

[Jump to Navigation](#) | [Jump to Content](#)

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Advice to a 1L

Friend's wife is starting law school next month. (I didn't find out in time to stop her.) She'd like recommendations on what she can do in the next month to prepare. I recommended some legal vocabulary books. Can I pass along your recommendations?

Mike Phillips

No need to prepare really... maybe enjoy her last novel, because it will probably be the last for 3 years. She will learn everything she needs to know when classes start. No need to fill up your mind with anything else.

John Bryan

Have her take a look at some of the books on surviving law school currently on the market. Tell her to learn the IRAC method of answering questions. Practice her networking skills, classmates can be a great resource even after law school is over. Try to figure out what area she wants to practice before she gets there.

Stephania Jason

Mine would be to RELAX and enjoy herself. You get immersed in the legal vocabulary, long reading sessions, studying, etc. soon enough. Enjoy who she is now, because I think law school changes you, and certainly changes your schedule (i.e. availability of free fun time without anxiety about what you're doing). It certainly changes your desire to read for pleasure for a while, and it takes over your life. The first year is hard enough, and, in my mind, especially the first semester because you are not used to the one-exam-at-the-end-of-the-semester-determines-your-grade system. I remember being completely freaked out before my grades came out and I learned that I miraculously (I thought) did not fail every class. Don't do anything to prepare except to enjoy her life as it is while it lasts.

My \$.02.

Stacie E. Barhorst

I'd genuinely recommend preparing by enjoying this last month. Mental health may be as important as anything when starting, and in my view little can really be done beforehand.

Benjamin Y. Seldin



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Tell her about IRAC, define tort and estoppel. If I were doing it again I'd pick up a used bar prep course from eBay and go through the sections corresponding to the classes as I took them.

Steve O'Donnell

If it's possible, get connected with students who are now 2Ls and 3Ls at the school she will be attending. They may have some valuable suggestions and she will probably find speaking to them reassuring. Other than that, I agree with what has been said so far; just relax and spend time with friends and family.

Susan L. Beecher

None of this is stuff she can do before law school, but once she gets in:

1) Brief the cases. All throughout law school Don't rely on canned briefs and don't blow off reading and briefing the cases when she gets to be 2L and 3L. Law schools keep talking about teaching you to "think like a lawyer" but fail to explain what that means. What it means is, you need to develop a skill set: and a large portion of that skill set is being able to *critically* read a case. You got 3 years to learn how to read cases: the best way of doing that is to actually read the cases and brief them. Sure, it's tedious, but you need to do it. I know too many lawyers, and a few judges, who can't read cases.

2) IRAC's fine, but because is better. What that means is, when you write an exam, every single sentence should contain the word 'because'. Too many law students know the law but fail to get points on exams because they fail to explain reasoning. What law profs call "conclusory". If you make a point of using because in each sentence, you will maximize your points; you can still IRAC but you will be as close to certain on maximizing points. F'rinstance: The issue in this case is whether an assault was committed on A because although Tortfeasor threw the chalk at A, it missed A and hit B. The rules are that where a tortfeasor intends to contact a person but fails to do so, an assault still lies because the test is not whether the tortfeasor accomplished what they wanted but whether they attempted to do so. In this case, an assault was committed by tortfeasor because in throwing the chalk at A, tortfeasor intended for the chalk to hit A and whether or not it actually hit him is irrelevant. Something like that. When prof goes over his checklist you'll get maximum number of points.

3) Watch your time in exams: each question only has a certain number of points available, and you reach a point of diminishing returns when you go for every single point on one question but entirely fail to address another question. You are better off getting 60% of the points available on each of two questions than 100% on one and zero on the other, assuming equal points on both questions.

Ronald Jones

I'd recommend the book "Guerrilla Tactics for Getting the Legal Job of Your Dreams" by Kimm Walton -- there's some great advice on how to begin networking as a law student that I regret not knowing when I started law school! (I understand that local bar associations are great ways to network, even if you're only in the area you eventually want to work during law school summers...)

