



## Preparing for the Owner Builder Authorization Exam

This study guide will help you prepare for the Owner Builder Authorization Exam in British Columbia. It describes the competency areas covered and what you need to know to pass the exam. The guide answers commonly asked questions, explains how to schedule an exam, where you can take the exam, what you need to bring to the exam and more. It also provides resource information to help you study for the exam.

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After reading this study guide, we encourage you to visit the [Education Registry](#) on the Licensing & Consumer Services section of our BC Housing website. You can search the online registry to find a variety of optional courses to help you plan for the exam. This includes courses offered by colleges and industry associations on a range of topics: from the building code to construction technology and construction management.

You will also find information about the optional Owner Builder Authorization Exam Preparation course. This course is being offered from an independent education provider and is intended to assist applicants prepare for the exam.



## Overview

As of July 4, 2016, anyone who wishes to build a new home in British Columbia as an owner builder must apply for an Owner Builder Authorization and pass an exam.

The Owner Builder Authorization Exam will test your knowledge and understanding of home building basics. Applicants will be evaluated in two competency areas: **construction basics** and the **statutory obligations and requirements** that Owner Builders must meet under the *Homeowner Protection Act*. Successfully completing the exam provides evidence that the applicant possesses the necessary requirements and home building knowledge to receive an Owner Builder Authorization.

## What do I need to know?

An Owner Builder **must** build or directly manage the construction of their new home themselves. In order to be successful as an Owner Builder, and ensure you can manage the construction activities and processes required to complete and personally occupy the home, the exam will test your knowledge on the following criteria (see *appendix A for detailed exam criteria*):

## Construction Basics

- Construction Management and Site Supervision
- Permits and Inspections
- Site Preparation and Foundation
- House Framing
- Roofing
- Building Envelope
- Regulated Trades
- Insulation
- Interior Climate Control
- Interior Finishing
- Chimney and Fireplace



## Statutory Obligations and Requirements

- Eligibility Requirements under the HPA\*
- Statutory Protection and Liability
- Disclosure Requirement
- Offences and Penalties under the HPA\*

\* *Homeowner Protection Act (HPA)*

**Note:** This Study Guide replaces Regulatory Bulletin 26: *Owner Builder Authorization Examination Requirement*.

## How to Prepare for the Exam

Managing the construction of your own house requires basic knowledge of core competency areas identified in this study guide. The exam will test your knowledge of **construction basics** as well as your understanding of the **statutory obligations and requirements** expected of an owner builder under the *Homeowner Protection Act*.

The information in this study guide is intended to complement an applicant's life experiences and understanding of residential construction. An applicant's life experiences may be sufficient to take the construction basics section of the exam without any additional training. It is recommended that all applicants review the HPA statutory obligations and requirements of owner builders. For applicants who have limited or no experience with residential construction, there are training courses available from a variety of education providers. This includes an optional course developed to prepare applicants for the exam. Please visit the [Education Registry](#) for available training and search *owner builder* for more information about the exam preparation course.

**Each applicant is responsible for reviewing their own experience and knowledge and determining the level of training and/or study they will need to successfully pass the exam.**

## Statutory Obligations and Requirements under the *Homeowner Protection Act*

Applicants are required to be familiar with the obligations of an Owner Builder as prescribed in the *Homeowner Protection Act and Regulations*. These questions will account for approximately 30% of the exam. In particular, you should familiarize yourself with the following sections:

- Part 7 (sections 20 - 21) of the *Homeowner Protection Act*
- Section 23 of the *Homeowner Protection Act*
- Section 4.1 of the *Homeowner Protection Act Regulations*
- Section 19 of the *Homeowner Protection Act Regulations*

The Registrar has also published a number of regulatory bulletins on the BC Housing website covering these topics:

Bulletin 5: [Buying or Selling an Owner-Built home](#)

Bulletin 25: [What Builders Need to Know about Owner Builder Projects](#)

Applicants for an Owner Builder Authorization should be fully aware of these requirements and obligations prior to entering into the commitment to build their own home.

### Sample Exam Question

Following first occupancy, when can the title of an owner built home be legally transferred?

- After one month
- Within the first six months
- Within the first twelve months
- Only after the first twelve months

Correct answer:

- Only after the first twelve months

### Construction Basics

For the questions on the exam covering construction basics (approximately 70% of the exam), applicants will be tested on the basic knowledge a person needs to successfully be their own general contractor, managing a construction project. This includes:

- understanding construction sequencing and scheduling,
- understanding basic building code requirements for each major component of a home,
- understanding an owner's obligations for site safety,
- supervising construction trades, and
- interacting with construction professionals and building inspectors.

