to Mississippi attorney applicants. The Board determines if the state in which the applicant is coming from grants "similar privileges." Mississippi also requires the MPRE and the same passing score requirement as the attorney's home jurisdiction.

Oregon provides for reciprocal jurisdiction in a process called "Reciprocity Admission/Alternative Admission." Attorneys must have passed the bar exam in a reciprocal jurisdiction and be actively engaged in law for at least 5-7 years immediately preceding the application for admission. Oregon has special reciprocity with Alaska, Idaho, Utah, and Washington. If an attorney is licensed in one of the previously—stated jurisdictions, the practice of law is lowered to 3-5 years preceding the application for admission.

Virginia provides for reciprocal jurisdiction in a process called "Admission Without Examination." Attorneys must have been admitted in a reciprocal jurisdiction for at least five years and actively practiced the law for the past three years. Attorneys from Virginia must be allowed without examination in the transferring jurisdiction.

In **Wyoming**, the process is called "Admission on Motion." Attorneys must have passed the written bar exam and practiced law actively in a reciprocal jurisdiction for five of the past seven years preceding application. Reciprocal jurisdictions must admit Wyoming attorneys without additional examination.

Admission on Motion for Attorneys Initially Admitted by Diploma Privilege:

Arkansas allows this as long as the applicant is a graduate of an ABA-approved law school.

Connecticut allows this as long as the applicant is a graduate of an ABA- or committee-approved law school.

The **District of Columbia** requires the applicant to have been in good standing of the bar for five years.

Mississippi allows it as long as the laws in the state from which the applicant comes grant similar privileges to Mississippi attorney applicants.

In **Ohio**, an applicant who has been admitted in another jurisdiction by diploma privilege is eligible for admission without examination only if applicant has also taken and passed the bar examination and been admitted as an attorney-at-law in the highest court of another state or the District of Columbia.

In **Tennessee**, the applicant must file a petition with the Board setting forth reasons for admission and a hearing is held in response.

Applying for the Attorneys' Exam without Graduating from an ABA-Approved Law School:

In **California**, attorneys must have been admitted and in good standing for four years.

In **Maine**, if an applicant is not a graduate of an ABA-approved law school, then the applicant must have engaged in the practice of law for three years in the U.S. jurisdiction where admitted.

In **Maryland**, if the attorney applicant has practiced law for ten years (or five years in the immediate past ten years) following admission by examination in another jurisdiction, the applicant is eligible for the attorneys' exam and need not be a graduate of an ABA-approved law school.

In **Rhode Island**, applicants who have not graduated from an ABA-approved law school may sit for the attorneys' exam provided they have been engaged in the active full-time practice of law for five out of the ten years immediately preceding the filing of the bar application.

In **Virginia**, attorney applicants who hold an active license to practice law, are in good standing, and have taken and passed a bar exam in another jurisdiction, may sit for only the essay portion of the Virginia bar exam.

Admission Pro Hac Vice

An additional way that an attorney can practice law in another state—on a very limited basis—is by being admitted *pro hac vice* on a given matter. *Pro hac vice* is a legal term that means “for this one particular occasion” in Latin. States and courts have their own requirements for Pro hac vice admission, but normally a lawyer must be experienced as well as sponsored by a member of the local bar (or even have a local lawyer serve as co-counsel).

The jurisdiction of **Puerto Rico** allows attorneys from other jurisdictions to be admitted *pro hac vice* for specific matters with a fee of \$150 per appearance, but Puerto Rico does not allow for admission on motion. In order to practice in Puerto Rico, an attorney must pass the “Commonwealth of Puerto Rico’s Bar Examination.” Attorneys can qualify for admission without examination; however, those standards are extremely high. The attorney must be admitted to practice in good standing before the highest court of a state or certain other jurisdictions and also has either passed the Puerto Rico Bar Exam or served in the district in various judicial capacities: District Judge, Magistrate Judge, Clerk or Chief Deputy Clerk, Law Clerk, U.S. Attorney or Assistant U.S. Attorney, Federal Public Defender or Assistant Federal Public Defender, General Court Justice for the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico as judge, or tenured professor at a law school for various lengths of time and under specified circumstances. The Puerto Rico Bar Exam tests Federal Civil Procedure, Federal Evidence, Federal Jurisdiction and Venue, Federal Criminal Procedure, Local Rules, Federal Appellate Procedure, Bankruptcy, and Ethics.