Josh Paulin

Friend and wife need to prepare their relationship for the onslaught.

Arthur B. Macomber

While I am adding my two cents everywhere... Law School is not that bad. Sure it is hard, but it is only as miserable as you make it for yourself. Obviously it varies from school to school, but through my law school experience I found that it is really not that hard to get a B in a course. It can be very hard to get an honors grade (depending on the curve/ requirements and restrictions of the schools grading system).

However, the amount of randomness that seemed to be involved was very surprising to me. There were courses where I thought I literally got every single point right on the exam and I got a B and even once a B/C. Then, there were courses where I came out of the exam thinking I did ok, and I got an A or an A/B.

I honestly believe that in some cases if you went back in time and reshuffled the tests, the grades would change in quite a few cases.

You have to learn to shake it off and not worry about it. Remember, "What do they call the person who graduates last in their class?

.....A Lawyer."

Nobody is going to ask for your Law School GPA after your first job. Sure its great to be in the top 10%, but it is not worth mortgaging your life and your marriage.

Tell her good luck and relax, law school is not as hard as we all like to make it seem.

Sean M. Sweeney

I second Sean's comments, I found the work of law school to be easy but doing the work in the environment of law school to be more difficult.

I also valued having a mentor who practices in tax, the practice area that I was interested in and in which I now practice. She should be on the lookout from day one.

I also got a lot out of the experience of working in legal

firms/organizations beginning in September of my first year and continuing nonstop until the week of the bar exam. It helped for at least two reasons--first, going to the Legal Aid Society as a 1L it got me out of the law school environment for ten hours a week, and it also helped to keep me motivated by seeing how I was going to apply what I was learning in the real world (as opposed to the distant possibility of having a better chance at a job motivating me to get good grades rather than just to learn). No way I could have started a successful solo practice in a specialized area like tax if I hadn't started working in small tax firms in Sept of my 2nd year and all through 3rd year and during studying for the bar exam.

Tim Lewis

I didn't think it was that bad, and I didn't think it was all *that* hard. It sure involves a LOT of reading; but I enjoy reading and I have a very high reading comprehension and speed. The biggest problem I saw in law school amongst students was time management: I saw law school as a full time job and between attending classes and doing the reading and studying devoted about 40 hours a week to it. It was my priority. Now, I didn't, and don't have spouse/kids, so I didn't have a lot of outside pressures. But even amongst other students who didn't have spouse/kids, a LOT of them had time management problems. They'd get up, get coffee/breakfast, kind of meander to class, go to class, hang out with others, go to lunch, get back go to afternoon class, get out, hang out, go to dinner, watch TV, and then about 10 PM, they'd crack the books. And at 11 PM they'd be knocking on my door asking me about whatever the next days readings were. Obviously, not everyone was that bad, but a lot of them simply weren't willing to devote the time to the job.

Ronald Jones

Get a laptop and some form of note taking/outlining software. Set up software in IRAC format. Learn to be proficient with the software before law school starts. Law school is an immersion learning experience; trying to get a head start may end up being a start in the wrong direction.

Duke Drouillard

Start some kind of exercise regimen. It's good to start out law school in shape. And even better if you are already in a routine. Do something fun or crazy (but legal). Read a trashy dimestore novel. Go to concerts. Go to movies. Shop, if you like that. These are your final days of freedom to do those things.

Make sure you have the right computer equipment and programs. Read a book like "1-L" by Scott Turow, or the Paper Chase, to see what it's like.

We had an orientation prior to starting, and we got a packet of orientation materials. I remember sitting by the pool and going through this stuff. It was long, and intense. At orientation it made absolutely no difference that I had read it.

There is really no way to prepare. You might as well just have as much fun as possible.

David A. Silverstone

What David said is so true. Exercise regularly. No, you don't think you'll have time once you're actually in school, but you really, really need to. I did sporadic exercise and felt much better when I did it.

I also read the huge packet of orientation stuff. Waste of time.

