

## **5 Steps to Obtaining Your California General Building Contractor License**

### **Step 1. Sign up for the exam.**

You will have to take and pass the California Board's Business and Law Exam to get a license. The Board will review your application and let you know whether you are required to take the exam or not.

To apply for a license, contact:

Contractors State License Board (CSLB)  
9821 Business Park Drive  
Sacramento, CA 95826  
(916) 255-3900  
(916) 366-9130  
<http://www.cslb.ca.gov/>

CSLB has an automated, toll-free number (1-800-321-2752) you can use to order an application or get other information. Forms and applications are also available online at <http://www.cslb.ca.gov/services/forms.asp>.

To make the examination procedures more convenient for applicants, testing centers have been set up at numerous locations throughout the state. The CSLB has exam sites in eight cities: San Diego, San Bernardino, Buena Park, Inglewood, Ventura, Oakland, Sacramento and Fresno. Through the use of zip codes, applicants are assigned to the testing center nearest their business address. The exams are given every weekday. Normally it takes the state about seven to ten weeks from the time you apply until you sit to take the test.

To qualify for a license you must verify that you've had at least four years of experience in the last ten years as a journeyman, foreman, supervising employee, contractor, or owner-builder. You may be able to apply from one and one-half to three years of approved education and/or apprenticeship to this requirement.

Unless you are applying for a joint venture license, you must have more than \$2,500 worth of operating capital to apply for a new contractor's license.

Contractor's license fee: There is a non-refundable fee of \$250 to apply for a license and \$50 for each trade you apply for after the first. The initial license costs \$150. You may not add a trade that requires an exam until you obtain your first license. A license is valid for two years.

The Board may accept your trade experience and/or license from another state. However, you must still apply for a license, pass the law and business part of the Board exam, and pay the appropriate fees.

### **Step 2. Purchase the required books for your exam.**

To find out what documents and books the State of California requires for this exam, refer to the list of documents and books on your state's exam page of our website. You must purchase these documents and books in preparation for the exam.

### **Step 3. Follow the rules.**

This is a closed-book examination. No reference materials may be used during the examination. All materials brought to the examination site must be left in an unmonitored area at your own risk. Some questions require arithmetic computation. Applicants may bring a hand/pocket calculator (either battery operated or solar powered) that is non-printing and not alpha-programmable.

### **Step 4. Start studying!**

To fully prepare for your exam it is best to thoroughly study the required documents and books, as well as any recommended studying materials. The amount of preparation time needed will be different for each individual. Be sure to allow yourself enough time to fully prepare for the exam.

### **Step 5. Good luck on the exam!**

The exam is closed book and is made up of two parts, each taking about two and one-half hours to finish. The examination will be administered on a computer-assisted testing (CAT) system. The exact amount of time allowed for each examination will be announced at the test site. In addition, you will be informed at the test site about the percentage of correct answers needed to pass each examination. It is best to arrive at least 15 minutes before your test's scheduled start time. Good luck!

The first part consists of approximately 100 multiple-choice questions related to business management and construction law. The examination is divided into ten major sections:

- Project/Job Management (about 20 % of the test);
- Licensing (about 15 %);
- Bookkeeping (about 15 %);
- Bid Procedures (about 13%);
- Safety (about 12%);
- Contracts (about 10%);
- Liens and Dispute Resolution (about 5%);
- Employee Issues (about 4%);
- Insurance (about 3%);
- Special Circumstances (about 3%).

The second part of the exam is a multiple-choice, with four choices per question. Some questions require mathematical computation. Examination questions are written to provide only one BEST answer and are NOT written as trick questions.

All correct answers have equal value and there are no score reductions for wrong answers. Therefore, all examination questions should be answered.

Ample time is provided to answer all examination questions, so be sure to read each question and its four choices completely and carefully before selecting the BEST possible answer to the question.

The General Building (B) Examination is divided into five major sections. These sections are:

1. Estimation, Plans, and Specifications (23%)
  - Scope of work and code compliance

- Cost estimation for materials and labor
  - Design and construction error identification
  - Shop drawing and plans and specifications preparation
  - Field inspection performance
2. Framing and Structural Components (23%)
- General framing
  - Roof framing
  - Seismic requirements
  - Siding and stucco
3. Safety (10%)
- Work site safety
  - Personnel safety
  - Public safety
  - Environmental safety
4. Core Trades (28%)
- Plumbing
  - Electrical
  - HVAC
  - Concrete
  - Earthwork and surveying
  - Insulation and acoustical
  - Roofing
5. Finish Trades (16%)
- Painting
  - Tiling
  - Flooring
  - Cabinetry and millwork
  - Plaster, drywall and ceilings
  - Windows and doors
  - Fencing

The Board requires a contractor's bond before it will issue you a license. After you pass the exams you will be notified as to how much the bond must be for. This will depend on the type of license you obtain and which trade it is in. Generally it is in the area of \$10,000. After you submit proof of your bond, the Board will issue your license number in three to four weeks.