

How To Pass LEED Green Associate in 2024 | Transcript

Welcome to Green Building Matters, the original and most popular podcast focused on the green building movement. Your host is Charlie Cichetti, one of the most credentialed experts in the green building industry and one of the few to be honored as a LEED fellow. Each week, Charlie welcomes a green building professional from around the globe to share their war stories, career advice, and unique insight into how sustainability is shaping the built environment. So settle in, grab a fresh cup of coffee, and get ready to find out why green building matters.

Welcome to a special episode of the Green Building Matters podcast. I'm your host, Charlie Chiquetti, and today we're going to talk about the LEED professional credential exams. In particular, I'm going to give you some tips on how to pass these 100 question multiple choice exams. Get those letters after your name. Understand what's the latest with this green building movement? Understand how to work on LEED projects of all sorts, whether it's new construction, whether it's interiors. Maybe you want to green up existing buildings or work on entire neighborhoods. Or maybe you also work on homes and some residential. So I think my tips are going to apply. I've been doing this for a long time, actually 15 years here in the LEED movement. Very proud of that fact.

I have passed all of the LEED exams over the years and I'm very fortunate to have been named as a LEED fellow just three and a half years ago. Today, I'm going to give more tips about the LEED green associate exam because that's where you need to start. So if you're listening to this, share this with colleagues. I'm going to really give you some of the secret tips on how to study and pass. What do you really need to know to pass this 100 question multiple choice exam? I'll talk a little bit about the other LEED exams. Some of you listening may have already passed a LEED exam. Some of you might have passed the test before 2009 when they went through major changes. Let's go over a little bit of that history.

If you have passed a LEED AP exam and you passed it before 2009, you're what we call a legacy LEED AP. You don't have to do anything there. There was a big movement to get you to opt in, do continuing ed, and be listed as a LEED AP with specialty, probably BD plus C, building design and construction. So if you're listening to this and you pass that LEED exam before 2009 with all the big changes for LEED version three, congratulations. You were in early. What I want you to do here is forward this to some colleagues or friends industry or up and coming young professionals that really want to do something in the sustainability movement. Because again, you have to start with the LEED GA or the LEED Green associate exam.

If you pass one of the LEED exams after 2009, you've started with the LEED Green associate exam. Some of you might have moved on to take a second exam. Those are specialty exams. I'm going to put a link here in our podcast show notes so you can see all the great LEED professional credentials. All right, so let's talk about these exams. It is a little intimidating. Some of us, we probably haven't taken a standardized test in years. And I myself am getting a little older here. My son is 15 and a half. I'm teaching him how to drive and I think he finally hit me. It's like, okay, yes, I'm getting a little older and I've also been doing LEED projects for a long time. And I'm grateful for that.

One of my favorite things is to help people pass these exams, boost their career, and get these letters after their name. Maybe it helps you get a promotion, a raise. Maybe it helps you and your firm win that next project. So@gbes.com green building education services we've actually been working on LEED education, green building education since our original founders, Katie and Scott, started the company in 2007, October 2007, and they were the first to put out original content around. How do you pass these tricky exams? Architects, contractors were in early development, but now it's evolved to building product manufacturers, real estate owners and developers, property managers, building engineers, all kinds of MEP engineers and so much more. Actually, I'm going to put another link in the podcast show notes.

This is going to be a very valuable podcast and I'm going to put a link to the LEED professionals at a glance. It's a beautiful map, a lot of data that is shared from the USGBC and their data scientist key. It just shows you where these LEED professionals are? All over the world. One of my career highlights. Several years ago I went to St. Lucia, the country of St. Lucia in the British West Indies. My wife actually came with me on that trip. It was amazing. They had zero LEED professionals when I went there. And another colleague, Allison, and we were teaching these prep classes on LEED grant associate and LEED AP, BD plus C prometric. And I'm going to tell you in a minute, that's where most of us are going to take this exam.

At the time they flew in proctors with scantrons because they didn't have a prometric testing center in the country of St. Lucia. By the time we got done with our training, everyone was using the flashcards and practice tests and the material we left behind. That country now has 36 LEED professionals. So proud of that moment. What a beautiful country, too, if you get a chance and make sure you remember it's the British West Indies. I forgot that when I arranged to rent a car. I think you know what I'm saying. Okay, I digress. We're going to put some links in the podcast show notes. Let's talk about the LEED green associate exam. It's a 100 question multiple choice exam. You're going to take this test either at the prometric testing center near you or coming out of the pandemic. You can now take it virtually.