Go into it with a positive attitude. I read "Law School Confidential" and felt it was pretty good. I enjoyed Scott Turow's "1-L" immensely, too. But have fun these last couple of weeks. You will meet 200 of your new best friends in a few weeks; enjoy the experience!

Sheila Rainbeck

Gosh I have a friend who STUDIED from about April on til school started. He still did poorly his first semester (did great on his 2nd) and I really am opposed to the whole idea of pre-law school prep. Gosh, law school builds enough stress -- no use getting it started early!!

I say tell her to rest her eyes, visit with friends and family as much as possible, etc. I love David's idea of an exercise regimen, that makes sense to me.

We had assignments for a few classes before school started -- I did a bit of the reading by the pool in Vegas because it had not occurred to me that the weekend before school wasn't the perfect time for a last bash when I planned my trip.

I went through most of my 1L year kind of clueless as I knew no attorneys or law students but it really didn't seem to matter -- I got good grades and would have done better if I studied more, which had nothing to do with knowing some secrets or not. I honestly think if you are meant to be a lawyer, you will succeed and the less you stress yourself trying to follow all the "Oh you must do this" advice of others, the better you'll be because you can just focus on learning and not on the B.S.

-- Amy Kleinpeter

Practical advice: spend time in the school's computer room and pull up the Temp files for complete outlines of all courses, then correct/massage them as you actually go to class. Get several so you can decide your favorite format. Why start from ground zero when the templates are there for all to use?

Best regards, Arthur B. Macomber

There will be plenty of time to worry about the substantive legal learning.

No matter what your friend does now, she will need to begin reading cases with a copy of Black's Law Dictionary handy, just like everyone else.

In addition to some serious relaxing, relationship nurturing, etc., I would recommend she use this month to give some serious, structured thought to what she wants to DO with her law degree. One month won't be long enough to finish the process, but it will be good start. Knowing as much as possible about what one ultimately wants to do will be invaluable when it comes time to start applying for summer jobs.

There is essentially a small cottage industry out there aimed at helping lawyers transition out of law practice, or transition into a different type of law practice. Anyone considering or beginning law school would do well to tap into that knowledge base ahead of time. (As an aside, I think every law school applicant should be asked how many informational interviews they have had with practicing lawyers in different types of practice, and what they understand the real life of a practicing lawyer to be like.)

Two books in particular are well worth the small investment of money and time to purchase and read: What Color Is Your Parachute, Richard Bolles, and What Can You Do With A Law Degree, Deborah Aaron. The Parachute Book is excellent reading for any job hunter -- that means all of us because every job (or client) is temporary in the sense of uncertain duration. Aaron's work, to those who are not acquainted with it, offers eye-opening information about what it is really like to be a lawyer and why so many lawyers feel like they do. In any event, the sooner your friend can become a meaningful specific, rather than a wandering generality like most law students, the sooner she will have a filter by which to make meaningful decisions about where to focus her efforts and which opportunities to pursue.

We all joke about not being able to talk people out of going to law school. Here's a quick, true, story to pass on to your friend -- My entering class in law school included a journalist who had been working for a few years before deciding to go to law school. Two or three days into it, he came into Contracts class and said he didn't think he was coming back the next day. He had concluded it was just not for him. He was the smartest guy in our class. Not because he didn't become a lawyer, but because he knew himself well enough recognize a poor fit and he had the self confidence and courage to act on that recognition.

I hope your friend will find law school and the practice of law challenging, rewarding, satisfying and a good fit for her God-given talents.

Chris Dunagan

My advice is based on being out thirty plus years before computers in the classroom, but it's this: if your handwriting stinks type your bluebook exams. Mine did (does still) and I didn't, and my grades were not reflective of my knowledge. Professors had to try to decide what the scribbles said, and the last thing you need to do is make their job harder. They still use bluebooks, don't they?

John D. Kitch

Two pieces of advice and some obiter dicta:

FIRST, and most important, once the semester starts, "NEVER, EVER get behind, not a single day, or you'll never catch up again."