Working in a State without Being Admitted in That State

In most cases you must be admitted in a state to work there, but there is an exception for **in-house corporate work**. You do not necessarily have to be admitted to the bar in California to do transactional work for an in-house legal department.

Some corporate jobs require applicants to have a “legal background” such as a J.D. even if they will not actually be practicing law. For example, many banks hire people with legal knowledge to be trust officers. The legal background connotes—at the very least—an understanding of laws, contracts, and other subjects in that realm, whether the corporation wants to hire a full-fledged attorney or not.

Sometimes companies do not want to hire a licensed attorney because they have to pay more. These firms do not want to pay more when someone else, such as an unlicensed attorney, law school graduate, or paralegal, is able to complete the same tasks competently. Having a J.D. will definitely fulfill the legal background requirement on a job description, even if the person is not a practicing attorney.

Options for People Who Have Failed the Bar Exam

Bar admission is complicated, but useful. Bar admission is so useful that **failing the bar exam** (even more than once) should not deter you from giving it another try.

If you failed a bar exam, do not get unduly discouraged. Even top law students and attorneys sometimes fail the bar exam. In one notorious case, **Kathleen Sullivan**—the former Dean of **Stanford Law School** and a prominent United States Supreme Court litigator—failed the California bar exam the first time she took it. There are many **ways to bounce back after failing the bar exam and pass on your next attempt**.

The first way, of course, is to study harder and prepare yourself better for the next bar exam. You’re not the first person to fail the bar exam—nor will you be the last. There is absolutely no shame in having to take it more than once in order to pass.

The bar exam is a passable exam, and not as impossible as some people make it appear. **If you have failed the bar exam, it is not the end of the world**. One positive aspect about the bar exam in many jurisdictions is that it can be retaken as many times as necessary to pass. This is unlike some other

professional exams where a person is allowed a limited number of attempts. Another positive is that the bar exam is given two times a year in most jurisdictions. This is unlike an Olympic athlete who must wait four years for another shot at the gold.

Besides studying harder after failing a bar exam, there is another way to avoid retaking the bar exam you failed and still get the “Admitted to the Bar” stamp on your resume. The key is to take another state’s bar exam— a state with a much easier exam and a much higher pass rate.

You can do the research on states with high-pass bar exams. Compare it to your own state’s exam. You’ll have to study for that particular state’s exam and arrange for your own travel and accommodations, of course. With all of this extra work and expense, you could wonder: What are the benefits?

If you are in New York applying for a job and you have Admitted to the Pennsylvania Bar on your resume, for example, that looks infinitely better than just having J.D. in your education section. At an interview, you’ll doubtless be asked about this situation, and this too can work to your advantage.

You obviously don’t want to say, “I took the Pennsylvania Bar Exam because the New York exam was far too difficult” or “I took the Pennsylvania Exam just for the sake of having a Bar Admission on my resume,” even though that may be exactly what you did. Instead, you can come up with creative reasons. Perhaps you can say that you once aspired to practice law in Philadelphia but later opted against it. Or you can say that Pennsylvania law interested you in the past because you thought about living there.

This strategy may not work if you’re applying for a New York job that requires a New York license. Again, it is wise to review [ABA guidelines for reciprocity or admission on motion](#) for the state(s) in question. But for a corporate-type job where bar admission is not required, your resume will look more complete with a Bar Admission on it—from any state—as opposed to just a J.D. Competition is fierce for employment, especially for legal jobs. Many of your competitors will have Bar Admissions on their resumes, so you cannot afford to be without one.

So don’t just rest with your J.D.! Do what it takes to pass the bar in your state, or in another state. Emphasize these preparation tips to overcome failing the bar exam:

- Conduct a personal assessment
- Understand the law
- Memorize the law
- Read carefully

When people fail a bar exam, they usually receive a tally of their scores on each question and receive a copy of their actual answers. For instance, in California, the bar examiners return the graded essays and performance tests to the applicants who fail along with a scorecard showing their multiple choice raw and scaled scores. Find out the reasons you failed, and take action to redress these problems by speaking with a professor, former bar exam grader, or bar exam tutor who knows the law and how the bar exam works. Try to pass a bar exam in any state. Get it on your resume. It is that important! From there, you will be able to explore practicing law in whatever state you choose.

