



Opinions in the magazine are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the State Bar of Arizona, its Board of Governors, the Editorial Board or staff. The magazine provides an open forum for readers. Send your own viewpoint or letter to Tim.Eigo@staff.azbar.org.

## The Admissions Game

*“Due to a shortage of space, California is considering raising the standards for prison admission.”*

—From a recent news article, November 2006

Whoa! At last, here is an area where my experience, all in civil law, can be useful in the world of criminal law. I am delighted that decades of working in professional ethics, Bar administration, as an Adjunct Professor with the ASU College of Law, and with a variety of selection committees might now bear unexpected fruit: I have experience directly related to California’s dilemma!

Clearly, law school admission procedures provide a near-perfect blueprint to help our giant neighbor to the West with its prisoner quality problem.

First, if the California Bureau of Prisons wants to keep the numbers down and the quality up, prisons need an aptitude test. We’ll call it the PAST—Prison Adequacy & Superiority Test. As with the LSAT, your score helps determine whether you will be admitted to an Ivy League facility with marquee status and its own soundtrack, like Folsom, or just some run-of-the mill detention center.

The same categories of skill testing that have worked so well with the LSAT should apply: analogies, vocabulary, memory tests, games and short essays.

Here are some sample questions:

### ANALOGIES

1. Assault is to battery as bread is to:

- Pigeons (stool or avian)
- Moola; do-re-me; sawbucks
- Butter
- Solitary confinement

2. Camera is to mug shot as a PIN is to:

- Bowling
- A needle
- Diapers
- An ATM

### MEMORY

1. What were you doing at 8 p.m. last Friday night?

- Attending a Stanford extension class in Sanskrit
- Making cookies for the homeless shelter
- With your girlfriend/wife/brother/sister/mother in church
- Relieving Circle K of its cash drawer

2. Give the California criminal code citation for your last three crimes.

Bonus Points: name your last three public defenders.

### GAMES

1. If Criminal 1 leaves for the crime at 11:45 p.m. and Criminal 2 at 10:30 the same night, and both start from seedy motel rooms located exactly 12 miles from the house they plan to burgle, but Criminal 2 still has to steal a car, which Criminal will get to the flat-screen TV first?
2. Is your answer different if either Criminal starts from a better motel?

### SHORT ESSAYS

1. In 500 words or less, please tell us what you hope to get out of prison? (Note: not “when” but “what”)
2. Please tell us a situation when you had to put an idea into action, including your personal feelings, whether you relied on others, and if a hit man was involved.

### VOCABULARY

1. Which one is not a definition of “5 to 10”?

- A dime store
- Grand larceny, second conviction
- Cell size
- Chances of falling in love in prison

2. “Chain gang” refers to:

- A work detail tied together with metal chains
- A “get-famous-fast” PR trick by Sheriff Joe
- A remnant of slavery and inhumane treatment
- All of the above

**GPA:** In addition to the PAST test, a prison hoping to keep its numbers down and its quality up should look at the applicant’s GPA (Gross Penal Accumulation), with weighted averages allowing for youthful crimes (fewer points), heinous conduct (more points) and those committed while holding elected office. (Note: Points increase commensurate with amount of public trust involved, *i.e.*, PTA officer = low; Presidency = high.)

**REFERENCES:** Though the Admissions Officers can predict that all applicants for the System will only list positive references who will vouch for their top-level criminality, this is actually a fertile area of inquiry. As with Law School, extra points should be given for:

1. Applicants who write their own reference letters, especially on fake letterhead (Note: “Son of Sam” is trademarked)
2. Trading on even the most obscure connection to famous people (“I know the applicant from a passing slur overheard by an Aryan brother who did time in Attica, and I can assure you he is perfect for your prison. Sincerely, A Lifer.”)
3. Knowing that *The Sopranos* are not real
4. Ditto Hannibal Lecter

**PERSONAL INTERVIEW:** Not recommended, and certainly not without protection.

**LOOKING AHEAD:** Getting into law school is no picnic, and apparently neither is getting into prison in California. The obvious parallels don’t stop with admission. Every first-year law student feels involuntarily incarcerated, often in solitary confinement. And then there’s mug shots and Bar Directory photos, sad outcomes with juries, uniforms (albeit with ties), and even assigned numbers in the system.

Whoever woulda thunk that preparing for life behind bars and in the Bar would have so much in common!



*Roxie Bacon*

**Roxie Bacon**  
is a former President of the State Bar of Arizona.