SECOND, just for fun and to sample first year law school, listen to some law school podcasts such as "Life of a Law Student" [LoaLS:Civil Procedure, Contracts, Criminal Law, Introduction to the Law, etc.]. Download them and just let them flow over you. Don't try to actually learn anything yet; just enjoy the experience of hearing the topics discussed.]

Though they're a bit dated, Scott Turow's "One L" and John Jay Osborn's "The Paper Chase" (or the movie) are always good for inspiring a little terror, and, of course, there's "Legally Blonde" for pure fantasy.

Developing an ear and fondness for 17th and 18th century English was helpful for me. I was given a four-volume reproduction of "Blackstone's Commentaries on the Laws of England" and "Coke upon Littleton" before I started law school. (Ok, I confess that I was an avid fan of English lit and history, and legal history was just a variation on those themes.)

About 1994 or so, when Bryan Garner was fairly early in his crusade and corporate road show campaign for plain English for Lawyers (and long before West Publishing had allowed him to whack up my beloved Black's Law Dictionary), I had just finished reading John Locke's Two Treatises of Government (1689) before taking Bryan's course.

Apparently Locke & friends were more influential on me than just for political theory. Bryan was singularly unimpressed with me and my atavistic syntax and style of writing. He gave up on me as an utterly hopeless case -- a sort of walking, talking antique.

To this day, I remain steadfastly unrepentant, and I eagerly devour each new issue of the Selden Society's Year Books.

Donna E. Wynne

OK.. law school was a long time ago for me. What is IRAC format?
Sincerely yours,

Michael D. Caccavo,

Issue, Rule, Application, Conclusion.

Donna Wynne

I

RANT

AGAINST

COLLEGE.

No, really, it is a suggested format for legal argumentation: issue, rule, analysis, conclusion.

Best regards, Arthur B. Macomber

IRAC is the recommended format for answering essay questions. First you identify the issues, then for each issue you respond with: Issue, Rule (relevant law), Analysis (how facts fit the law), and Conclusion (your lawyerly opinion).

Duke Drouillard

The two things I wish I'd done before law school were improve my keyboarding skills, and get glasses. Who would've thought law professors actually write things on the blackboard or use overhead projectors? They did, and I spent the first two years unable to read them. Sitting in the front row didn't help much. On the plus side, I had to pay more attention to what was said, but I did miss a few things.

Don't do what I did – buy a new house and spend the last few weeks of freedom unpacking boxes and shopping for furniture.

And, in response to the other excellent advice given, I wish I'd decided up front what area of law to practice in. When I started school I thought it would come clear by graduation. I'm now a year out of school and just starting to have some glimmer. Although if I had made my mind up then, I'd probably have changed it by now.

Abby Fuller

The most useful thing I acquired for law school was an art museum membership (MOMA has great student rates!). Whenever my brain started to hurt I would go to the museum and stand in the quiet place in front of a Van Gogh or Monet until I started to feel human again.

Wendell Finner

Recommend to "friend" that he needs to be very supportive of his wife, in an active way. He's not going to get to see much of her. The worst part for wife is that she's going to feel bad for neglecting her husband. He really needs to continually let her know that everything is just fine.

"Friend" also needs to be sure to let his wife have some alone time away from the books and library. There is not much free time in law school, and it is important that she be able to take at least a bit of it to be alone and process everything.

I also strongly agree with the exercise advice. It is well worth the time

investment.

Best Wishes, Joel Christiansen Law Clerk/ Law Student

I think the single most useful thing I did first year was to attend LEEWS. <http://www.leews.com/> Don't wait, like I did, until you've gotten a bad round of first semester grades. Sign up and attend now.

My first semester grades were horrid, not because I didn't know the material, but because I was incredibly poor at getting them onto the page in a manner that made them easy to follow for the grader. IRAC was a nice idea, but LEEWS offered a system that successfully allowed me to quickly and efficiently tear through essays.

