



HOW TO PASS THE ELECTRICAL JOURNEYMAN EXAM

**A guide to eliminating fears,
doubts, and bad study habits**



The Young Electrician

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How To Pass The Electrical Journeyman Exam

Foreword from El Profe

This E book is filled with great tips from an electrician that not only went through the exam, but also is very frank about emotionally what he was feeling from beginning to the end.

Sometimes what we need is the real story of why we do things and how we react when things don't go our way. This is our best motivation! I failed my first JW twice before I passed, and I can still recall the emotions and the heartache of those particular days. I can also recall the tears of joy of when I passed as well! The certification exam is tough. It takes planning, dedication, commitment, and strategy to get that pass. Looking forward to hearing about everyone's success when they get their JW card! Thank you, Ruben, for sharing your knowledge selflessly so others can move forward.

Sincerely,

Sergio Cortez

CEO and Master Trainer of Surge Electrical Training

How To Pass The Electrical Journeyman Exam

Intro

Congratulations on taking the next big step in advancing your life and career! You might not think that picking this humble, little eBook up is a big step, but it is!

What The Data Shows

From my experience and from what studies show: Making the decision to take action is the difference that sets doers apart from dreamers. So, from here on out consider yourself a doer!

Having Doubts Is Normal

I've always been the type of person to doubt myself and I feared taking action. Being complacent and even making bad decisions came a little easier to me. I had the "if you don't try, you can't fail" mentality. But the reality is: If you fail to take action, then you've already committed to failing.

Does Mindset Matter?

This kind of mindset kept me from taking the electrical journeyman exam until I was well into my 10th year as an electrician - the shame, I know- At that point in my career I've already completed all of my electrical schooling, moved up in the trade, lead crews, ran jobs, and even helped bid some jobs. But not having my J-card kept me from moving up in two crucial areas: my confidence and my wage.

The Real Reason We Avoid The Exam

I understand the reasons behind why we avoid taking or retaking the Journeyman exam and I want to do all that I can in the short span of this eBook to help answer those fears and doubts by pulling the curtain back on this exam and what it takes to pass it so that by the time you end this eBook, you'll have the information, motivation and inspiration to start and finish the process to becoming a journeyman.

Let's get after it!

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Part 1

My Experience: Bona-Fide, But Not Certified

“A tenth-year apprentice”. That’s what a younger version of myself just starting out in the trade would have called me as I entered my 10th year as an electrician with no J-card. Although, I didn’t feel that bad since most of my co-workers (even some foreman) didn’t have their cards either. If you would have asked me why I hadn’t even attempted the test at that time I know exactly the excuses I would have given: “it costs too much”. “I don’t know what to study”. “I don’t know how to fill out the paperwork to get my hours or apply for the journeyman exam”. All valid reasons, but underneath all that was the cold hard fact: I just lacked confidence in myself.

Sure, I could save up the money to pay for the exam, but ‘why do that if I’m just going to fail?’ And I could ask around to find a prep class to take, but ‘what’s the use of all that energy and money if I’m just going to fail?’ And I could have even figured out what paperwork I needed to fill out and how to do it, but again, ‘what’s the use in all that time, energy and money if I’m just going to fail?’

The reality was that I just didn’t have the confidence in myself to go through all the trouble that went in to taking the exam. At least Until I had too.

My Turning Point

Then, I got married.

My wife and I got engaged just two weeks before the covid-19 pandemic sent everything into lock-down. She was working in a hospital at the time, and I was working in a medium sized electrical company. I definitely miscalculated how much it would cost to be married and to save in preparation for starting a family, but it was more than we were bringing in at the time, that’s for sure!

Shifting sands

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Because of the pandemic being so fresh and me not knowing how it will affect the construction industry, I was afraid to switch companies in the pursuit of more money. It wouldn't do me much good to switch companies for more money just for that new company to close shop shortly after. On the plus side, the company I was working for at the time had a steady flow of work during the pandemic, for which I'm eternally grateful, it kept me working and kept food on my family's table while the world was shutting down.

