

Speaker 1: Welcome to The Extra Mile Podcast for bar exam takers. There are no traffic jams along The Extra Mile when you're studying for your bar exam. Now, your host, Jackson Mumeey, owner of the Celebration Bar Review.

Jackson Mumeey: Hey, everyone. Welcome to episode sixty seven of The Extra Mile Podcast for bar exam takers. This is Jackson. I'm so glad that you've taken time out of your day to spend a little bit of time with us. As this episode is coming, if you're listening to it pretty close to our release date, you may know that we're very close to the February 2016 bar exam. Obviously, that's a big deal.

For those of you who are taking the exam in just a few days, we wish you well and hope that you have good results. For most of you who are listening, I suspect you're probably looking at the July 2016 exam or maybe at later date than that.

Today's message is going to be particularly powerful for you, even though it's titled as Ten Days to the Bar Exam. The reason for that is that I'm going to be looking a little bit at what I call the Elements of Style. You might remember that as the title of a very famous book written by some guys named Strunk and White. It's really the classic. If you don't have it, you really ought to get it. We'll put a link to it on the show notes. In any event, what I do in today's lecture taken from our vaults is that I go through some of the key elements of style and show how they relate to good bar exam essay writing.

Now, here's a spoiler alert, good bar exam essay writing is not issue spotting IRAC. You will find none of those in The Elements of Style. If you're really a true believer in IRAC and by the way, that would probably put you in The Flat Earth Society. This is going to be a tough one for you to listen to, but try and keep an open mind and see if what I'm saying doesn't make some sense. I think it's going to be an interesting opportunity for you to get a different perspective.

Now, if you'd like to know more about our approach to the bar exam, I really encourage you to join us on Thursday at 3:00 PM, Eastern, that would be 12:00 NN, Pacific time for a free live master class. The title of the class is, How to Make the Last Bar Exam Your Last Bar Exam. It's totally free.

I'll be going through the four steps that passing bar takers have to use to get success on their exams. We'd love to have you join us for it. We've had over fifteen hundred people go through this course since we started offering it. The results had been terrific and the feedback has been great.

To get your free sit, you can do it in one of two ways. You can go to our website at celebrationbarreview.com, you'll see a button on the front page there to claim your sit, just go ahead and do that. Give us you email so we can give you the link and you'll be all set to go. You can also text your registration in by texting the phrase, "Next Bar Exam" to 33444. Again, that's the phrase, "Next Bar Exam." Text that to the number 33444 and we'll get you registered.

Well, let's go ahead and jump right in. If you're interested at all in what makes for good bar exam essay writing, you'll definitely going to want to listen to listen to today's message.

Speaker 2:

Hi and welcome to our countdown series to the bar exam. We are ten days or so until the test. One of the criticisms I sometimes get from students is, "Well, you have this inspirational messages that you post on YouTube and other places, but how about some concrete tips?" Well, there's plenty of those within the course itself, but I thought today, with ten days to go, I would turn to the masters when it comes to writing.

Two of my very favorites and great authors, the book is called *The Elements of Style*. The authors are Strunk and White. The book was now in its I don't know how many printings, four or five. In 2005, an illustrated version was done on this book and it's absolutely wonderful.

Now, I suspect most of you have heard of Strunk and White, somewhere in your middle school, high school, perhaps even in college in English classes, you have to refer to this book. It probably drove you crazy because it was so simple and straight forward. I was really struck however this week in going back. It's one of the few books I keep on my shelf. I went back and just looked through some of the basic guidelines to see if they would apply to writing good bar essays, regardless of what jurisdiction you're in. I was stunned at the rules. I'm going to recite a few of those rules to you with some notes that I've got about how I think it applies.

Now, professors Strunk and White both deceased now were classic masters of scary sparse language. They believed that the best writing was the most direct and that informed the great deal of what they do. I think it informs good bar writing. Here are their elementary principles of composition, most of which I think apply.

The first was, "Choose a suitable design and hold to it." If you're on our course, you know that that's important because we give you a particular structure and we say, "Stay with that structure within the question or the answer itself, but even from answer to answer." Those who jump around and write different kinds of designs or answers tend to get themselves in trouble. Choose a suitable design for your writing and then hold on to it, be consistent.