Beyond that, stay on pace, and set aside time each day to focus on things other than law school. I spent my lunch hour every day reading a novel or hitting balls at a nearby driving range. My golf game didn't improve terribly much, but it certainly reduced my stress levels.

Don't work while in law school, except for summer clerking. This was my single biggest mistake - I worked throughout school at my current firm as well as on my own business ventures. The pursuit of short-term cash harmed me in the long run.

Mark Lyon, Law Clerk

I think whether or not you work in law school is very dependent on who you are. I personally don't manage my time well when I don't have much to do. Most adults will find that law school leaves you with a lot of unscheduled, unrestricted free time. When I have that much time, I don't do my work, because I "have plenty of time." When I was an undergrad, I got my best grades the semesters that I carried 18 or more hours and also worked full time. This worked out to be true in law school as well.

I don't recommend working during the first semester though. You're processing a LOT of new info, along with a new way of processing, and for many people, law school is the first time in their lives there has ever been competition for grades (so, the first time you ever have to really study to get decent ones). Also, your first year grades are the basis for getting on law review, and law review is the basis for getting a big firm job (which I recommend for two years to pay off the student loans), so I would do whatever necessary to do as well as possible first year (including do not work).

Becki Fahle

I didn't have a choice--I had to work during law school. But the type of job I had made the difference. I had been working as a mortgage appraisal analyst before school and was able to scale that down to PT. When I left that job, I took a job for a sister company, a title company, near my house. I typed title commitment letters all day long--didn't require deep thought and actually helped when I took Real Estate Law later on.

Whenever I talked to older students like myself about working, I'd say they were relieved to hear that someone else had to work for financial purposes and that it was doable. If you are currently employed in a job that is stressful or high-level, however, you may need to negotiate to scale it down if possible because I'm not sure that type of work and law school go together.

Just my \$.03 (inflation).

Ann Verme

I didn't need contacts until law school, prior to then I'd wear glasses purely for driving and reading the blackboard in undergrad.

In any event, it's a nice thought to think you'll know what area you want to practice in right away, but I started out law school wanting to practice in fields that I currently don't practice in (they still interest me though!). And I had zero desire to practice in Bankruptcy starting law school, just because I knew nothing about it. Really, you don't need to know until you complete your first year anyway, it's not like you get to pick your first year classes.

Lesley Hoenig

Pardon if this tip is repetitive.

I think Amy Kleinpeter hinted at this but I elaborate here a bit.

Many law schools post assignments in advance of first day of class.

Check the hallway bulleting boards, nowadays maybe the Internet, for required books and assignments.

Be ready to recite at first meetings. The rule is that if you are not prepared, you will be called upon. By "ready to recite" I mean you have obtained the textbook and have read the assignment and made notes.

Does it sound like I was called upon at 8 am on first day of law school to go down and sit in front of Torts class of 150 and recite that first case, which, in most Torts texts, involves the wife of the innkeeper? Does it sound like I did not know about the assignments and had not purchased the text yet? I had not, but fortunately had skimmed my roommate's text and although it was a different torts text the first case was the same case as the first case in the assigned text. I was able to stumble through that experience which I will remember the rest of my life. Fortunately, I think none of my classmates recall it.

I wondered how the prof had selected me. I think he had a game where he would select students whose surname was the same as law faculty having same surname. In my case, the other 1L torts class was taught by a prof with my surname and that prof had a competing text if I recall, at least not the same text as my prof.

I have given this tip to parents and students in the past. While this tip is much less important than most in this thread, I get feedback thanking me.

Also, a remark I think I have not seen in this thread involves your career: some of your classmates will be future co-counsel, future opposing counsel, future administrative law judges and future judges. You might end up in hearings where each attorney in the room was in same law school and at same time as you.

When seeking employment you may list faculty as references. Do not be surprised if faculty members other than your listed references get calls about you.

Rob V. Robertson

Wow- something I can answer competently (maybe). I'd recommend you tell your friend:

(1) Befriend 2Ls & 3Ls and others who you legitimately like (i.e. who you can reciprocate friendship with, or worst case, make payment to) and get their outlines for your specific 1L classes and professors.