The Money Problem

Although I was grateful to be working, I still needed to make more money so that me and my wife could have a better chance preparing for the future of our family. I had already hit the cap for what my company was willing to pay a non-certified 10th year electrician. so, the only way to get more money was to get certified.

My Wife And I Made A Deal

Although I doubt myself, I'm also stubborn. My wife suggested that I take a journeyman prep course, but I insisted I could pass by just studying the journeyman prep book a friend recommended.

Although that book helped my ability to navigate the nec code book tremendously, and I do recommend using a prep book for this purpose, my abilities in the case of the equations I needed to know was lacking.

The deal I made with my wife was that if I failed I would take a prep course.

I Failed

I got a 63 on the exam. I was crushed. But I felt like I knew exactly where I went wrong, and I was eager to hit my journeyman prep book even harder this time. Then my wife reminded me of our little deal, so for the sake of my marriage I called the WECA apprenticeship school and scheduled to take their two-day accelerated prep course and I set my next exam date for one week after the class would finish.

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All Work, No Play

As soon as my exam date and class were scheduled I began to study my prep book again as I waited. I went through one test a day from the prep book (about 50-100 questions) until the date my prep class started. The class consisted of two back-to-back Saturdays, both 8 hours each, ending with a practice examination that would determine if I was ready to take the real exam or not.

A Hit To The Gut

I failed the practice exam. This practice exam was supposed to be the milestone marker that would build my confidence and showed that all my hard work was paying off. Failing it felt like a ton of bricks to the gut, Like I was letting myself and my family down.

Get Up & Shake Off the Dust

I chalked it up to being exhausted, hungry and at an extreme lack of caffeine, since the practice exam was given at the end of the last 8-hour class. I decided to push my exam date back an extra week in order for me to spend one full week studying my book again and another full week studying all my notes from the prep class. Failing again was not an option.

Examination Day

I decided that I wasn't going to be nervous. I had studied my backside off, so if I failed it won't be for a lack of trying. I got a full night's rest, ate a good breakfast and had a cup of coffee or two then headed off to slay this dragon.

The verdict

Immediately after the exam had finished, I got to my car and called my wife. I started the call with just light conversation, not mentioning the exam at all, she got a little nervous because this is how the last call started when I failed the first exam. Then, I mentioned something about her now being married to a journeyman and she got excited. All the hard work paid off. I passed the exam and now I was not just bonafide, I was certified.

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Part 3

Qualifications To Take The Journeyman Exam

What are the requirements for taking the Journeyman Exam? You'll probably be surprised to learn that there are actually a few different ways to get certified and not all of them include the same requirements.

Day Phone: _____ Email: _____

Note - You also need to attach the following to this application:

(a) Proof of experience as required under CCR 8, Ch. 2, Part IV, Section 291 of the regulations '**check only one**' and **attach the Social Security Administration Employment History Report (SSN# redacted)(AB 1346) or if coming from another country submit verification letter(s) from employer(s):**

- ☐ (1) Apprenticeship Certificate (attach copy of Certificate & SSA Report (United States only). Read section (a) for other required proof. [Regulations 291.1(a)(1) & AB 1346]
- ☐ (2) On-the-job experience (enter your hours below & SSA Report) and/or Other experience, including military (attach proof & SSA Report). Read section (a) for other required proof [Regulations 291.1(a)(2) & (c) & AB 1346]
- ☐ (3) Other state license (attach copy of License & SSA Report). Read section (a) for other required proof. [Regulations 291.1(b) & AB 1346]
- ☐ (4) * Apprentice in last year of training (attach copy of DAS1 form) [Regulations 291.2(f)] ***Note:** No certification card will be issued until completion of the term of apprenticeship.
- ☐ (5) * Electrician Trainee has completed Approved Curriculum (attach copy of Certificate) ***Note:** No certification card will be issued until the required on-the-job experience is acquired. The SSA report needs to be submitted once you complete your experience. Read section (a) for other required proof. [Regulations 291.2(g) & AB 1346]
- ☐ (6) NICET Certification in Fire Alarm Systems at Level II or above (for Fire/Life Safety Exam Only) (attach copy of Certificate & SSA Report). Read section (a) for other required proof. [Regulations 291.1(a)(2) & AB 1346]

