

## SECURITIES EXAMS—UNMASKED!

### What No One Tells You About FINRA Tests



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## Inside Securities Exams

What you know *about* your exam helps you pass. Since 1998, we've dissected FINRA exams, vetted successful and unsuccessful candidates and prepared study sessions that help you pass on the first attempt. We know high-stakes exams because we wrote some! Learn how you can prepare and pass—on your **FIRST** attempt!


### Questions in Your Exam

While every exam covers different topics, the test itself follows an “almost Bell-curve” pattern. Your first few questions are easy. These are generally definition questions that may give you a false sense of security. “I’ve got this!” you’ll say. In the next phase, questions get more difficult and at the 50 percent mark, they become truly challenging with Roman Numeral questions and longer, sometimes convoluted questions. In the last third of the exam, questions are often easier with more “definition” or simple answer questions.

Your study materials show the percentage of questions in each test topic, but FINRA does not give the question difficulty rating. While candidates should have the same number of difficult questions, there is no way to know if one


*“Adviser Test Prep was the only platform that helped me understand the concepts while also giving me tips on how to retain the information ...”*

*—Kayla Stafford,  
Dallas, TX*



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candidate’s test is the same difficulty as another candidate’s exam. A candidate’s exam is compiled when the candidate logs into their exam, so, in theory, each exam administration is unique.

### How Questions Are Written

Test writers are like other workers—they have to produce! For that reason, some questions are better than others. The question—what we call the “prompt” - must have only 1 right answer. Most questions will have 1 ridiculous answer (to catch candidates who are clueless), 1 answer that is related to the topic, 1 answer that is “close,” and 1 answer that is correct.

What if 2 answers “seem right?” Look more closely at the prompt. Is there a modifier that cancels one of the answers? Words like no, not, un-, always, and “most likely” are clues to the right answer. **READ CAREFULLY!**



Adviser Test Prep Online Custom Coaching Session

*“[Adviser Test Prep classes]...humor and light-heartedness makes the time pass so quickly that you don’t even realize how long you’ve been sitting there.”*

*—Esther Zufelt, Phoenix AZ*

tout higher success statistics, but we worked for them and tracked candidate pass rates for years. FINRA recently published that 74% of test takers passed the SIE. However, FINRA did not say it was on the *first* attempt, nor does FINRA publish their annual candidate numbers.

## FINRA vs. NASAA Exams

The SIE, Series 6, Series 7, Series 26 (and others) are FINRA exams. NASAA writes Series 63 and Series 65/66. The difference between FINRA and NASAA exams is huge and each requires a different study strategy.

All Securities exams are administered by FINRA. However, FINRA-written exams are relatively straight-forward and test core subject knowledge. At least 30% of these exams cover key word definitions, so candidates must know major glossary terms well. Most exams have a few “Roman Numeral” questions, but there are very few, if any, long questions.

The most difficult FINRA questions APPLY test concepts to real-life scenarios.



Adviser Test Prep Mobile-device friendly Online Courses

Test writers often work with psychometricians (skilled exam scientists) who edit questions so they are free from social, age-related, ethnic, socio-economic and regional biases. Then, questions appear as pre-test questions on exams where they must pass a strict pass/fail ratio. If a question does not hit the right ratio (e.g., not enough fails), it is re-written and re-tested until it hits the ratio. One question can take up to a year to make it through the process. For that reason, specific State-only regulations and numbers that change (like IRA contribution limits) are almost never tested.

However, the opposite is also true: things that *don’t* change—like Coverdell contribution limits (\$2,000 per child, per year) - are tested extensively.

## How Many Candidates Pass?

First-attempt pass rates rarely exceed 40%. Yes, we know that some test-study companies

## SIE QUIZ

FINRA hosts a free SIE Practice Test. To see typical questions and see if you are ready for the real exam, [click here](#).

In contrast, NASAA exams have long, confusing questions loaded with Red Herrings—that is, unnecessary details that distract from the right answer. Word substitutions are common: instead of asking for a “pencil,” a NASAA exam would ask for a cylindrical, graphite-filled, rubber-tipped writing instrument. Really!

For long questions, *read the question BACKWARD from the question mark*, one word at a time. Your brain will ignore distractors and the real question will surface.

In a NASAA exam, a candidate must read precisely, understand the concept, apply it, know the concept’s fine-point definitions AND the concept’s exclusions. For those reasons, expect to spend more time studying for a NASAA exam than for a FINRA exam and reach at least 80 percent on practice exams before you take the test itself. There is no “extra time” in a NASAA exam. Be prepared!

## Why Prep Providers Fail

*“Really easy to understand.”*

All test Prep Providers are not the same!

*—Renee Baker, Omaha NE*

Yes, every provider helps someone. Can they help you? Unless you have a finance degree, Securities exams are like a foreign language. Choose a Provider that matches your learning-type.

### STUDY TIP:

Merely re-reading study materials does not increase retention. Instead, find another source or different media.

**Agency leaders:** What does it cost when your candidate fails? Do you use the same provider year-after-year because it is easy? It’s time to compare—and stop losing candidates!

**Candidates:** Did you fail your exam? Do not go back to that Provider. Why? Your brain sees the same information and

says “I already know this stuff,” and will not absorb more. Chances are, your Prep Provider is “old school.” Knowledgeable, yes, test-effective— no!

We used “other providers” and even worked for them. We said, “There must be a better way to learn this stuff.” Of course, you must know the “What,” but to pass the test, you must *apply* the “Why.”

**What DOES NOT Work:** “Talking heads,” “narrated outlines,” and “whiteboard scribble.”

*“[the instructor used] visuals and hands-on exercises that really helped me understand concepts that I’ve read before but didn’t make sense to me. I highly recommend this class for a better chance of passing the test the first time.”*

*—Daniel Macias,  
Denver CO*

## The Adviser Test Prep Difference:

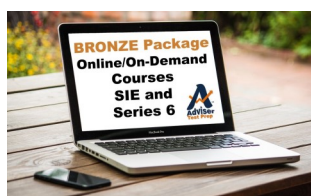
**What DOES Work:** Short, one-sitting, often humorous, video sessions make study painless (well, almost!). We address all learners—not just those with college degrees or finance experience. The test material sticks—through the exam—and beyond. Our online courses are mobile-friendly, too. You can study on your laptop, iPad or SmartPhone—wherever you are Internet connected. We are so confident that you will pass on your first attempt, that we give you the Adviser Test Prep Guarantee.

## The Adviser Test Prep Guarantee: An Industry First!

Before your exam, you may schedule a 1-hour Custom Coaching Session (a \$100 value) included with every course at no additional cost. *You set the agenda.* If, in the unlikely event you fail your exam, we coach you every 2 weeks until you pass. **(See details).**



**Start Now—Pass on your 1st Attempt!**



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## What Exams Do You Want to Pass?

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