
10 STUDY TIPS & TRICKS

A GUIDE FOR EMERGING PROFESSIONALS



If you are just starting your journey on the road to licensure, then you already know that it can seem stressful, discouraging, and possibly intimidating to take the leap of not knowing what will be the outcome. You are not alone. Many just like you are either going through the ebb and flows of getting those AXP (formerly known as IDP) hours completed or not knowing where to begin with the amount of resources you have to consider through NCARB. In my experience, it is, and was not, the way I would have done it knowing what I know now. I want to give all of you the guide I wish I had when I first started studying. Here, I will be going through a few brief steps on how to successfully study for your exams with less stress and confidence.

Breaking down each step:

1. Schedule an exam.
2. Create a calendar and mark days and specific times per week for studying.
3. Read the NCARB handbook for the primary resources they provide to you first.
4. Take time to rest.
5. Do other activities.
6. The exam process is your business and no one else's.
7. Seek out other resources/study practice exams.
8. Take the NCARB practice exams.
9. Post Exam evaluation.
10. Celebrate your pass or fail.

1. There is no easy way to be “ready” for the exam other than doing your best and tackling it with confidence. “I need to push back my exam because I just don’t feel ready yet” will not help you. At least for the majority of people I have interacted with, and in my own experience, it is best to just schedule it and keep that goal as a motivator. Schedule it no more than three months out from the day you purchase your exam seat.

2. One strategy that worked for me in my process that I suggest for your preparation, is to print or draw a calendar for 30 to 90 days from your scheduled exam date. On these calendar days, write the days and times you will study. We often juggle many things in our personal day to day... whatever it may be...you need to take time for yourself and also time for this exam. The best approach is to outline your plan on paper, which will help you visualize it clearly and remind yourself to commit time and take responsibility. See the last page for a timeline visual, this is a general graphic and can be done however suits your schedule and needs.

3. The NCARB handbook is your main resource for the specific content needed for exams. This will allow you to get a better understanding of the contents of each test and help you to decide which exam you want to take first. For professional practice exams, use the *Architect's Handbook of Professional Practice*, which covers Project Management, Practice Management, and Construction and Evaluation. You won't be able to read or retain everything, so give yourself time and grace. This process is about your growth, not competition, and enjoying it will help you retain the information needed to become a great architect.

- 4.** Rest is crucial, so avoid all-nighters and ensure you get enough sleep. Your brain needs rest to process and retain information effectively. At least 7 hours of sleep is proven to boost memory. Don't feel guilty about taking care of yourself—take a day off if needed; the content will still be there the next day.
- 5.** Incorporate hobbies, exercise, socializing, and family time into your life to create balance and make your journey more enjoyable. Taking an hour or two from your busy schedule for fun activities can make a big difference
- 6.** When preparing for the A.R.E., it's important to set boundaries to reduce stress. Limit sharing your exam dates to avoid added pressure. Failing is normal and part of the learning process, helping you become a better architect. Engage with supportive communities like the *NCARB forum*, *The ARE Facebook Group*, and *Walking the ARE 50 Group*. Focus on your growth, and share your progress only if you're comfortable.
- 7.** As you start to navigate NCARB and familiarize yourself with what is expected, seek other resources that will also impact and make a difference in your study habits. Some of my favorite programs include, but are not limited to, *BYoung Design with Bryn Young*, *Walking the ARE with Erik Walker*, and *Hyperfine with Ben Norkin*, just to name a few.
- 8.** Once you have studied more through the resources given to you from those listed above, it will be time to hit the ground running and take those NCARB practice exams. Prepare a day to schedule a practice exam that is going to be similar to the real exam. Get a feel of what it's like and reduce the anxiety of not knowing what to expect.
- 9.** Write down how you felt during and after the exam. Write down questions that you think you missed but the most important thing about this, is that it is for yourself. It is forbidden to share any content that you have studied, so make sure when you dump your questions down that you only use this for learning purposes.
- 10.** Go out and celebrate! Treat yourself to a big step in your career. Even if you failed, it is one step closer to passing. Don't give up and remember to ask questions, figure out ways to process and enjoy this part of learning. Connect with other professionals and seek out someone or a group, who is knowledgeable and eager to help you. Good luck future architects!