Fig 1

as you can see in figure 1 above (a screen shot from the actual Journeyman application), there are a few ways a person can qualify to take the exam. Let's start with the first one.

Note: all routes require a certain amount of work hours depending on the type of certification you are applying for. For example: It is 8000hr for the General Electrician Certification in California.

***All the requirements I share in this section are from the California Journeyman Certification form and are used as an example to help you understand the different types of requirements. Every state has different requirements and you should contact your states licensing board to learn your states requirements.**

1. Apprentice certificate.

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This is probably the one we're all familiar with and the route I recommend if you are just starting out.

Journeyman Exam Requirements:

- Copy of Certificate: this is referring to the certificate of completion of an electrical apprenticeship program.
- SSA Form: this is referring to form SSA-7050 which is used to obtain your proof of hours by receiving a copy of your work history from the Social Security Administration. (this form can be avoided by just sending copies of your W-2 forms for the required years(hours) as proof of work hours instead. which I recommend doing because the SSA 7050 form costs \$100. at the time of writing this)

A little about taking the Apprentice route:

With this approach you will enroll in either a union or non-apprenticeship program.

Requirements to join an apprenticeship:

- Be 18 years of age.
- Have a high school diploma or GED.
- Pass an entry exam.

With this approach your apprenticeship program will be responsible for your job placement, pay raises, schooling, medical insurance and retirement benefits.

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- **Job Placement:** They will place you in an electrical company that partners with them so you can gain the work experience you need in order to qualify to get certified – this also includes finding and placing you in another company in case of Job loss.
- **Schooling:** They put you through their schooling. Some programs require you to go to school a few nights a week while you work. Others require you to go to school for two weeks every 6 months (you'll be unemployed for these two weeks and return to the company you left after the two week schooling period ends)
- **Pay Raises:** pay raises are typically given every 6 months and after a certain percentage of schooling is completed.
- **Medical:** Your medical benefits are covered through your apprenticeship program. You will not have to worry about switching medical insurances if or when you change companies while in the Apprenticeship Program. (this medical insurance ends when you complete the program.)
- **Pension:** you'll also be given a mandatory retirement plan that will be a pension or act like a pension (*contact your Apprenticeship program for more information about this)
- **Journeyman prep:** you'll also be given a prep course to get you ready to take the Journeyman Exam when your schooling and work hours are completed (they also help with all the paperwork to apply for the exam)

2. On The Job Experience.

This is a lesser-known route to get certified and is usually used by someone who has been working in the field but has never received or completed proper electrical schooling. This is not an exhausted list but here are some examples:

- Someone might have been kicked out of their apprenticeship program.
- They stopped signing up for/attending their electrical training classes at a community college.
- For the old timers: this person might have been working since the early days before the journeyman card was enforced/required.
- Or, as stated on the application form, the person worked as an electrician in another country.

Journeyman Exam Requirements:

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- SSA Form: this is referring to the form SSA-7050 which is used to obtain your proof of hours by receiving a copy of your work history from the Social Security Administration. (This form can be avoided by just sending copies of your W-2 forms for the required years(hours) as proof of work hours instead. which I recommend doing because the SSA 7050 form costs \$100. At the time of this writing.)
- Unmentioned requirement: the DIR asks for a written letter from your previous employer(s) when applying using only your work hours and no schooling. (this knowledge is from what I've personally seen when others have applied with this approach.)
- **NOTE:** You do not need an ET (ELECTRICAL TRAINEE) CARD to apply with this option. If you receive a defect letter from the Dir asking for an ET card then email the dir at ECUINFO@dir.ca.gov and they will assist you.