I've had some colleagues that have done that. A lot of our customers choose that option. Just know if you choose that option, you have to have a room that you can close the door, nothing on your desk, a camera that can move around. So not just a laptop camera, because someone will be actually watching and proctoring your exam while the prometric software is loaded there on your computer. And you go through that 100 question test, which you'll have up to 2 hours to complete. So some like to take it virtually at work or home, but just know there's some restrictions around it. All of my LEED exams I've taken in person at the prometric testing labs, and I'll give you some tips on that in just a minute because they do give you scratch paper or a dry erase board.

So for the LEED green associate, that's where you're going to start. High level, it's focused on vocabulary. Why am I doing this green building initiative in different scenarios? What would be best for this type of project? But you're not going to do detailed calculations, okay. If you choose to move on to your next LEED exams, those are going to get more detailed because then you're starting to specialize. For example, LEED AP, BD plus C, building design and construction. You're going to have to do some calculations there on the square footage of your hardscapes and maybe do we have this much white roof there reflecting light, shedding heat? Remember, that's the heat island reduction we're focused on there.

You'll, out of 100 questions, probably have ten or 15 kinds of math heavy calculation questions on a LEED AP BD plus C exam, similar to ONM or IDNC or some of the other specialties. So LEED grant associates focus on your vocabulary. Focus on where does this information fit into a LEED scorecard? Another resource I'm going to put in the podcast show notes is gbes.com freesources. That's where we put out a lot of the LEED scorecards. We even have a glossary with all the great terms. You can download that. It's a spreadsheet. Everybody on here is listening to this. If you haven't passed a LEED exam yet, or maybe a friend just forwards you this podcast. Thank you, friend. You have to do a little self awareness.

I've been teaching in person and online LEED classes for the last 15 years and I always open the classes with this look. Do you learn best by reading? Okay, we're going to give you flashcards. We're going to give you a searchable PDF study guide for the LEED Green associate exam. Or do you learn best by listening? Well, maybe you're going to take one of our online courses, or you did one of our in person all day crash courses. Or maybe your company wants to have us come in with a trainer and you have ten or 15 or 20 people that want to go through this together. We got you covered. Just reach out to gbes.com there. But you have to have a little self awareness. Do you learn best by reading? Okay, if I were you, I'd do some flashcards.

I'd go through and read most of the actual study guide. And then don't forget that PDF is a searchable study guide. You can hit ctrl f if you forget what is greywater, hit Ctrl F and it'll go to two or three paragraphs about gray water. And you'll need to know that for your LEED Ga exam. But no matter what, and this is what our company was founded on many years ago, is the LEED practice test. They are very similar to your real exam. You can take these by category. You can take just 100 questions all mixed up. You can pace yourself. Make sure you take lots of LEED practice tests on the gbs.com learning hub.

Okay, LEED green associate exam. One of the first things I want you to do is I want you to go to free-resources and you're actually going to download the LEED BD plus C scorecard, which is a spreadsheet. You don't need to know exactly how many points each line item is worth each credit and prerequisite, but you do need to know kind of how it's weighted? Right? LEED is actually weighted based on carbon LEED is actually weighted based on carbon emission reduction when you're looking at that scorecard, I want you to know what fits into sites, what fits into water, what fits into energy. Make sure you know your prerequisites. You have to do those on a LEED exam. You don't get points there. Hint as you're taking our practice tests.

In the real exam, if you see words like must or have to, that means prerequisite. But then we have to get enough credits,

enough points to get to certified silver, gold or platinum. You do need to know. 40 points for certification, 50 for silver, 60 for gold, and then a big jump. 80 or more points to get to the cherished LEED platinum level. Okay, we have a really great resource. We have a blog that's very popular and we're going to put a link to that. That's on our GBS website. It's got some top tips on how to pass. It actually tells you how to sign up for the real exam. We actually have a link to the candidate handbook that's on the free resources page.

All of you that have not passed the LEED exam yet, or maybe you let one lapse years ago and life got in the way. It's okay. Come back. We've got you covered. If you're a previous customer of GBS, reach out. We'll see what we can do to reconnect you with some material. You're going to download that candidate handbook. It's a PDF. It's going to tell you how to sign up. How much is it? If your company is a US green building council member company, get a discount and it'll go through. Hey, here's what it's like to take the exam in person. Here's what it's like to take it virtually. You now have those two options. All right, so LEED green associate exam. A few of Charlie's best tips. Keep your studies high level.

For the green associate exam, you're going to get more specific if you choose to move on to one of the specialty LEED exams. Where does this fit into LEED? Which sections really are worth more points because they're more impactful with our carbon emission reduction? Right? When in doubt, I want you to remember a few things. This is a US based LEED program. Now, you can take this exam in other countries, but then you're going to have to think, what are the green best practices? When I go through and build that next building out of the ground in the US as a representation or maybe a major renovation or tenant improvement. So some of you listen, if you're on property management or building engineering, of existing buildings.

