

The Infinite Actuary Joint Exam 1/P Online Seminar

General Tips and Frequently Asked Questions

Recommendations for getting the most out of the seminar:

1. Take advantage of the pause button.

Math is best learned by doing rather than watching. In a traditional math class, I regularly pose a problem and then pause the lecture to let students think about it before talking about the solution. For the online seminar, I recommend doing the same thing. When I start a new example in the lecture, pause the video and try to solve the problem yourself. You may not be able to because the examples are often showing you new ideas, but if you think about each example before I talk about it, you will get more out of each lecture.

2. Calculators, exam rules, and all that.

There are a few calculators that you can use for the exam, but the consensus is that the TI-30X IIs is the best one to use. It has a converter to go from decimals to fractions, a two-line display, and an nCr button for doing combinatorics problems. Plus it is primarily solar powered (with a battery backup for dim light) so you don't have to worry about the battery dying during the exam. Regardless of which calculator you choose to use on the exam, you should use your calculator exclusively for a while to get used to it and figure out how to take advantage of all of the functions.

For most questions about the exam, look at the rules on www.beanactuary.org. You will have 3 hours to do 30 questions, all of which are effectively equally weighted (strictly speaking, some questions are pilot questions and don't count towards your score, but from a strategy point of view you should ignore that). Passing requires somewhere between 60 and 70% correct, but the exam is hard--typically only 33-40% of the people who take it pass.

3. Even if you have a good calculus background, look at the section on integration by parts.

The most common situations on the exam in which you "need" to use integration by parts are all fairly similar and can actually be done by memorizing a general formula. In the integration by parts section of the calculus review, I cover tabular integration (a speedy way of doing repeated integration by parts) and the Gamma function, both of which may be new to you and can save you time of integration by parts problems.

4. Consider looking at the video solution of practice problems even if you solved them correctly.

Most problems have multiple solutions, so even if you got the problem right, there is a good chance that the solution will have some different ideas than what you used. You can usually tell from looking at the .pdf of the solutions whether or not my solution is the same as yours, so you can save time by figuring out which ones you have to watch that way.

Other frequently asked questions:

Where can I find solutions to the practice problems?

Video solutions to the practice problems (and practice exams) are hosted on our alternate/backup sites, tiavideos1.com and tiavideos2.com. Since these sites are hosted on different servers than the main site, you may need a separate login id and password. If you have trouble logging in the first time you use one of these sites, click on the "Forgot your password" link to have your password sent to you. If that doesn't work, you can also contact customer support. These sites are video only sites, which means that they are often faster than the main site even for the lessons so you may want to use them for all of the videos.

How can I fast forward/rewind the videos?

Once the video is buffered, you can just move the slider at the bottom to jump forward/backwards to wherever you want. One of the reasons why I prefer the QuickTime version of the videos is that it displays how much of the video has been buffered so you can see how far ahead you can skip.

Is there any way to talk to other students?

One of the drawbacks of an online seminar as opposed to a live seminar is that it gives you less of a chance to work with your classmates. A partial way to get around this is to look at one of the online actuarial discussion forums. I recommend the Actuarial Outpost (www.actuarialoutpost.com), which is also where many of the people involved with the Infinite Actuary met each other.

Where can I go with my questions?

I am happy to answer any questions about the material. The easiest way is to send e-mail to dave@theinfiniteactuary.com but you can also post in the probability forum at the Actuarial Outpost (see the previous question). If you have technical questions and problems, I am happy to hear about them, but ultimately I don't fix the technical problems so you will get a faster response from sending e-mail to customer support.

What formulas do I need to memorize?

I don't focus much on what you should and shouldn't memorize during the bulk of the seminar because I view pure rote memorization as something that you want to do relatively late in the game. If you want to get a jump on memorization, you can take a look at the formula sheets in the review section. You will ultimately want to know the basic distributions, their means, variances, and a few moment generating functions. There are also a few other formulas (e.g., change of variables) that you need to know, but you should pick those up from pure repetition of problems. I will add more information about what exactly I think is important to memorize in the review section.

I want to take the exam in February. When can I sign up for the seminar?

You can start whenever you want—in fact, earlier is better as a steady pace is better than cramming. Just send customer service a note when you sign up explaining when you are taking the test, and they will extend the expiration date (see the next question as well).

My subscription ends in December, but I am taking the exam in February. Do I need to buy the seminar again?

Of course not. If you are taking a future sitting, whether because you want a longer study schedule or because you failed the exam, we are happy to extend your subscription. If you have a good reason to extend your subscription, let customer service know and they will do so. The only thing that we don't want is to have people pass the exam and then let other people use their accounts.