(2) Read and learn those outlines before you complete your first month of classes. Do NOT get sidetracked by the ridiculous day-to-day reading assignments, which will have you lost in the trees rather than seeing the forest. If reading every word is a requirement before showing up at class because your Socratic professor may pick on you, then don't go to class, and spend the time reviewing the outline and taking practice exams. (Socrates rarely bothers to take attendance or learn your name). Working too hard on the wrong/assigned things-- and giving a crap about what Socrates and students and others think-- are the two biggest mistakes in law school, in my opinion. The outlines will serve as your Cliff Notes, and will give you a high-level perspective of what cases boil down to, and how they related to each other, which are much more important forms of understanding than having understandings of cases' specific facts and details.

(3) Find copies of each professors' prior final exams, and (a) familiarize yourself with the format and content, and (b) after you learn the applicable outline, take each exam, under actual conditions. Again, it is ideal to do this EARLY, in the first month of classes. This will give you a solid perspective about what your course grade is ultimately about. Once you are familiar, comfortable and skilled with what that involves, then you can concern yourself with things that others misprioritize and shove in your face.

(4) Use a laptop computer- do NOT take handwritten notes. You can save so much time and organize things so much better (typing is faster than handwriting, Word's autotext/autocomplete function saves lots of time, you can copy and paste things to save time, you can do keyword searches, etc. etc.). Lots of attorneys still use too much paper, but I am assuming not as many students limit themselves in this way.

(5) Tell yourself, and your family, what is priority #1. If priority #1 is your

family going into law school, then it should stay that way while you are in law school. Do NOT prioritize 200-page reading assignments, non-graded projects, or goal-less study groups over taking time with your family, or taking time for lunch, for that matter. Some of these things seem silly to say, but when you are in law school, it is easy for silly things to take on way too much priority.

(6) Spend some of the academic time you would have spent on silly tasks on practical, real world exercises. If the law school has a real-world program that is in an area of interest (e.g. you are an aspiring criminal defense lawyer and the school has a criminal client representation clinic), that is a much better use of your academic time than is reading cases.

(7) When it comes to exam time, think like a robot. A robot will methodically do everything that needs to be done; a robot can make lists, complete each task, and check each box until all bases are covered. However, a robot can NOT have thoughts of self worth tied up in exams, or worry about failure, or worry about what bad grades mean. If a bad grade happened-- heck, if you flunked-- that would just be a challenge that comes up, and would be something you could and would adjust do, and do better at the next step. It doesn't make any sense to worry; just do what you need to.

(8) Take extra courses in writing and research, if they are available. The chances are good that you won't ever use the info from a particular substantive class, but if you take courses on writing and research, those skills can be applied in almost any area of practice.

(9) Substantive (and elective) courses that I wish I took but hadn't: damages, business organizations, economics and law, tax law, collections and consumer law. Courses I'm glad I took: administrative law and privacy law (incl. HIPAA, which rears its head nearly everywhere). These courses would be helpful for professional and/or personal issues, for most attorneys, in most practice areas.

(9) If you ever find yourself saying you "can't" fulfill an important personal obligation because of law school, then know that YOU are doing something wrong that YOU must correct. Do not externalize the problem to law school, or to how big and bad it is. YOU make things as good or bad as they are. You will observe that there are some students who appear stress-free, aren't buried in work, don't take themselves too seriously, spend lots of time on more important life activities, and yet wind up with great grades. You can be one of them.

Michael Brown

Whether not going to a class because you might get called in is a good idea depends on whether your class is actually big enough that the prof wouldn't notice whether you are there. My law school's total enrollment (not just for 1L's but the entire law school) was 300 people. Needless to say, as a first year student, my Section had maybe 50 people in it at the most. And I can tell you, my profs, regardless of teaching method noticed if I (or any other student) wasn't there. I had a few classes where missing x

number of classes could actually impact your grade, so I made sure not to skip those particular classes unless it was absolutely necessary.