### Sample Exam Question

Whose responsibility is it that an inspection is arranged?

- a. Permit holder
- b. Contracted Sub-trade
- c. Regulated Trades person (e.g. Electrician)
- d. Municipal Building Department Official

Correct answer:

- a. Permit holder

If you have previous experience in construction, you may wish to refresh your knowledge by studying the following, much of which is available from online industry sources:

- Part 9 of the BC Building Code (or the City of Vancouver Building By-Law in Vancouver) available in public libraries or for purchase at [www.bccodes.ca](http://www.bccodes.ca)
- Permitting requirements and the inspection process
- WorksafeBC [requirements](#) for employers
- Role of a general contractor and other roles in the construction process (e.g., engineer, building inspector, architect, regulated trades)
- Technical research [publications](#) on residential construction

### Online Education Registry

There are also courses available from several colleges and industry associations in varying levels of detail on building code, construction technology and construction management. You can find current course offerings by searching the online [Education Registry](#) on the Licensing and Consumer Services section of the BC Housing website. You will also find information about the optional Owner Builder Authorization Exam Preparation course on the Education Registry.

### What if I have limited construction experience and just want to hire trades to build my home for me?

If you have limited construction knowledge and experience, you will likely need significantly more study to successfully complete the exam. You can check the [Education Registry](#) for current course offerings or look for online materials on the topics outlined. The BC Housing website offers many informative [residential construction guides](#).

You are only eligible to be an Owner Builder if you agree to be your own general contractor and manage the construction project yourself. Relying on trades to perform work correctly is highly risky for owners who do not have the knowledge to adequately supervise those trades.

As an Owner Builder you will be personally liable for 10 years for construction defects in your home should you sell the home. This personal liability is passed to any subsequent purchaser within 10 years after the home is complete. Research shows that the average owner stays in their home for four years and will sell the home during the first 10 years, putting them at risk for liability for construction defects. Structural and building envelope defects can be particularly costly to rectify. In addition to Part 9 of the BC Building Code, the [Residential Construction Performance Guide](#) contains information about the expected standards for new homes in BC.

Building inspectors report that inexperienced Owner Builders hoping to save money by building their own home often spend more time and money than expected on costly mistakes.

Prospective Owner Builders should review their own abilities and consider whether they are ready to take on the responsibility of building their own home or whether it's worth hiring a licensed residential builder to manage construction of the home and a policy of home warranty insurance on the home that covers construction defects.

## Questions & Answers about the Exam

### Where can I take the Exam?

The exam will be administered and supervised at an approved test centre. These test centres are located in educational institutions and at other public organizations. Test centres are located throughout the province for convenience and accessibility. When you are approved by the Licensing Department to write the exam, you will receive details about the test centres and be able to choose the location that is most convenient. A schedule of exam dates and cities is available [online](#). Additional test centres are available upon request for applicants who are located in remote areas away from the scheduled locations.

### How do I schedule my Exam?

The Licensing Department will notify you when you are approved to write the Owner Builder Authorization Exam. You will receive details of the test centres and how to schedule the exam at your preferred location.

### What do I need to bring to the Exam?

**Login credentials:** When the Licensing Department informs you that you are approved to write the exam, you will also receive important information about the test centre and the credentials you will need to login to the exam system. You are required to bring these credentials to the exam centre.

**Government issued ID:** At the exam centre, you must show the same government issued identification used on your Owner Builder Authorization application. Only the Owner Builder applicant will be authorized to write the exam.

The use of electronic devices or reference materials is not permitted during the writing of exam.

### How long will the Exam be?

You will have 100 minutes to complete the exam. The exam will be conducted on a computer with a simple, user-friendly interface. The exam consists of 100 multiple-choice questions, and each question has four possible answers. There are no short answer or written questions included in the exam.

### What is a passing grade and how will I be advised about my exam results?

Applicants are required to achieve an overall grade of seventy percent (70%) or greater to pass. After completing the exam, your results will be sent to the Licensing Department, for a final review. Applicants will then be notified of their standing and overall application assessment.

### What happens if I don't pass the Exam?

Applicants will be provided with one exam attempt per Owner Builder Authorization application. Applicants who do not pass the exam, will be notified by the Licensing Department, and issued a refund of \$375 within thirty (30) days. The applicant can request a review of the decision within 30 days if you feel that an error has been made. This request must be in writing and identify the error for which the review is being requested.

