I scored a 92.5% on the October 2016 test with zero industry experience. I am actually a practicing attorney who passed the California bar exam, and I truly believe that this test rivals the bar exam in difficulty. So buckle down, and get yourself as much time as possible to prepare for this monster. As a side note, I think it would be a waste of time to attempt this test without a prep course.

**Studying:**

Give yourself a realistic amount of time to complete the entire course, including the midterm test. For each chapter, read the regulations and the textbook and make sure you complete the practice test afterwards to ensure you really understand the material. A few weeks into the program, I tried to take 1-2 hours a week to review previous chapters just to keep them fresh in my memory.

When you are budgeting your time, give yourself a solid chunk of time to compete as many practice tests as possible (I think I did every test going back since 2007). CBP repeats questions like crazy, and there is no better feeling than knowing an answer to a question because you have seen it on a previous test. On a related note, when you take a practice test, go through every question and answer to ensure (1) you got it right because you knew the answer and weren’t just guessing; and (2) if you got a question wrong, you understood why. I actually took notes (which I brought into the exam) for classification questions that I missed on practice tests that were based on random rulings. Sure enough, there were at least two questions (identical to questions from previous tests) that I would have missed if I didn’t have these notes.

The key to this test is timing and learning to find information as quickly as possible. Take advantage of the cheat sheets provided, and get used to using them and make notes on them if you find that helpful.

I tabbed the regulations with both the section number and a brief description of what the section covered (TAB EVERYTHING—I used the recommended tabs but also snuck in tabs for questions that frequently popped up on practice tests). Then, I made flashcards of which sections contained what information so I wouldn’t have to even think about where sections were located. I made a few other flashcards of really common information and took them everywhere (watching tv, commuting etc). The more you can memorize easy stuff (like the date used for currency conversion), the more time you will save.

Highlighting is SUPER helpful too. I like to highlight the start of each subsections (so you can see all the exceptions to the rules or all of the requirements for something) and monetary amounts. I also underlined words like “shall/may/must/may not” and words like “and” and “or” because those words can make all the difference in understanding rules.

Don’t even think about trying a practice test before you complete the study program. You won’t be ready. It will simply waste your time and frustrate you.

**For the Exam:**
Organize everything the night (or two nights if you are staying in a hotel) before: make sure you have a SILENT calculator that works, pencils, your email with the information to get in, your ID, etc. Make a checklist and make it super easy on yourself.

Bring a small dictionary to the exam. Especially for classification questions, there were several words (especially in regards to chemical compounds and textiles) that I had never heard before.

Bring a watch, and keep track of your time. If a question is taking too long, fill in your best guess and mark to come back to it later. My test site didn’t have clocks, so if I didn’t have a watch, I would have basically only known when I was halfway done because they announced it.

If you don’t live close to testing site, book a room at a nearby hotel if at all possible. This saved me so much time and stress. Also, you might be able to write it off on your taxes as a business expense (but please check with your tax professional before doing so).

Get to the test early. If you’re not going to eat breakfast at home, research the nearest coffee place and budget time accordingly. It’s a LONG day if you don’t eat breakfast. I actually brought little candies (those fruit Mentos) and ate them during the test to keep my energy up. Also, use the restroom before the test starts. Yes, you can get up during the test but you will lose valuable time.

I hated this test because it occasionally feels like they are intentionally trying to mislead you. As such, read every word to every question and answer. On the converse, however, sometimes the questions really are straightforward. So, be careful, but trust yourself (easier said than done).

When you review a question, cross off the answers you know are wrong and circle your final answer. I marked the ones I was SURE on and marked ones I wasn’t sure on. I had a little extra time at the end, and it was easy to return to the ones I wasn’t sure about. Since you can take the booklet home, this approach has an added benefit as, when LTS releases its analysis of the exam, you can compare your answers and get a sense of how you did.

Finally, listen to the proctors and ask them questions. There are optional questions in the beginning and the end of the test that are located on different portions of the Scantron. Make sure you are filling in the right bubbles and ask the proctors if you aren’t sure.