

Thoughts After Auditing the AICP Exam (Again), and Advice to Those Preparing for It

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Ruminations

- The test is difficult and comprehensive (study)
- Not all questions are clear (slow down and read again)
- Some questions are a lot harder than others (and will take you longer to answer)
- Some questions have extraneous information (just like the rest of life)
- Some questions require you to exercise judgment (what's both right and practical?)
- You can't get everything right (so don't sweat the wrong stuff)

What should you do?

- Don't memorize dates, unless they have independent meaning (Housing Act of 1949)
- Understand concepts and be prepared to apply them
- Know famous planning figures and know why they are famous
- Have a grasp of theory
- Read the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct
- Understand conflicts of interest
- Know the basic mechanics of filing a professional complaint
- Memorize a few basic numbers/conversions/formulae (feet in a mile, square feet in an acre, floor area ratio, etc.)
- Understand scale and how maps of different scales might be applied differently (i.e., site analysis versus the location of the site relative to other things)
- Know famous cases and what they stand for (especially "takings" cases)

Taking the exam

- Sit down and start breathing
- Use the headphones if you find them helpful; noises can be distracting
- All questions are multiple choice; eliminate obviously wrong answers and choose the best answer from among those that remain
- If you have doubts about your answer, trust your instincts: what seemed right the first time you read the question? Choose that answer, then mark the question for follow-up
- Don't leave questions blank – choose an answer, even if you don't have a clue! Mark the question for follow-up
- When following up, only change your answers if you're really sure you were wrong the first time around

What if you don't pass?

- Don't worry, it's not the end of the world
- Look upon it as a dry run for when you *really* take the test (next testing window)
- As soon as you can, write down your thoughts on the exam—what questions or content areas gave you trouble?
- You're not alone – roughly 1 in 3 people don't pass

Good luck!