Second, they say and I love this one, "Make the paragraph the unit of composition." I know people that write bar essays where the unit of composition is several pages, or the unit of composition is a phrase, or the unit of composition is whatever pops into their brain at that moment.

I admit to being a curmudgeon about some things. Paragraphs are nice little tools. They tell us, "Stop. Go to the next idea. Tell the reader what's going on." If you don't write in paragraphs, I think you're showing your lack of writing skill in

this form. Now, I admit, you probably don't paragraph much on Facebook, or when you're instant messaging, or texting on your phone, but here's a news flash, the bar examiners don't do any of those things.

Third, my favorite, "Use Active Voice." Oh, come on, what else do I have to say. Don't write in the passive voice, don't write a third party, "I'm a brilliant academic," but use active voice. Make arguments. Show how you would reason through a problem. Don't talk about it in the third party abstract. Passive voices would be opposite of active voices call.

Next, very similar, "Put statements in a positive form." Make arguments. Don't argue the negative. I'm always surprised when people start, "An evidence says," say for example by making the argument of the party who agrees with the ruling. It's a little hard to do. Start with the party who's unhappy, who's going forward first. Put your statements in positive form.

In the same vein, "Use definite, specific, concrete language." That's great. Definite, specific, and concrete. Oh, yeah. What do you call that? The facts. Use the facts. I think that's another way of saying the same thing.

Next, "Omit needless words." Oh my, there is so much written through clearing that goes on in a bar essay. Stop with all that. Just get to the point. Getting to the point doesn't mean writing the issue and then the rule. It means framing the argument and then writing about it, but you don't need needless words.

Next, "Avoid a succession of loose sentences." This is sort of the unit of composition of the paragraph, it's the analog. I find way too many people who just put together sentences. Sometimes they usually spot that way, sometimes their arguments spot that way. Here's a sentence, here's a sentence. Here's another sentence. Oh, here's another sentence that goes after the other sentence. Do they have any connection? Apparently not. You see, that idea of loose sentences is really difficult for the reader to understand and to follow, so you want to avoid it.

The final Elementary Principles of Composition that I want to highlight is, "To express coordinate ideas in similar form." This is a lot like choosing a suitable design. I think what they mean by coordinate ideas is, if you have an approach to the problem, stay with that approach all the way through your answer.

In our writing, that means a three paragraph structure that we detail, but whatever the writing style, even if you're doing crappy IRAC writing or because your big box bar told you to do it, at least stay consistent to that. It's the inconsistency that drives the reader crazy because now they have to stop and try and figure out what your meaning is because the structure doesn't help them.

If you got coordinated ideas and you expressed them in the same form as we teach you to do at our course, you're way ahead of the game. That's good solid writing. I know that there are some out there who would say, "You know, the five weeks I was a bar grader, I didn't need any of those things." OK, knock yourselves out, but good writing is still good writing and good writing has those qualities to it.

Anyone that tells you that they can wade through all of that in five or six minutes of reading an essay, and they don't need any of those tools or techniques is really indicating their own lack of ability, and I think their lack of academic structure. More over, they're just sending you down the wrong path. The best way to write an essay is still to do good writing.

There are couple of other rules that Struck and White have that I think that are appropriate for bar exams and I want to just highlight those. They come from the approach to style part of the book if you happen to have the book somewhere in your office or bookshelf.

The authors say this, "Avoid fancy words." Pretty clear isn't it? I'm always impressed when I see an answer that has lots of in frost, and [inaudible 10:21], and [inaudible 10:22] force, and thereafter, and all sorts of great language because I know that's a contract lawyer in waiting, who's just going to dazzle the world with contracts and language that none of us will ever understand.

Unfortunately, they may not make it to pass the bar exam to get that opportunity. When you avoid fancy words, you're being clear in communicating. You're being direct in your communication. Instead of trying to find the fancy word, just get to the heart of the problem.

In the same way, rule sixteen, "Be clear." The next rule, "Do not take shortcuts at the cost of clarity." This is a good one for bar takers. I know you're under time conditions. I know that means that you think everyone should understand that you're in a hurry, but those of you that think you're just going to put down some phrases at the end of your answer, you know, some outlying words, some terms of art, some buzz words, let me tell you, it isn't going to work. Shortcuts at the cost of clarity end up in confusion and obscurity and the examiners, no matter what the jurisdiction is, simply can't respond in any meaningful way to that. You don't want to take a shortcut in your writing if it's going to hurt the clarity of the work you're doing.