Frequently Asked Questions

What Is The Bar Examination?

Known as the bar exam, the Uniform Bar Examination is a standardized test administered by the National Conference of Bar Examiners. To become licensed to practice law, **lawyers must pass the test** assessing their skills and knowledge. Three parts make up this exam:

- **Multistate Bar Examination:** 200 multiple-choice questions
- **Multistate Essay Examination:** Six 30-minute essay questions
- **Multistate Performance Test:** Two 90-minute exams

During UBE administration, two full days are required. In the United States, only 27 states accept the UBE as a standard competency test to apply for membership in the bar. Although similar in format and content to the UBE, the other 23 states offer their bar exams.

The written bar examination covers the following content areas:

- Conflict of laws
- Real property
- Family law
- Contractors
- Business associations (Partnerships, limited liability companies, and corporations)
- Criminal law and procedure
- Torts
- Uniform Commercial Code, Article 9 (Secured Transactions)
- Evidence
- Trusts and estates

You need to pass an examination to be admitted to the state bar to practice law. Passing this test shows your understanding of important legal areas.

What Is State Bar Reciprocity?

The bar exam may not have to be retaken if you pass **the bar in one jurisdiction** and wish to practice law in another. **Bar reciprocity** is offered in many states. It is possible to be admitted on motion (also known as "waiving") into your new jurisdiction if you have already passed the bar and have practiced law for a specified period. To be admitted on motion, you are required to apply to be admitted to the bar of the jurisdiction you intend to practice in, which often entails proving you have high moral character, taking the MPRE, or other requirements. Once you are approved for a license in your new state, you will be able to begin practicing.

A **comprehensive guide to bar admissions** is provided by the National Conference of Bar Examiners, which is updated annually. **The reciprocity rules of several jurisdictions may change over time.** If you are moving from one state to another, make sure to review the reciprocity rules of the new state's bar before proceeding.

Having passed one bar, you may feel confident studying independently if you have to retake the bar in your new state.

The term "Bar reciprocity" includes several types of admissions on motion under the umbrella of **bar reciprocity**. A bar reciprocity agreement and an admission on motion agreement are both practices whereby **attorneys licensed in other jurisdictions** may be admitted to practice in that jurisdiction without being admitted through the bar. Generally, bar reciprocity requirements fall into one of the following categories:

- No Admission on Motion allowed
- Admission on Motion allowed based on Criteria (attorneys from any state may be admitted)
- Admission on Motion based on Reciprocity (Attorneys may be admitted if attorneys from the admitting jurisdiction can be admitted to the transferring jurisdiction under similar rules.)
- Semi-Pure Reciprocity (Attorneys may be admitted if attorneys from the admitting jurisdiction can be admitted to the transferring jurisdiction under similar rules, but applicants are subject to the more stringent rules, requirements, and fees of the transferring jurisdiction if applicable.)
- Pure Reciprocity (Attorneys may be admitted based on the rules of the transferring jurisdiction.)

Which State Bar Exam Have Reciprocity?

When looking for lawyers for a firm, recruiters explore every option. Your search for a home will have an edge if you search out of state. You will have more choices for finances, lifestyle, and a variety of intangibles. The bar may not need to be taken again in several states where you may be able to practice law.

State bar admission processes vary widely. The **Uniform Bar Exam** gives lawyers the ability to practice in multiple states upon passing the exam.

Comprehensive Guide to Bar Reciprocity in Every State

Alabama

Alabama, known for its stringent rules regarding bar admission, is one of the states that does not officially offer bar reciprocity. As of 2023, attorneys seeking to practice in Alabama are generally required to sit for the **Alabama State Bar Exam**, regardless of their licensure status in other jurisdictions. However, Alabama does offer an option for admission on motion, which could provide a path to bar admission for out-of-state attorneys who have been practicing for at least five years. The criteria for this option are strict, and the admission process can be time-consuming, so careful planning is advised.