Applicants wishing to take the exam again, can reapply immediately, once you have been notified of the application decision. The subsequent application process is the same and is shown in the diagram below. The Licensing Department will notify you when you are eligible to schedule another exam.

### What is the Application Process?

An Owner Builder applicant should review the eligibility criteria to ensure that they meet all requirements prior to submitting an application. You can find the eligibility criteria on the Licensing & Consumer Services section of the BC Housing [website](#). When an application is submitted, it will be assessed by the Licensing Department. Once all eligibility requirements have been confirmed, the applicant will be notified they are eligible to schedule and take their exam. When the exam is completed, the results will be sent to the Licensing Department for review and a final decision on the application. The application process is illustrated below.



## Appendix A: Exam Competency Criteria

The Owner Builder Authorization Exam will test your knowledge and understanding of home building basics. The competency areas covered in the exam are **construction basics** and the **statutory obligations and requirements** that Owner Builders must meet under the *Homeowner Protection Act*.

### Home Building Basics:

#### 1. Construction Basics

##### 1.1 Construction Management and Supervision

- 1.1.1 Design and Project Plans
- 1.1.2 Financial Management
- 1.1.3 Risk and Time Management
- 1.1.4 Construction Sequencing and Scheduling
  - 1.1.4.1 Management of Sub-trades
- 1.1.5 Jobsite Safety and Workers Compensation

##### 1.2 Permits and Inspections

- 1.2.1 Building Permit
- 1.2.2 Inspections
- 1.2.3 Occupancy Permit

##### 1.3 Site Preparation and Foundation

- 1.3.1 Soil Conditions
- 1.3.2 Foundation and Drainage
- 1.3.3 Crawl space and basement finishing

##### 1.4 House Framing

- 1.4.1 Floor Framing
  - 1.4.1.1 Best Practices
  - 1.4.1.2 Sequencing
  - 1.4.1.3 Materials
- 1.4.2 Wall Framing
  - 1.4.2.1 Best Practices
  - 1.4.2.2 Sequencing
  - 1.4.2.3 Materials

##### 1.5 Roofing

- 1.5.1 Roof Framing
- 1.5.2 Flashing types
- 1.5.3 Roofing Materials

##### 1.6 Building Envelope

- 1.6.1 Exterior Finishing and Cladding
- 1.6.2 Windows and Doors
- 1.6.3 Decks and Balconies
- 1.6.4 Electrical Outlets and Vents

##### 1.7 Regulated Trades

- 1.7.1 Plumbing
- 1.7.2 Electrical
- 1.7.3 Gas Fitting

## Exam Competency Areas

### Home Building Basics:

#### 1. Construction Basics cont'd

- 1.8 Insulation
  - 1.8.1 Insulation Types
  - 1.8.2 Components and Application
- 1.9 Interior Climate Control
  - 1.9.1 Heating Options
  - 1.9.2 Ventilation and Air tightness
- 1.10 Interior Finishing
  - 1.10.1 Wall and Ceiling Finishing
  - 1.10.2 Cabinets and Countertop
  - 1.10.3 Flooring
- 1.11 Chimney and Fireplaces

#### 2. Statutory Obligations and Requirements under the *Homeowner Protection Act (HPA)*

- 2.1 Ownership of Land
  - 2.1.1 Acceptable options for registered interest in land
  - 2.1.2 Title Requirements and Transfers of Title
- 2.2 Building Intention
  - 2.2.1 Type of residential construction project
- 2.3 Occupancy Intention
  - 2.3.1 Occupancy Duration
- 2.4 Property Usage
  - 2.4.1 Differences between personal use and restricted uses
- 2.5 Owner Builder History
  - 2.5.1 Amount of time between prior OBA's
- 2.6 Construction Management
  - 2.6.1 Personal Involvement in Construction Activities
- 2.7 Statutory Protection and Liability
  - 2.7.1 Personal Liability for Home
  - 2.7.2 2-5-10 year components
  - 2.7.3 Optional Owner Builder Home Warranty Policy
- 2.8 Disclosure Requirement
  - 2.8.1 Owner Builder Disclosure Notice
  - 2.8.2 Real Estate Board Property Disclosure Notice
  - 2.8.3 Offering Owner Built Home for Sale
- 2.9 HPA Offences and Penalties
  - 2.9.1 HPA and Regulation Non-Compliance
  - 2.9.2 Administrative Orders and Penalties