I imagine things have changed since I was in law school (99-2002), but out of my whole class, maybe 2 people used a laptop to take notes in class. Some profs didn't like it, and it could be a distraction for others to hear the clicking of the typing. I always took handwritten notes and would type them up at the end of the semester to make my own outlines (which was immensely helpful at putting the big picture together using the casebook to fill in any blanks). Maybe now that laptops are a bit more affordable, more people take notes in class on a laptop. I know I personally type faster than I handwrite, but some people may find they absorb info better by handwriting their notes.

Lesley Hoenig

From my experience, and I just graduated in May 2007, the proportion of Laptops was exactly opposite. There were maybe 5% of people who did not have one. Unfortunately I did have a laptop and a subscription to MLB.TV- so the beginning of the Fall and the end of the Spring were always tough for me. Nothing beats watching a baseball game during class, but it certainly makes it harder to absorb the material.

Sean M. Sweeney

First, advice from me on being a married student, then from a friend (also an old fart like me) who just finished 1L

On being married in law school: I was 6 years married at the start of law school. Those three years were the most stressful the marriage ever had. Stress eats at you, finds the fault lines in the marriage, whatever they are, so your issues will be particular to your marriage. Recognize this ahead of time, talk about it, be prepared to say "stop, this is law school getting at us, time to take a walk" (or whatever). And know that your horny classmates with no time will be infinitely jealous of your married state.

From my friend:

(1) Clearly define your goals in law school. There is more than learning the law. For example... A-- if you are going to school where you intend to practice, probably 50% of your classmates will also be colleagues. Allow time to get into activities that allow you to get to know them, and they, you. My visit with you in Seattle brought home how important reputation is. Don't ignore it during the law school years. You are building a reputation even if you don't try to - and not engaging is likely to get you the rep of someone who is utterly uninterested in others. I had a girl in my class thank me profusely when we got to Rome, because I'd taken the time to explain why I was such a gunner in one particular class: You got up to 2 grade increments for class participation. She got an A because of that. I got credit for making the A possible. Since this girl wants a big corporate job, it really mattered to her. It cost me maybe five minutes. B--Even if not going to school where you will practice, keep touch with people from your area (if any) and in your likely practice area. Of course, make friends and

keep touch with them. C-Get a format for briefing. Modify it only if your professor insists. Your format should include asking where the case fits with earlier cases and the course as a whole, and BLL it fits with. D-Keep a log of cases, with one or two line summaries of F: (acts) and H: (holdings). File the case under the appropriate BLL category in your outline, and also keep a separate file of the condensed cases. This is critical. You may or may not use the cases in the outline, but some profs require it. More important, if you can summarize the case in two or three lines total (Case title, citation, F: and H:) then you are really learning how to critically read cases. E-Each day, DURING CLASS, correct your case condensations. Ask questions or go up to the prof after and e sure you got the essence in the summary. You are learning how to read cases in micro.

(2) Passing the bar: You have to pass the bar to be a lawyer. Write good outlines, boil them down to good checklists, KEEP THEM (and I recommend keeping your books) and REVIEW them periodically during law school. I found myself referring to torts and contracts in later 1L classes. This is good. Don't let the stuff completely decay in your mind. Review it for its own sake, and try to link it to other areas of law. This may even get you a few points on the odd exam.