Alaska

Alaska, on the other hand, is a state that offers bar reciprocity to attorneys licensed in other jurisdictions. This means that attorneys actively engaged in law practice for five out of the last seven years in a reciprocal jurisdiction may be eligible for admission to the **Alaska Bar Association** without taking the state's bar exam. However, applicants must also have a JD from an ABA-approved law school and pass the **Multistate Professional Responsibility Examination (MPRE)** with a score of 80 or higher. It's important to note that Alaska's reciprocity is not automatic and requires an application process.

Arizona

Arizona offers a somewhat limited form of reciprocity, an admission on motion. Lawyers who have actively practiced law for five of the past seven years in a reciprocal jurisdiction may qualify for admission without examination to the **State Bar of Arizona**. However, unlike many states, Arizona requires reciprocal jurisdiction to have been the lawyer's primary place of practice. Additionally, applicants must pass the MPRE, proving their knowledge of professional conduct rules.

Arkansas

Arkansas offers bar reciprocity under the condition of 'Admission on Motion.' Lawyers licensed in reciprocal jurisdictions, who have been in active practice for five of the last seven years, can apply without taking the **Arkansas Bar Exam**. Applicants must have graduated from an ABA-approved law school and should pass the MPRE with a score of 85 or more. The **Arkansas Judiciary** outlines specific rules and procedures for applying under Admission on Motion, which include submitting a range of documents, such as a certificate of good standing and law school transcripts.

California

California does not offer traditional bar reciprocity. However, attorneys from other jurisdictions may be eligible for the Attorney's Exam, a shorter version of the **California Bar Exam**, which excludes certain sections. The Attorney's Exam is open to attorneys who have been active and in good standing for at least four years in another US jurisdiction. All applicants must pass the MPRE regardless of reciprocity, and foreign-educated attorneys may face additional requirements.

Colorado

Colorado offers bar reciprocity through ‘Admission on Motion’ to attorneys from reciprocal jurisdictions. To be eligible, attorneys must have been actively practicing law for five of the past seven years and must have graduated from an ABA-accredited law school. As is the case with most states, applicants must also pass the MPRE. The [Colorado Supreme Court](#) provides a comprehensive list of reciprocal jurisdictions and detailed application procedures.

Connecticut

Connecticut offers limited bar reciprocity. An attorney licensed in a reciprocal jurisdiction who has been engaged in the active practice of law for at least five of the last seven years may apply for ‘Admission on Motion’ without taking the [Connecticut Bar Exam](#). It’s important to note that Connecticut considers only full-time, salaried government or judicial clerkship experience as ‘active practice.’ The MPRE is also a requirement with a passing score of 80 or more.

Delaware

Delaware does not offer bar reciprocity. All applicants, regardless of their licensure status in other jurisdictions, are required to sit for the [Delaware Bar Exam](#). Attorneys should be aware that Delaware has a unique requirement that applicants complete five months of clerkship in the state under the supervision of a Delaware attorney.

Remember, rules and regulations may change, and it’s crucial to check with each state’s bar association for the most up-to-date information. This comprehensive guide is intended to assist you on your path to practicing law in different jurisdictions, and we at [BCG Attorney Search](#) are here to help.

Florida

Florida does not offer bar reciprocity. Regardless of their licensure status in other jurisdictions, attorneys must pass the [Florida Bar Exam](#). In addition, all applicants are required to pass the MPRE with a score of 80 or more and must meet character and fitness requirements set by the Florida Board of Bar Examiners.

Georgia

Georgia does not offer traditional bar reciprocity, but it does provide ‘Admission on Motion’ for lawyers who have been active and in good standing for at least five of the last seven years in a reciprocal jurisdiction. Attorneys applying for this option must provide a range of documentation, including a certificate of good standing and law school transcripts, and must meet character and fitness requirements. Regardless of their licensure status, all applicants must pass the MPRE with a score of 80 or more. Detailed information can be found on the [State Bar of Georgia’s website](#).

Hawaii

Hawaii allows for 'Admission on Motion' if the attorney is licensed in a reciprocal jurisdiction, has been practicing for at least five of the last six years, and has graduated from an ABA-approved law school. The applicant must also pass the MPRE with a score of 85 or more. The [Hawaii State Judiciary](#) provides more information on the application process.

