

## Suggestions For Preparing Before Law School

1. You should definitely prepare for law school as much as you can, but you must prepare *smart*. If you prepare smart, you'll emphasize a holistic approach incorporating the acquisition of knowledge and understanding through a lens of issue spotting and then resolving each issue with a lawyerly argument. You'll reject a simple college-exam-preparation method emphasizing mostly knowledge and understanding. Law school essay exams are about the dual performance of issue spotting and argument making and are really different from collegiate essay analysis and writing. Indeed, responding to law school essay exams in the ways you analyzed and wrote college essay exams may be the chief first-year student blunder: it confines you at most to the C grading range.

2. "Planet Law School II" by Atticus Finch details a variety of materials and schedules that enable you to study smart. Get his book and acquire the materials he recommends (including my books), select one of his detailed schedules, and conscientiously follow it. You'll be pleased you did so as your first year unfolds. You'll be preparing smart and likely avoid most of the confusion and acute anxiety that afflicts many first-year students.

## Advice for Students Beginning Law School

1) Have courage? Get and read the old law exams of each professor in the first week of school (usually in the library). Do not expect to understand anything and expect to be a bit scared. Remember: you have 15 or so weeks to practice with them. Don't try to work with them right away. Instead, do as follows.

2) As you read assigned materials and attend class, look for fact patterns and issues *similar* to what's in the exam problems. By the end of even the first or almost certainly the second week, you should catch at least one or two issues that are also in the old exams. Then practice writing out an argument to resolve each such issue applying what you believe to be the appropriate CIRI(P) writing format. After four or five weeks, you should be practicing with a bunch of her exam issues. By the end of the semester, you should have spotted **all the different issues** in the old exams and **written a variety of types of argument** to resolve them. And by so doing, you have, of course, also refined both your issue-spotting and CIRI(P) writing-format skills.

3) From spotting these different issues and writing out exam arguments, you should gradually begin to pinpoint her familiar pattern of recurring issues from exam to exam, though presented with varying fact patterns. You'll also note the number of issues in her typical multi-issue problems, the frequency of two-and-(exceptionally)-three-way arguments that her exam issues typically require, and the extent of her use of policy arguments as well as their type.

4) From the first day, practice after class with hypotheticals based on each class discussion and assigned and other materials. Which facts spark which issues? By so doing, you are again practicing to refine your issue-spotting skills, especially zeroing-in issue-spotting, and also to refine your CIRI(P) writing skills. Since you write your exams, writing is clearly best to prepare but oral recitation when you cannot write may help. In addition, practicing hypotheticals with a study buddy or two who share your wavelength provides other sets of eyes and minds.

5) As you practice hypotheticals each day after class, begin to compile in each course, a list of red-

hot facts that trigger issues, including the facts of some of each teacher's hypotheticals. Look for the blatant instances as previously illustrated: in tort, facts detailing intentional and negligent injuries; in criminal law, facts of killing, robbing, stealing, conspiring; in contract, facts specifying breaches such as failure to pay agreed prices or failure to deliver goods as promised; in real property, attempted oral transfers of real property or different property interests; in civil procedure, facts demonstrating a conflict as to whether a court has jurisdiction over plaintiffs and subject matter.

In addition, look also for legal relationships that *impose duties* such as employers who are responsible for negligence of employees; a member of a Board of Directors who breaches her fiduciary duty; or co-conspirators who are generally culpable for each other's crimes in furtherance of the conspiracy.

6) Most students should strive to find one or two students to study with who share a common wavelength: who are preparing for a law school, not a college, exam; who are committed to working each day with hypotheticals and at least weekly with old exams; who see knowledge and understanding as a necessary fuel for issue-spotting and writing arguments rather than an end in itself; and who also regard making an outline as a means (not an end) for relentless practice with hypotheticals and old exams.'

7) Please carefully avoid all those study groups whose members are conscientiously preparing for a college exam that is **not** given in law school; who see deepening their knowledge and at most their understanding as the driving tasks; who display chronic bad judgment as to which issues are core and which marginal; who with certitude daily devote almost all their time to briefing cases and preparing their outlines; and who insist they will begin preparing for exams later when they know the materials at or near the end of the course (as in college).

8) Try by yourself, or possibly with another student, to engage each professor as previously explained.

9) To get to Carnegie Hall and to get As and B+s, Practice, Practice and Practice (with hypotheticals and old exams).

Take a look at the Planet Law School Yahoo chat room.  
Students are hard at work with hypotheticals.  
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/planetlawschool>

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