3. Other State License.

This one is self-explanatory. This is for the person who is a certified electrician in another state and wants to become a certified electrician in California.

Journeyman Exam Requirements:

- Copy of license: you will be required to send a copy of your license from the state you are certified in.
- SSA Form: this is referring to the form SSA-7050 which is used to obtain your proof of hours by receiving a copy of your work history from the Social Security Administration. (This form can be avoided by just sending copies of your W-2 forms for the required years(hours) as proof of work hours instead. which I recommend doing because the SSA 7050 form costs \$100. At the time of this writing.)

4. Apprentice in Last year of training.

This is for the person going through an electrical apprenticeship program and is in their last year (year 4 or 5). And would like to take the journeyman exam early. Note* in this scenario you can take the exam early, but you will not be issued a license or considered a journeyman until your schooling is completed.

Journeyman Exam Requirements:

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Das 1 form: this is an Apprentice Agreement form. Ask your apprenticeship about this if you are in your last year and want to test early (this seems to be the only requirement)

5. Electrician Trainee has Completed Approved Curriculum.

This is for the person who has paid for their own schooling and has taken and completed either:

1. electrical classes at a community college,
2. an accelerated electrical program,
3. went through any electrical trainee program with a state approved curriculum.

***Note:** you're able to take the exam as soon as your schooling is completed. If you don't have the proper amount of on-the-job experience (work hours) then your license will not be given until you complete the proper amount of work hours needed.

***Note:** You must keep an active E.T (electrical Trainee card) during this process. Only hours work while having an active E.T card will be counted by the Dir towards getting your journeyman license. E.T cards need to be renewed annually.

***Note:** The amount of class/school hours to take the Journeyman Exam are 720+ hours depending on the program.

Journeyman Exam Requirements:

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- Copy of Certificate. This is a copy of the certificate of your completion of an approved curriculum from your electrical trainee program.
- SSA Form: this is referring to the form SSA-7050 which is used to obtain your proof of hours by receiving a copy of your work history from the Social Security Administration. (This form can be avoided by just sending copies of your W-2 forms for the required years(hours) as proof of work hours instead. which I recommend doing because the SSA 7050 form costs \$100. At the time of this writing.)

6. NICET:

This deals with getting a certification in Fire/Life Safety. Which I dont know much about.

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Part 4

Bonus Tips:

Make sure you set your test date out a week or two after you finish your prep course. No more than 2 weeks. I gave myself two weeks after my prep course finished so that I could go over all the material again and really instill it in my mind.

Quick Recap:

1. Pick a test date (1-3 months away, or 1-2 weeks after your course ends)
2. Pick a prep course or book
3. Decide how long each study session will be (30 mins - 1 hour)
4. Decide what days you'll be studying and at what time of the day
5. Decide what you will be studying before your study session begins
6. Decide where you will be studying
7. Make sure your study materials are visible and easily accessible

Part 5

Study Time!

How to Develop Good Study Habits

In this section I'm going to give you the exact steps that I took to help myself get the most out of my studying. This helped me get the most out of each study session and this helped me to actually keep myself studying leading up to the actual exam.

I also go over this information in an episode of the podcast I did titled: Atomic Habits for Studying

https://youtu.be/nAmveqt9UX8?si=_-W5DbGrle8SZHzl

This 5 step process helped me to:

1. Study more consistently.
2. Study more effectively.
3. Study with less distractions.
4. Make studying less of a grueling task

Before we begin:

Prerequisite: apply for the exam & pick something to study

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1. Many of us want to put the cart before the horse and start studying before we even have confirmation that we can take the exam. This isn't necessarily bad, but it can give us the illusion that we are making progress when we are not. One of the hurdles for many of us is actually sending that paperwork in. So get that hurdle out of the way ASAP.
2. Now, once you have confirmation that you can take the exam: You need to decide what prep book or course to study and purchase it!
3. I hear it all the time, and I've said it myself, "I know I need to get certified but I don't know what to study". My answer to this is simple: Find a journeyman prep course or get a journeyman prep book. There's no lack of study material out there. The majority of them will do the job just fine. The challenging part is picking one. Just pick one!
4. Set your test date for 1 week after your course ends or 2-3 months out if you are doing a self-paced program or book (you can change your test date 48 hours before if you don't feel ready.)
5. If you have a hard time getting the money to pay for these things then I have a helpful resource on budgeting on my Instagram to help you get past that hurdle called "I Can't Afford to Take The Electrical Journeyman Exam!"

Step 1. Decide what days you're going to study on

For many of us we'd like to think that we'll just study every day- the problem with this is that it's not realistic and will set most of us up for failure.

What Happens when we think this way and decide not to have a structured game plan? For most of us we will study for a while and then quit when we can't keep up. I've noticed that it's better to choose a few days out of the week to study on. If we want to study on the off days then that's fine, but we won't be burdened with the constant need to keep up daily or the crushing guilt of failing when we fall behind.

Pick 3 or 4 days out of the week that you will make time every week to study on. Trust me. It's better to study 2 or 3 times a week for a couple of months leading up to your test date then it is to study every day for a week or 2 then give up. Longevity is important. This is a marathon not a race my friends.

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Step 2. Decide what time of day you will study.

I've noticed that when I don't schedule what time of day to study, then I end up in a cycle that sounds something like this: "I'll study In the morning before work!" The morning comes and I wake up late or I'm feeling groggy and decide "I'll just study on my lunch break! My lunch break comes and I realize it's too noisy to study or my car isn't that comfortable to study in so I decide "I'll just study when I get home". When I get home the wife reminds me that we need to do some grocery shopping or I remember that there's something else I need to take care of, so I decided "I'll just study tomorrow"

The issue is that *when we fail to plan then we plan to fail*. When you decide what time of day you'll dedicate to studying then it will make it easier for you to stick to that time and it will make it easier for you to make the necessary arrangements to make sure you are in a good place to study. For instance; if your house is too noisy then you might want to find the quietest place in the house to use and let those who live with you know that you need some time to study with no distractions. If others won't get on board with you Then it is up to you to figure out an alternative place to study, like a coffee shop or library.

This leads into step 3

Step 3. Pick a place to study.

Picking a time and place to study go hand in hand. If I know that I'm going to study after work at a coffee shop, then I can make the proper arrangements to easily do so. Such as: pack my study materials the night before and put them somewhere that I can easily see in the morning when I'm heading out the door so that I don't forget them.

If I'm going to study after work in the dining room then I can make sure my study materials are somewhere that is easily accessible and where I can see them when I get home. There has been a few occasions where I came home from work and couldn't find my study materials and then just gave up and said "I'll study tomorrow".

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The best thing we can do to assure we stick to our study plan is to decide where we will study. Your first choice might not be a good place. Give yourself a chance to try some different places out. Home, coffee shop, work, ect. For myself I know that I study best at a coffee shop. The noise doesn't bother me and it's easier for me to focus when I'm not home and around all the things that distract me

Step 4: Decide what you will study.

I mentioned in the "prerequisite" section that most of the journeyman prep courses or books will be good enough to help you pass. Something that many of us don't realize is that these courses are literally designed to HELP YOU PASS THE EXAM! I used to believe that these books and courses just taught a wide variety of electrical knowledge and when you went to take the exam you'd just have to hope you've learned the right things or took the right course. But, that couldn't be further from the truth. They only teach you what you need to know to pass the exam and nothing more! That's great news right?!

But, after you choose a course or prep book then you have to decide what you will study each time you sit down. An issue that some people run into is that they don't want to study all the material they have been given and they try to guess what will be on the exam and only study that, or they skim through the material to find something they feel like they need to improve on and just study that- YOU NEED TO STUDY ALL THE MATERIAL.

