



MSLAW Academic Support

The Ten Commandments for Academic Success in Law School:

1. **Show up and do the work!** This may seem elementary, but it's important nonetheless. Succeeding in law school means doing the reading, briefing, and studying that's assigned.
2. **Figure out what works for you—and stick to it.** There isn't necessarily a "right" or "wrong" way to study in law school, and different study methods work for different law students. Be it study groups or flash cards, experiment with various study methods and tools to find out what works best with your learning style. Be careful of relying too much on commercial study materials: use them as additional study tools, but don't think they can replace studying the material on your own.
3. **Learn to cull the most important information, put it into an organized format, and update regularly** as you move through each semester. The cases are important because they illustrate how the black letter law plays out in different situations, but you must still learn the black letter law and how to apply it appropriately in order to succeed on your law school exams (and, ultimately, the bar exam.) Whether you use a traditional outline, flow charts, or some other method, you must learn to spot the information that's important, create an organized method for putting that information together, and keep up with your work.



4. **Hone the skills you'll need for writing a successful law school exam.** These include issue spotting skills, analytical skills, logical thinking skills, and writing skills. Learning the material is only the beginning; you must also be able to convey effectively what you've learned on your exams. To hone the skills you need, practice exam-taking under test conditions. Many professors post their past exams or put them on reserve at the law library; use those past exams to practice issue spotting, IRAC analysis, logical thinking, and essay writing. If your school doesn't put past exams on reserve, then search online for sample law school examinations.
5. **Develop effective and efficient study habits.** At the beginning of each semester, come up with the amount of time you'll need to spend on studying each week, then

schedule in your study time, work schedule, and social activities and follow the schedule you set. Prepare for the program, the class, and the professor: different professors and different courses can require different methods of preparation, analysis, and writing. Learn to figure out what your professors expect from you (it never hurts to ask!) and prepare accordingly.

- 6. Take advantage of the resources that MSLAW offers**, including: writing labs; tutoring; practice exams; study sessions; guided study groups; academic workshops; and other academic and student support programs. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Make sure you seek out additional assistance at the first sign of academic difficulty: it's best to address academic issues as early as possible.
- 7. Take advantage of opportunities for practical education and experience** as a law student. Law school teaches you to think like a lawyer—but clinical and practical programs can show you what law practice is like, provide you with great experience, and offer you a way to stand out among other candidates for employment. Seek out law student clinics, externships or internships, and student activities that introduce you to law practice.
- 8. Participate in class and get involved in your law school community**. Professors notice students who participate freely and intelligently, and you will get more out of your law school experience if you do.
- 9. Beat law school burn-out**. With a rigorous curriculum, grueling work schedule, and often competitive atmosphere, law school can afford few chances for work-life balance. But staying balanced is a must, in order to avoid burn-out. Learn to compartmentalize various responsibilities, be it studying, work, internships, or family time; then, prioritize and plan your schedule to handle all of your responsibilities. And make sure you make time for yourself: carve out some time for an activity that you enjoy.
- 10. Customize your legal education**: explore various academic programs, opportunities for practical education, social and service activities, and other resources to help you find what you want to do. Following your passion is paramount. In the end, your law school experience – just like your legal career – should be about you.