Idaho

In Idaho, attorneys from reciprocal jurisdictions can apply for 'Admission on Motion' if they have been actively practicing law for at least three of the last five years. Applicants must also have passed the MPRE with a score of 85 or more. Specific rules and procedures can be found on the [Idaho State Bar's website](#).

Illinois

Illinois provides 'Admission on Motion' for attorneys from reciprocal jurisdictions who have been actively practicing law for five of the last seven years. Applicants are also required to pass the MPRE with a score of 80 or more. The [Illinois Board of Admissions to the Bar](#) provides a comprehensive list of reciprocal jurisdictions and detailed application procedures.

Remember, rules and regulations may change, and it's crucial to check with each state's bar association for the most up-to-date information. We at [BCG Attorney Search](#) are committed to providing the most comprehensive and accurate information to assist you on your path to practicing law in different jurisdictions.

Indiana

Indiana offers 'Admission on Motion' for attorneys from reciprocal jurisdictions who have been actively practicing law for five of the last seven years. Applicants are also required to pass the MPRE with a score of 80 or more. Detailed application procedures and a list of reciprocal jurisdictions can be found on the [Indiana State Bar Association's website](#).

Iowa

Iowa allows for 'Admission on Motion' if the attorney is licensed in a reciprocal jurisdiction and has been in active practice for five of the last seven years. They must also pass the MPRE with a score of 80 or more. The [Iowa State Bar Association](#) provides more information on the application process.

Kansas

In Kansas, attorneys from reciprocal jurisdictions can apply for 'Admission on Motion' if they have been actively practicing law for five of the last seven years. Applicants must also have passed the MPRE with a score of 80 or more. Specific rules and procedures can be found on the [Kansas Judicial Branch's website](#).

Kentucky

Kentucky offers 'Admission on Motion' for attorneys from reciprocal jurisdictions who have been actively practicing law for five of the last seven years. Applicants are also required to pass the MPRE with a score of 75 or more. The [Kentucky Office of Bar Admissions](#) provides a comprehensive list of reciprocal jurisdictions and detailed application procedures.

Louisiana

Louisiana does not offer bar reciprocity. Regardless of their licensure status in other jurisdictions, attorneys must pass the Louisiana Bar Exam. All applicants are required to pass the MPRE with a score of 80 or more and must meet character and fitness requirements set by the Louisiana Committee on Bar Admissions. More information can be found on the [Louisiana State Bar Association's website](#). Always check with each state's bar association for the most current information. We at [BCG Attorney Search](#) provide the most comprehensive and accurate information to assist you on your path to practicing law in various jurisdictions.

Maine

Maine offers 'Admission on Motion' for attorneys from reciprocal jurisdictions who have been actively practicing law for three of the past five years. Applicants are also required to pass the MPRE with a score of 80 or more. More information, including application procedures and a list of reciprocal jurisdictions, can be found on the [Maine Board of Bar Examiners' website](#).

Maryland

Maryland allows for 'Admission on Motion' for attorneys who are members of the bar in a reciprocal jurisdiction and have been actively practicing law for five of the last ten years. Applicants must also pass the MPRE with a score of 85 or more. The [Maryland State Bar Association](#) provides more information on the application process.

Massachusetts

In Massachusetts, attorneys from reciprocal jurisdictions can apply for 'Admission on Motion' if they have been actively practicing law for five of the last seven years. Applicants must also have passed the MPRE with a score of 85 or more. Specific rules and procedures can be found on the [Massachusetts Board of Bar Examiners' website](#).

Michigan

Michigan offers 'Admission on Motion' for attorneys from reciprocal jurisdictions who have been actively practicing law for five of the last seven years. Applicants are also required to pass the MPRE with a score of 85 or more. The [State Bar of Michigan](#) provides a comprehensive list of reciprocal jurisdictions and detailed application procedures.

Minnesota

Minnesota does not offer bar reciprocity. Regardless of their licensure status in other jurisdictions, attorneys must pass the Minnesota State Bar Exam. All applicants are required to pass the MPRE with a score of 85 or more and must meet character and fitness requirements set by the Minnesota Board of Law Examiners. More information can be found on the [Minnesota State Bar Association's website](#). As always, checking with each state's bar association for the most current information is crucial. We at **BCG Attorney Search** are committed to providing the most comprehensive and accurate information to assist you on your path to practicing law in various jurisdictions.