In order to get the most out of your studying time and have the best chance at passing the exam then i suggest just starting from the beginning of your material and studying straight through.

If you are studying for 1 hour a day 3 times a week then you can start from the beginning and just study until your time is up and pick up where you left off on your next study session.

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If the course you are taking does not provide at least 200 to 400 exam questions then i'd recommend finding our purchasing prep questions and doing practice exams at least one day a week. When you complete your course material then i'd recommend continuing your study plan but instead of the course materials, you will do practice exams.

Practice exams are the bread and butter of your studying. It is important to study safety, troubleshooting, maintenance and other subjects, **but your number one ally in passing the exam is learning to navigate the code book quickly.** It doesn't matter what state you are in, finding answers in the code book quickly will guarantee you pass the exam.

Step 5. Remove all distractions

I mentioned this before, but it is important. Everything is a distraction. laundry , cooking, shopping, overtime, kids, spouse, everything. It is your job to remove any distraction that keeps you from studying.

Doing this includes things like: turning down overtime, planning out dinner ahead of time, planning out laundry ahead of time, taking with your spouse and kids about your need to dedicate a certain amount of uninterrupted time to study a few times a week. Planning out when to do your grocery shopping.

remember : this is not forever. At most this will be for 3 or 4 months. The more adequate studying you get to do means you have a better shot at passing the exam. You need to do your due diligence to give yourself the best opportunity to pass this exam and that includes making the necessary arrangements with family, work, and other responsibilities to insure your success. This is yours and your family's future. It's worth the extra effort for a season.

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Part 6

Day of the exam

1. Get plenty of rest. Studies show that a lack of adequate sleep can produce effects that are similar to the affects of having ADHD and can affect your cognitive abilities while taking an exam
2. Don't forget your ID card - make sure it isn't expired
3. Eat a good breakfast. Being hungry during an exam can also affect your ability to focus.
4. Leave for the exam at an adequate time just in case you have any issues getting there

When you sit down to take the exam

- The timer does not start until you press “start” on the computer. Use this time to set up your exam station by marking the code book they provide. You will be given sticky tabs for adding place holders in the code book. Quickly locate tables and articles you would like to find easily and put a tab on them.
- The test site will provide scratch paper and a pencil. Write down any equations on the scratch paper that you will like to easily remember. This will not only help you not only have a better chance of answering questions, it will save you time on using equations without having to remember them.
- Remember: most or all of the exam questions that can be found in the NEC will be written out word for word from the NEC. so when you find the answer, you can be sure you got it right because it will match word for word with the question
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- Relax and stay positive
- Unanswered questions are considered wrong, so don't leave any question unanswered.
- Read each question carefully and fully before trying to answer it
- Don't change any answer unless you are positive you know the right answer.
- Mark every question that you are not 100% sure of and review them after your first pass through of the exam. Only take a mark off when you are 100% sure it is right.
- Go through the pre-exam instruction exercise thoroughly so that you understand how to answer and mark questions. Ask for further clarification if you don't understand it.

How to get extra time for the exam

If you have a hard time taking exams because english is your second language or because you get nervous while taking tests then you can get 2 hours added on to your exam. Contact the DIR or local testing center for more information on this

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As I close out this little Ebook I hope it helped, in at least, some small way. I hope everyone that reads this will pass their electrical examination and then go on to do great things in the trade, for their families and for themselves.

I will continue to add to this ebook as the months and years go by. Please email me @ TheYoungElectricianPod@Gmail.com with your suggestions on what you think would make this book more beneficial

may you have great success in your career, life and health.

God Bless.

Ruben Young,
The Young Electrician

If You Need Any Additional Help

We can schedule a 1 on 1 coaching session either on the phone or through zoom

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A Guide to Eliminating Fears, Doubts, and Bad Study
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