You need to go ahead and think, well, what are my green building best practices for new construction or renovations? That's where most of your questions will come from for the LEED green associate exam. Okay, now, can you argue that at the very top of the Minnesota border and Canada, we shouldn't have a white roof and we should turn our building into the sun because there's more heating months than cooling months? You can, but not on the LEED green associate exam. Because I want you to remember on this exam, when in doubt, there's like a scenario question here on what would be the green building best practice. I want you to think, in most parts of the United States, this would be the best practice.

So in most parts of the United States, we're going to want to put a white roof that reflects light, that sheds heat, right? That's called Heat island reduction. It's going to save energy. It's going to help straight up with some sustainable site points and so much more. Now, on this blog post we've put a link to here, it's going to go through even how many questions in each category you get on the LEED green associate exam, for example, you're going to get 16 questions from the LEED process. If you've not worked on a LEED project, hint, that's a place you really need to focus. Right? What is LEED online? How do I register my project? What does it cost for my project? Right? That's based on square footage and whether or not you or the client or USGBC member company got it, move on.

There's so many different areas they can ask questions from. It's important for you just to get a concept or understand that kind of vocabulary word, if you will, and move on. Try not to get hung up on any one specific item. That's how it's going to be on the real exam, too. But we tell you how many questions are in each of the categories. You still need to study everything. There are 15 beta questions that get thrown out. So when you're sitting down, taking the exam virtual or in person, you're going to have 100 questions. Please be sure to answer every single question. If you're not sure, please guess at it, mark it. Maybe you can come back to it later if you have time. This is important.

After you've completed all of the questions, you can go back on the computer screen and you can look at all the questions again. Do not do that, please. You'll talk yourself out of right answers. Subconsciously, you answered some right that you didn't know. Only go back and look at the ones you marked, okay? And only change your answers if you have a good reason to do so. When you get to the prometric testing center again, if you're doing it virtual, there's some different restrictions. Make sure you read the candidate handbook there that GBCI and Prometric put out. But if you're taking the exam in person at prometric, you have to go in, put your belongings in a locker, they give you a key, empty your pockets, and you go into this testing center.

Picture a computer lab there, and once you hit start, you have 2 hours to take and answer all these questions. Now, for some of you, for the green associate, maybe you have a little bit of building background, maybe in design or construction, you might know some building terminology. Maybe you've really been studying. For the green associate exam, you might fly

through in 50 minutes, an hour, maybe an hour and ten. Don't think you have to just sit there and try to chain some answers and go crazy. No. Take a breather. If you actually needed to go out and get some fresh air and you had time or go use the restroom, you could actually sign out, go, come back, sign in. So you have to go through that process again.

So manage your time, sit back down, maybe only tweak one or two answers, and then hit submit. I don't think you have that opportunity when you're taking it virtually at home or work. So when you submit your exam through the prometric system, they used to give your score right there on the screen, but now it's emailed to you within like ten minutes. But you'll know if you're a LEED green associate or fill in the blank. One of the other exams you're taking, the specialty exams, definitely are going to take most of the 2 hours. They're wordier. There's just more math, more numbers. The LEED green associate you could really fly through. I hope you pass it there. That first try. We actually have a 95% pass rate@gbes.com. On our LEED green associate material. If you actually use the material study, this is important.

It's a professional credential. It's not a class you took. And there's a certificate of completion that's going to help you with continuing ed. And this is a legit professional credential. You're being tested by the authority on your knowledge around LEED and green buildings so you can more effectively work on these kinds of projects. Now, we're really good here at telling you what you need to know to pass the exam, you're going to want to go back another time to really slow down. Read through the reference guide when you're working on a real project. So, a few more tips to pass the LEED green associate exam. There's 100 questions they're going to throw out 15 beta questions.

We don't know what they are, but if you studied really hard and all of a sudden you get a question on a left field, I hope that's a beta question. You still need to answer it and you still need to move on. Remember, only change your answer if you have a really good reason to do so. Let's say you answered a question and one, two, three questions later, it's like that's kind of worded in a way. I might want to change the other one. You can hit back, change it and then keep moving. Okay. Please do not hit the button at the end that says look at all 100 questions again. That will drive you crazy. I've seen it before and people talk themselves out of right answers and you might just miss it. A few other things for the LEED GA exam.

Again, I'm reading off the blog here. We're going to put a link in the podcast show notes. You do need to know your ASHRAE standards. ASHRAE 90.1 is energy code in most parts of the United States. ASHRAE 62.1 is ventilation. ASHRAE 55 is thermal comfort. ASHRAE 52 is a filter. Think MERV 13 filters when we're running our building. MERV eight filters during construction. There's a few other numbers we've put on the page here. You're not going to have to do a lot of calculations, right? You might have liked one, but it's not really a calculation. It'd probably be around the water credits, right? You need to know that current plumbing code in most parts of the United States. Again, some areas might be more stringent, but in most parts of the US, it's 1.6 GPF, right? Gallons per flush on our toilets.

