



## Continuing Legal Education and Basic Skills Course Requirements: A Deep Dive Into the Basics

Once you become an attorney in the state of Florida, the clock starts on your Continuing Legal Education and Basic Skills Course Requirements. What are they? How are the two different?

This guide will lead you through the basics of both requirements, including when they are due, what happens if they are not completed timely, and possible exemptions/deferments.

**Please note: The Florida Bar will not consider requests for extensions from individual members for CLER or BSCR.**

### I. Basic Skills Course Requirement (BSCR)

#### What is the Basic Skills Course Requirement?

The Basic Skills Course Requirement is made up of two different phases.

- **Phase 1:** Practicing With Professionalism (PWP). The specific course entitled 'Practicing with Professionalism' is the only course which will satisfy this requirement. This course must be completed within the first year of becoming an attorney in Florida.
- **Phase 2:** Young Lawyer's Division (YLD) Mandatory Courses. You must complete 21 credit hours of the YLD sponsored basic level courses. Most courses are worth 7 credits, so only 3 would be needed. This phase must be completed within your first 3 years of becoming an attorney in Florida.

**\*It is important to note that these courses also count toward your general CLE requirement, and it is recommended that you complete these courses first.**

## Do I Have to Take These Courses?

In most situations, yes. Both phases will need to be completed in order to maintain a status of In Good Standing. However, you have two possible options.

1. **Deferment.** You may be eligible defer either the PWP or the YLD Mandatory courses to a later date if any of these situations are applicable:

- You are Active-Duty Military
- You are currently faced with an undue hardship.
- You are a non-resident who is not currently practicing in the state of Florida.
- You are a full-time government employee (**Phase 2 Only**).
- You are an inactive member.

If one of these situations applies, you will need to complete and submit a [Petition for Deferment](#) and provide the required documentation as to your eligibility. An undue hardship deferment remains in effect for one reporting cycle; however for all other reasons, your deferment will expire once your above situation no longer applies, and you must complete and submit a [Petition for Removal of Deferment](#). Once your deferment expires, you will have 12 months to complete the PWP and/or 24 months to complete the YLD Mandatory Courses.

2. **Exemption.** You may be eligible for an Exemption from the YLD Mandatory Courses if any of these situations are applicable:

- Governmental Practice. You have been continuously engaged in the full-time practice of law for a Florida or federal government entity for at least six years.
- Foreign Practice. You have been continuously engaged in the practice of law in a foreign jurisdiction for five or more years. You must also be able to show that you have completed at least 30 hours of CLE in the last three years.

If one of these situations applies, you must complete and submit a [Petition for BSCR Exemption](#).

**You must complete the Practicing with Professionalism (Phase 1) requirement prior to becoming eligible for the Phase 2 exemption of the 21-credit hour requirement.**

## How Often do I have to Complete the Basic Skills Course Requirement?

Once you have completed both phases, you will not need to do them again unless you elect inactive status and remain in that status for five years or more and have not practiced law in another jurisdiction.

## **II. Continuing Legal Education Requirement (CLE/CLER)**

This requirement is cyclical, and each cycle lasts for three years. Cycles are assigned once you become a member and may be staggered to account for the number of incoming members, so your first cycle may be more than three years. If this happens, each cycle thereafter will be three years in length. You can only post credits for courses that took place within your cycle.

### **What is the Continuing Legal Education Requirement?**

In each cycle, you are required to complete report the following:

30 credit hours of approved CLE.

- At least 3 must be technology
- At least 5 must be approved legal ethics, professionalism, substance abuse, and/or mental health and wellness
- [The Mandatory 2 Hour Professionalism Course](#) produced by The Florida Bar and approved by the Supreme Court of Florida. The course is updated every 18 months.

### **How Do I Calculate General Credit?**

Florida is a 50-minute state, which means that you receive 1 general credit for every 50 minutes of a course. As a general rule, divide the full length of the course in minutes by 50. For example, if a course you attend is 90 minutes long. 90 divided by 50 is 1.8, so you would receive 2.0 general credits. A 120-minute course would be 2.4, so you would receive 2.5 general credits. General credits can only be given in .0 or .5. A course must be at least 25 minutes in length to qualify for a half hour of credit.

### **How Do I Receive Credit?**

Florida is a self-reporting state. Courses pre-approved by The Florida Bar receive either a 4-digit course number, or a 7-digit course number that ends with an 'N'. You post credits by logging onto your member portal. Otherwise, you must complete the corresponding application and email it with the backup information to [clemail@floridabar.org](mailto:clemail@floridabar.org).

## What Types of Activities Qualify for CLE Credit?

### 1. Courses

- Attending a live course or viewing a webinar online are the most common ways to earn your CLE credit.
- The Florida Bar's Practice Resource Center offers free courses on the [Legal Fuel](#) website; you can also find courses on [The Florida Bar's web page](#), or through your [Member Portal](#).
- To receive credit for a course that does not have a Florida Bar Course Number, you must complete and submit an Application for [Unapproved Course Attendance Credit](#) and include the course description, timed outline of course content, speaker names and information, and/or a certificate of completion from the course provider.

### 2. Lectures

- You can receive credit for presenting a CLE course. You can receive up to 5-hours of general credit for every 50-minutes you present an intermediate course, and up to 7-hours for every 50-minutes you present an advanced course.
- **It is important to note that you can only receive credit for a specific lecture once per cycle regardless of how many times you give the presentation.** You can give as many different lectures as you would like, but you'll only receive credit for the first time you give the lecture during your cycle.
- To receive credit, you must complete and submit an [Application for Lecture Credit](#) and include the timed outline for your lecture.