The final rule I want to capture for you is this, "Prefer the standard to the offbeat." Some of you really enjoy being idiosyncratic. You really like that sense of, "I'm unique." You're sort of like the American Idol audition, the guy that comes out in the chicken suit. Well, it's interesting for the thirty seconds that we watch it on American Idol, but they're not going to win the competition.

In the same way, those of you that choose to write your essays in some bizarre idiosyncratic, high way individualized, very egocentric approach, we've got a name for you, called it repeat taker. That's the thing you want to avoid. Don't try and call attention to yourself by doing some weird thing, just use a standard approach.

Now, I think there are better standard approaches than others, but no matter what approach you're using, be standard, be consistent with it, be clear with it. When you do those things, when you take the lessons of a book like Strunk and White, Elements of Style, and you put them in to your writing, I don't think, you ever can go wrong. I don't think it will ever hurt you. I've never seen an essay come back from the bar examiners where the comment or the thought was, "You know, this was too clear. This was too straight forward. This was too understandable." You know that as well.

If you think about how to prepare in the next ten days, keep that in mind. Study clearly, study straight forwardly, be direct, and I think you'll find that The Elements of Style could be a very good friend to you as you get ready for your bar exam.

Thanks. We'll be back in a few days about our next message.

Jackson Mumey:

Well, I hope you found today's podcast valuable. If you did, I'd like to invite you to subscribe to The Extra Mile Podcast. You can do that in one of two ways, you can go to iTunes and subscribe there or you can go to our website celebrationbarreview.com, click on the podcast link at the top of the page where you'll find our show notes, and all the past episodes, and you can subscribe from there.

Now, if you'd like even more of The Extra Mile than we offer in these podcasts, I want to also invite you to join our private Facebook group called The Extra Mile. This is a community of current and past successful bar takers who've come together for advice, support, information, and some terrific resources.

We've put together The Extra Mile as a monthly paid subscription offering. I wanted to just share with you some of what's involved and some of the benefits you're going to receive when you join The Extra Mile Facebook group.

First and I think most significantly, you'll receive access to our popular economical Bar-U course as part of the membership. Bar-U provides digital lectures, and outlines, and selected questions for seven state bar exams, California, New York, Florida, Texas, Georgia, New Jersey, in addition to all of the uniform bar exam jurisdictions and the multi state bar exam.

Membership in Bar-U alone would normally cost you about a hundred dollars a month, but it's free with your paid subscription to the Facebook group. I think

you'd find this a great way to just have access to substance of current material, lectures, and outlines for all of the subjects that are on the bar exam.

In addition to that, members of our Facebook group receive access to our online writing workshop course that contains four lectures on essay writing plus sample question and model answers. That course sells for ninety nine ninety five all by itself. Definitely a value when you're part of the Facebook group and all of our Facebook group members will receive free sits for three brand new master classes we're doing this year.

These are being offered to the public. Actually for sale for fifty dollars per class, but they're free to our Facebook group members. The topics of this new master classes, which are presented in conjunction with our partners at learning strategies will be on abundance for life, and living the law of attraction, and rapid reading made easy.

There are three topics that I've extensively taught as ways to enhance and improve your bar exam scores and your study. I think you're going to find them really valuable. In addition to all of that, our Facebook members will get my proprietary exam predictions for each exam and you'll receive our exclusive video countdown leading up to the up coming bar exam.

On top of all of that and maybe even most significantly, you'll get the support and the advice that comes from a community of people who really want to see you succeed on the bar. Our past bar students who've been successful have generously agreed to come on and offer their insights and advice. I come in to the site on a daily basis to offer additional resources and to do Q and A.

I really, encourage you to check this out. In the show notes, you'll find the link to signup for this Facebook group. One other thing about it, there's a five day free trial. You can actually signup and not have anything charged, until you've been able to experience it for yourself. When you take all of the benefits together, it's several hundred dollars worth of resources available for only seventy seven dollars a month. There's no requirement to continue the subscription, it's every thirty days, until you cancel. Really invite you to join us there on The Extra Mile.

Well, that's it for today. Thanks for being with us. We'll see you on the next episode.

Speaker 1:

Thanks for listening to The Extra Mile podcast for bar exam takers at www.celebrationbarreview.com.