Well, we want to do better than that. We could do dual flush toilets or high efficiency toilets. 1.28 gpf, right? We could do a one gallon urinal. So that's code. Let's do pint flush, maybe if we're not going all the way to waterless. 0.25 gallons every time you flush. Know the difference between flush fixtures and flow fixtures? I hinted at it earlier. Here's a good example on your exam. What's the difference between gray water that comes out of your restroom sinks? It comes from your shower heads tubs right to blackwater, which is touched by human organic waste. Okay? So you got to know the difference there. Gray water in some municipalities, you can right away capture it, use it maybe for irrigation. Blackwater. Of course, you're going to have to treat that before you do anything with it. This exam is not impossible.

GBs and our team here, we've helped 150,000 people around the world pass their LEED exams, the newer, well, AP exams, and keep up all their continuing education. So don't forget, we've got you covered for exam prep and then we've got you covered for continuing ed. All those LEED specific and general hours. We've got packages there. We even have our overall known once a year subscription where you get it all. And we actually just submit your continuing ed to the authorities. Both LEED USGBC and AIA say if you're taking an exam, you know it's doable. You do need to chip away at your studies. Okay. I really want you to start after you maybe go through one of our online courses or read through the searchable PDF study guide for the LEED GA. And then I want you to take one practice task cold.

It's going to be a benchmark. Maybe you're in better shape than you thought, or maybe, reality check. This wording, all these LEED vocabulary words, it's a little tricky. I'm going to need to put in some study time, then some of our past customers that I've taught over the years in person or online, some like to go by category. Maybe you're going to study the entire water efficiency category and then you're going to take just water efficiency questions on our online practice tests, which you can

take on a computer, an iPad, a phone, and get really proficient with water efficiency. Be like, all right, I'm good there. Let me move on to the next section. So you can study by sections or you can just kind of study in order and just make sure you're getting your practice scores.

Just make sure you're getting your practice test scores higher than 75% on the real exam. The scoring, it's a little funny. It's a 100 question exam. They're going to throw out 15 questions, but there's 200 points total. Now, if I knew exactly how they were scoring it, we'd be having a different conversation. I don't. But here's what I do know. Some of the questions are worth a little bit more, maybe 1.11.2. Some are worth a little bit less .7.8 points. But you know what? Treat every question equally. Keep a good pace. Okay? If you're stumped by one guess at it, mark it. Keep moving. Keep a good pace. If you have time at the end to go back and look at the ones you marked, go look at those. But only change your answer if you have a good reason to do so.

Hey, we've got all the great resources. You don't have to use all of the study material, flashcards, MP3? S classes, and practice tests. But at least please take lots of practice tests. And if our system is showing you, hey, you're not doing too great in energy efficiency, okay? Go off the practice test for a little while, go read up or listen in on the energy efficiency category. Go back and look at those vocabulary words on the glossary that's on our free resources page, and then go take more energy practice tests until you get that category up right when you show up. Test day simple things right the night before, get a good night's sleep. Please don't try to take these exams like 07:00 in the evening because life and work happen.

And even if you studied so hard, you just maybe got burned out from the day. You don't have any glucose left, literally, to do problem solving this test. Don't do that. Take it in the morning or mid morning. Don't cram. The morning before. This exam is one that you just cannot cram right before it. You need to know overall LEED where all this fits in? Understanding some why questions. It's going to be a little tricky, so get a good night's sleep, eat some breakfast, and take that exam. Hopefully you signed up for the morning. Mid morning you can schedule through slash GBCI. All this is in the PDF candidate handbook. You can schedule weeks ahead of time as long as they have seats available. We've been doing this a long time here.

I just wanted to give you a few tips, give you a little confidence here on how to pass the LEED green associate exam first and then move on. Maybe take a specialty exam if you're curious about the LEED exam and well, hey, I think you would be well balanced. If you do the LEED green associate and then you move over and do the well aP, then you have both green buildings and healthy buildings covered. I'm Charlie here on the GBS team. I'm the host here of the podcast. Please go back, listen to some of our awesome guests. You'll hear them talk about how important professional credentials have been in their green building careers. You'll hear about their volunteering and trade organizations in their city and also nationally and so much more. Thank you for being a listener here on our podcast.

Reach out to me if you have any questions, even, hey, if you're stuck, you need a little help passing that next LEED exam. I'm serious. Shoot me an email, charlie@gbes.com. I'll get back to you and I'll try to clarify. All right, here's how you need to look at that question on your practice test. As you're getting ready to ace this exam and become the next LEED professional and get added to that map, make sure you check it out, the map of all the LEED professionals in the world. Good luck on your exam. Thanks so much.

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