Mississippi

Mississippi allows 'Admission on Motion' for attorneys licensed in reciprocal jurisdictions who have been actively practicing law for five of the past seven years. Additionally, applicants must have achieved a score of 75 or more on the MPRE. You can visit the [Mississippi Bar Association's website](#) for details and the application process.

Missouri

Missouri provides 'Admission on Motion' for attorneys who are members of a reciprocal jurisdiction's bar and have actively practiced law for five of the previous ten years. Applicants also need to pass the MPRE with a score of 80 or more. More information is available on the [Missouri Bar's website](#).

Montana

Montana offers admission by motion to attorneys from reciprocal jurisdictions who have actively practiced law for five of the previous seven years. The MPRE score required for application is 80. You can find more details on the [State Bar of Montana's website](#).

Nebraska

Nebraska provides 'Admission on Motion' for attorneys who are members of the bar in a reciprocal jurisdiction and have been actively practicing law for five of the last seven years. Applicants must pass the MPRE with a score of 85 or more. Please refer to the [Nebraska State Bar Association's website](#) for more information.

Nevada

Nevada does not offer bar reciprocity. Attorneys must pass the Nevada Bar Exam to practice law in the state, regardless of their licensure status in other jurisdictions. All applicants are required to pass the MPRE with a score of 85 or more. Further details are available on the [State Bar of Nevada's website](#).

Please note that verifying the latest information from each state's bar association is vital. At **BCG Attorney Search**, we strive to provide the most accurate and up-to-date information to support your legal career across different jurisdictions.

New Hampshire

New Hampshire offers 'Admission on Motion' for lawyers from reciprocal jurisdictions who have been actively practicing law for five out of the previous seven years. Applicants must also have achieved a score of 79 or higher on the MPRE. More information can be found on the [New Hampshire Bar Association's website](#).

New Jersey

New Jersey does not offer bar reciprocity. Regardless of their licensure status in other jurisdictions, lawyers must pass the New Jersey Bar Exam to practice law in the state. All applicants are also required to pass the MPRE with a score of 75 or higher. Please visit the [New Jersey State Bar Association's website](#) for more details.

New Mexico

New Mexico allows 'Admission on Motion' for lawyers from reciprocal jurisdictions who have actively practiced law for five of the last seven years. The MPRE score required for application is 80. More information is available on the [State Bar of New Mexico's website](#).

New York

New York does not offer bar reciprocity. Lawyers must pass the New York Bar Exam to practice law in the state, regardless of their licensure status in other jurisdictions. All applicants are required to pass the MPRE with a score of 85 or higher. Further details are available on the [New York State Bar Association's website](#).

North Carolina

North Carolina provides 'Admission on Motion' for lawyers who are members of the bar in a reciprocal jurisdiction and have been actively practicing law for four of the last six years. Applicants must pass the MPRE with a score of 80 or more. Please refer to the [North Carolina State Bar's website](#) for more information.

At [BCG Attorney Search](#), we strive to provide the most current and comprehensive information to support attorneys in their practice across different states.

North Dakota

North Dakota permits 'Admission on Motion' for lawyers actively practicing law for five of the previous seven years in a reciprocal jurisdiction. They also require a score of 85 or higher on the MPRE. For more information, visit the [State Bar Association of North Dakota's website](#).

Ohio

Ohio permits 'Admission on Motion' for attorneys actively practicing law for five out of the previous ten years in another jurisdiction. The requisite MPRE score is 85. Further details can be found on the [Ohio State Bar Association's website](#).

Oklahoma

Oklahoma does not offer bar reciprocity. Regardless of their licensure status in other jurisdictions, attorneys must pass the Oklahoma Bar Exam to practice law in the state. All applicants are also required to pass the MPRE. Visit the [Oklahoma Bar Association's website](#) for more information.

Oregon

Oregon offers 'Admission on Motion' for attorneys from reciprocal jurisdictions who have actively practiced law for at least five of the last seven years. The required MPRE score is 85. More information can be found on the [Oregon State Bar's website](#).

Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania permits 'Admission on Motion' for attorneys actively practicing law for five out of the previous seven years in a reciprocal jurisdiction. They also require a score of 75 or higher on the MPRE. Visit the [Pennsylvania Bar Association's website](#) for more details.

At [BCG Attorney Search](#), we continue to deliver updated and pertinent information to attorneys in their journey of practicing law across multiple states.

Rhode Island

Rhode Island offers 'Admission on Motion' for attorneys from reciprocal jurisdictions who have actively practiced law for at least five of the last ten years. Applicants also need a score of 80 or higher on the MPRE. Visit the [Rhode Island Bar Association's website](#) for more information.

South Carolina

South Carolina does not offer bar reciprocity. Regardless of their licensure status in other jurisdictions, attorneys must pass the South Carolina Bar Exam to practice law in the state. All applicants are also required to pass the MPRE. More details can be found on the [South Carolina Bar's website](#).

South Dakota

South Dakota permits 'Admission on Motion' for attorneys actively practicing law for five out of the previous seven years in another jurisdiction. The requisite MPRE score is 85. Visit the [State Bar of South Dakota's website](#) for more information.

Tennessee

Tennessee allows ‘Admission on Motion’ for lawyers actively practicing law for five of the previous seven years in a reciprocal jurisdiction. They also require a score of 82 or higher on the MPRE. More information can be found on the [Tennessee Bar Association’s website](#).

Texas

Texas offers ‘Admission on Motion’ for attorneys from reciprocal jurisdictions who have actively practiced law for at least five of the last seven years. Applicants also need a score of 85 or higher on the MPRE. For more details, visit the [State Bar of Texas website](#).

Our team at **BCG Attorney Search** is committed to providing accurate and timely information to help lawyers navigate the complex landscape of bar reciprocity across the United States.

Utah

Utah allows attorneys from reciprocal jurisdictions to apply for ‘Admission on Motion’ if they have actively practiced law for at least three of the past five years. The required MPRE score is 86. For more information, visit the [Utah State Bar’s website](#).

Vermont

Vermont offers ‘Admission on Motion’ for attorneys from reciprocal jurisdictions who have been actively practicing law for five of the last seven years. The MPRE score required is 80. Visit the [Vermont Bar Association’s website](#) for further details.

Virginia

Virginia permits ‘Admission on Motion’ for attorneys actively practicing law for at least three of the past five years in a reciprocal jurisdiction. Applicants must also achieve a score of 85 or higher on the MPRE. For more information, visit the [Virginia State Bar’s website](#).

Washington

Washington offers ‘Admission on Motion’ for attorneys from reciprocal jurisdictions who have actively practiced law for at least three of the last five years. The required MPRE score is 85. For more details, visit the [Washington State Bar Association’s website](#).

West Virginia

West Virginia permits ‘Admission on Motion’ for attorneys who have actively practiced law for at least five of the last ten years in a reciprocal jurisdiction. The MPRE score required is 80. Visit the [West Virginia State Bar’s website](#) for further information.

Wisconsin

Wisconsin allows attorneys from reciprocal jurisdictions to apply for ‘Admission on Motion’ if they have actively practiced law for at least five of the last ten years. The required MPRE score is 80. For more information, visit the [State Bar of Wisconsin’s website](#).

Wyoming

Wyoming offers ‘Admission on Motion’ for attorneys from reciprocal jurisdictions who have actively practiced law for at least five of the last seven years. The MPRE score required is 80. Visit the [Wyoming State Bar’s website](#) for further details.

We hope this comprehensive guide on bar reciprocity by the state has provided valuable information for attorneys seeking to practice law in different jurisdictions. For personalized guidance and assistance with your legal career, you can rely on the expertise of [BCG Attorney Search](#).

State Bar Associations

Access the official websites of each state’s bar association to find detailed information about bar admission, reciprocity requirements, and relevant resources.