(3) All that said, understanding how cases affect law is the basis of our legal system, even in an increasingly statute-driven system. Read and brief the cases. But try to do so with an understanding of how each case fits. It is terrifyingly easy to rush thru cases and pull out what is needed for class without seeing how the case fits into all law, fits into the area of law you are studying, or even, for god's sake, how it fits with the last damn case you read. Don't lose the larger perspective of how the case fits into all those things. This will not only make you a better lawyer (someday) but will get you better grades NOW. (2) Techniques: A-These are relevant comments because you WILL have to choose at times between adequate class prep and other activities. Don't blow class off. But do make judicious decisions about when to occasionally blow class off. If you have a 'panel' prof (our term for one who assigns specific cases rather than choosing randomly each day who will brief) prepare that case to death, and prepare enough other cases you are ready to do so. B -If your prof picks randomly, try very hard to get picked early on by volunteering and prepare those cases to death. Then do prepare most cases, and make a habit of making intelligent comments at least once or twice a week on cases other people brief. If you have questions, ,most of the time you should stop after class and ask the prof. Reason: The prof knows you usually prepare. If you blow one, well, he's been through law school. As long as he knows you usually prepare, you create a favorable impression and he will be more than willing to help when you have problems. C-If your school encourages a lot of prof contact, use it. St. Thomas does. You should be in your profs office every week. I have not been doing this, and its a mistake. These people know the law. You will simultaneously understand class and the BLL better, and get to know the profs better, by doing so. If you know the profs, the kind of exam questions they will ask will be less likely to be a surprise. D-Find a series of BLL guides you like and use them. The skinnier the better - if the guidebook is a thick as your text, don't buy it. Buy the plastic-coated cheap (\$6) law outlines you can find at grocery store checkout stand areas (yes, that's right). Use both. Develop a rough outline of BLL BEFORE class, during breaks. Then fit the cases into the

BLL outline. E-Buy your books very early for next semester. Politely badger your professor for a syllabus early - if that fails, find a 2L who still has the notes for the class. Borrow them, copy and return. Use notes to figure out what to read. Even if the prof changes the readings (not bloody likely) you will be ahead by using this info to get 2 weeks ahead in reading. You will ALWAYS have things happen to blow out your schedule - something you didn't understand had to take more time on, a social event, or Bar Review. The two weeks will be gone by semester end - if you work to plan though, they will JUST be gone. NOTE: When you have done the cases 2 weeks out, re-read your summary (not necessarily the case) night before. I use numbers in my brief keyed to the pages of the text so I can find parts of the case quickly when briefing. I was almost always ahead of my classmates in locating things, which made me look good, but more importantly, meant I understood the case more quickly while remembering less. F-Always record page numbers for your briefs and parts of briefs, even in the checklist. Amazing how easy it is to forget something in a test -- but how quickly a line of text will bring it back, and also, how clear the differences between the test hypo and the BLL case stand out with a glance (if you have done your work). Points on test for seeing the differences, and being able to outline them. > (5) Take the course called Legal Exam Essay Writing System (LEEWS). This guy explains how to deal with hypos better than anyone else. It also encompasses note taking etc. Forget IRAC. Leaves too much out and does not reduce the process to a mechanical system you can practice and memorize in advance so you don't lose focus during the exam.

(6) Take a timer into exams. LEEWS covers all this stuff. This is test techniques

Rebecca Wiess

My piece of advice regarding laptops: uninstall all the games on the laptop and tell the friend's wife to stay off the internet including instant messenger during class. It was so easy to get distracted by non-class stuff. Especially if you have a boring professor. Stay focused during class!

Most of my other advice has already been covered... Enjoy the next couple of weeks until class starts. Don't worry about the reading for orientation (you don't get a grade on it and we never touched that stuff again). Start or keep an exercise regime. Try to normalize law school - it's not the end-all, be-all that many people want to make it be. If your friend's wife doesn't want to go into BigLaw, then tell her not to worry about making law review. And if she has the grades, you don't really need Law Review to get the BigLaw job anyways. It's really the write-ons that need Law Review.

Kimberly DeCarrera

Kids today. Why, back in the day, we had nothing to distract us from class but the NYTimes crossword puzzle.

In ink.

Uphill.

Both ways.

Wendell Finner

I brought one of my nephews to one my classes, in one of those large rooms with seats in rows of differing elevation. When I caught him staring at the ceiling, I was able to say to him, "I got 764 ceiling tiles, let me know how many you count".

Paul Hogan

Horny classmates??? When my wife was in law school, at which time I was already practicing so that she and I both were impossibly busy, she was oft asked if she were either married or living with someone. She used to answer by saying she was married but NOT living with anyone!!!

Alan P. Bernstein

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