### 3. Teaching a University Course

- If you teach a course at a university related to the practice of law, you can earn up to 4-credit hours for each quarter hour, or 5-credit hours for each semester hour.
- Similar to lectures, **it is important to note that you can only receive credit for a single course once per cycle, regardless of how many times you taught the course.**
- To receive credit, you must complete and submit an [Application for University Teaching Credit](#) and include the syllabus for the course.

### 4. Writing

- You may receive credit if you write and publish an article, book, or chapter in a book. You become eligible for credit once your writing is complete and accepted for publication.
- Credit is given based on the amount of time devoted to the preparation and cannot exceed **15 hours per item written.**

- To receive credit, you must complete and submit an [Application for Written Material Credit](#) and include either a physical copy or link to what you wrote.

## 5. Pro Bono

- Credit may be awarded for Pro Bono services rendered. You can receive 1 general credit hour for each hour of pro bono service, **but you cannot exceed more than 5-hours in a reporting cycle.**
- To receive credit, you must complete and submit an [Application for Pro Bono Service Credit](#).

## 6. Lawyers Advising Lawyers (LAL)

- Credits can be awarded if you are involved with the Lawyers Advising Lawyers program. You can receive 1 general credit hour for each hour you spend responding to lawyer inquiries, **but you cannot exceed more than 5-hours in a reporting cycle.**
- To receive credit, you must complete and submit an [Application for LAL Advisor Credit](#).

## What if I earn more than the Required Amount During My Cycle? Can any Extra be Counted Toward the Next Cycle?

No. Carrying-over credits from one cycle to the next is prohibited. Only courses taken within your cycle dates count for that cycle.

## Is it Possible to Defer, or be Exempt, from CLE Requirements?

You are not able to defer your CLE requirement, but it is possible to be exempt under the following conditions:

1. **Automatic Exemptions** You are automatically exempt from the CLE requirement if:
  - You are a member of the full-time federal judiciary who are prohibited from engaging in the private practice of law, or
  - You are a Justice of the Florida Supreme Court; a judge of the district courts of appeal, circuit courts, and/or county courts; and other judicial officers and employees as designated by the Florida Supreme Court
  - You are inactive.
2. **Application for Exemptions** The following situations require you to fill out and submit an [Application for Exemption](#):
  - You are Active-Duty Military
  - You are currently experiencing an Undue Hardship
  - You are a non-resident who is not currently practicing in the state of Florida

**Please note:** Exemptions are good for one reporting cycle only and are automatically removed at the end of the current cycle. To be eligible for an additional exemption, you must complete 10 credit hours: 1 hour must be in technology; 2 hours legal ethics, substance abuse, and/or mental health and wellness; and the mandatory 2-credit hour Florida Legal Professionalism course produced by The Florida Bar and approved by The Supreme Court of Florida.

### **What Happens if I Don't Complete either Phase of the BSCR or the CLER Within the Allotted Timeframe?**

1. **Reminders.** Courtesy emails are sent to your official Bar record email address at 120-days, 90-days, 30-days, and 15-days prior to the end of your reporting cycle.
2. **Noncompliance.** If you have not completed the requirements and posted the credits by 11:59 pm of the last day of your reporting cycle, you will be deemed noncompliant.
3. **Delinquent.** If the requirements are not completed and posted by midnight on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month, you will be deemed delinquent and ***INELIGIBLE to practice law in the state of Florida.*** If you reach this stage, these are the steps you will need to complete to become Compliant:
  1. Complete the CLER or BSCR, which is applicable.
  2. Complete and submit either a [Petition for Removal of CLER Delinquency](#), a [Petition for Removal of BSCR Delinquency Phase 1](#), or a [Petition for Removal of BSCR Delinquency Phase 2](#) (whichever is applicable).
  3. Pay \$150.00 per petition either by check or you can call The Florida Bar's Accounting Department at 850-561-5831 to pay over the phone.

**Please note:** These steps may be completed online by logging in to your member portal. All **three** steps must be complete before you are eligible to practice in Florida.

- If you are delinquent more than 60 days, you are subject to discipline upon reinstatement. RRTFB 1-3.7(f).
- If you are delinquent five years or more, you will be deemed permanently delinquent and must seek reinstatement through the Florida Board of Bar Examiners and approval by the Supreme Court of Florida. RRTFB 1-3.7(d).

### **Who Do I Contact if I have Any Questions?**

The Legal Specialization and Education (LSE) Department of The Florida Bar. You can reach them by phone at (850)561-5842 or by email at [clemail@floridabar.org](mailto:clemail@floridabar.org).

## **Helpful Links and Information**

- [Rules Regulating the Florida Bar Chapter 1](#)
- [Rules Regulating the Florida Bar Chapter 6](#)
- [Standing Policies of the Board of Legal Specialization and Education 500 Series: CLE Accreditation](#)
- [Standing Policies of the Board of Legal Specialization and Education 600 Series: Continuing Legal Education Requirements](#)
- [Standing Policies of the Board of Legal Specialization and Education 700 Series: Basic Skills Course Requirement](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions about CLE Requirements](#)
- [General CLE Info & Requirements](#)