- **Alabama:** [Alabama State Bar](#)
- **Alaska:** [Alaska Bar Association](#)
- **Arizona:** [State Bar of Arizona](#)
- **Arkansas:** [Arkansas Bar Association](#)
- **California:** [State Bar of California](#)
- **Colorado:** [Colorado Bar Association](#)
- **Connecticut:** [Connecticut Bar Association](#)
- **Delaware:** [Delaware State Bar Association](#)
- **District of Columbia:** [District of Columbia Bar](#)
- **Florida:** [The Florida Bar](#)
- **Georgia:** [State Bar of Georgia](#)
- **Hawaii:** [Hawaii State Bar Association](#)
- **Idaho:** [Idaho State Bar](#)
- **Illinois:** [Illinois State Bar Association](#)
- **Indiana:** [Indiana State Bar Association](#)

- **Iowa:** [Iowa State Bar Association](#)
- **Kansas:** [Kansas Bar Association](#)
- **Kentucky:** [Kentucky Bar Association](#)
- **Louisiana:** [Louisiana State Bar Association](#)
- **Maine:** [Maine State Bar Association](#)
- **Maryland:** [Maryland State Bar Association](#)
- **Massachusetts:** [Massachusetts Bar Association](#)
- **Michigan:** [State Bar of Michigan](#)
- **Minnesota:** [Minnesota State Bar Association](#)
- **Mississippi:** [The Mississippi Bar](#)
- **Missouri:** [The Missouri Bar](#)
- **Montana:** [State Bar of Montana](#)
- **Nebraska:** [Nebraska State Bar Association](#)
- **Nevada:** [State Bar of Nevada](#)
- **New Hampshire:** [New Hampshire Bar Association](#)
- **New Jersey:** [New Jersey State Bar Association](#)
- **New Mexico:** [State Bar of New Mexico](#)
- **New York:** [New York State Bar Association](#)
- **North Carolina:** [North Carolina State Bar](#)
- **North Dakota:** [State Bar Association of North Dakota](#)
- **Ohio:** [Ohio State Bar Association](#)
- **Oklahoma:** [Oklahoma Bar Association](#)
- **Oregon:** [Oregon State Bar](#)
- **Pennsylvania:** [Pennsylvania Bar Association](#)
- **Rhode Island:** [Rhode Island Bar Association](#)
- **South Carolina:** [South Carolina Bar](#)
- **South Dakota:** [State Bar of South Dakota](#)
- **Tennessee:** [Tennessee Bar Association](#)
- **Texas:** [State Bar of Texas](#)
- **Utah:** [Utah State Bar](#)

- **Vermont:** [Vermont Bar Association](#)
- **Virginia:** [Virginia State Bar](#)
- **Washington:** [Washington State Bar Association](#)
- **West Virginia:** [West Virginia State Bar](#)
- **Wisconsin:** [State Bar of Wisconsin](#)
- **Wyoming:** [Wyoming State Bar](#)

Conclusions

When I graduated from law school, I started my career clerking for a judge in Michigan. I had worked in a New York City law firm during the summer after my second year and had every intention of returning there. The firm was serious, however, and the people I was working with seemed quite solemn, on edge, and there did not appear to be any opportunities at the firm for advancement.

On a whim, I decided to apply to a handful of California firms and I was glad I did. The firm I ended up going to work for had no dress code and the people seemed much happier than the firm in New York. Moreover, I did not have to sell my car, got to live in a nice climate most of the year, and the firm paid just as much as New York law firms. It was a great decision for me in all respects but it would not have happened if I only wanted a New York lifestyle. Many people would never in a million years consider living in Los Angeles over New York. But people are different and being open to new experiences can often lead you exactly where you are meant to be. That is why **every attorney should consider multiple markets**.

When you look at other markets and use your qualifications to approach firms in other markets, you give yourself additional options—lifestyle, financial benefits, prestige, happiness and other considerations—that could be very worthwhile. Relocating to a different legal market is often a great way for an attorney to get ahead.

If you are working with us, please speak with your recruiter about **applying to law firms in other markets**. You may not even need the bar exam. I would estimate that 80% of the candidates I am working with look at markets outside of their home market for the following reasons:

- The economy varies depending on one region of the country to another. You may be very marketable in one area (and even to a better firm) and less marketable due to the concentration of highly-qualified candidates in another.
- You may be a better fit “culturally” in one area of the country and not another.
- Your skills and experience may be a “perfect fit” in one area of the country and not another.
- There may not be any jobs in the area of the country you are from and plenty of jobs in other areas.

By expanding your options, considering other markets, and **never giving up when you are rejected**, you have the best chance of finding a legal job that is ideal for you.