



MSLAW Academic Support

Assessing Your Study Skills, Pinpointing Your Strengths and Weaknesses:

A Law Student Self-Assessment Checklist

Honestly assess your study skills, proficiencies, strengths and weaknesses. Indicate how well you believe you perform in the following areas—are you:

**Very proficient,
Somewhat proficient, or
In need of improvement?**

Reading and briefing cases:

Processing the information you read in a case

Very proficient Somewhat proficient Must improve

Understanding the facts of the case

Very proficient Somewhat proficient Must improve

Culling the rule of law from the case

Very proficient Somewhat proficient Must improve

Understanding the significance of the case to the course as a whole

Very proficient Somewhat proficient Must improve

Creating comprehensive, readable and organized case briefs

Very proficient Somewhat proficient Must improve

Using the correct format for your case briefs

Very proficient Somewhat proficient Must improve

Reading cases in a timely manner

Very proficient Somewhat proficient Must improve

Outlining and creating review materials:

Discerning the legal concepts you need to know

Very proficient	Somewhat proficient	Must improve
Understanding the significance of each concept or definition to the course as a whole		
Very proficient	Somewhat proficient	Must improve
Putting the material into a readable and organized format		
Very proficient	Somewhat proficient	Must improve
Using the correct review format (flash cards, flow charts, outlines) for your learning style		
Very proficient	Somewhat proficient	Must improve
Discerning what will be tested on your law school exams		
Very proficient	Somewhat proficient	Must improve
Discerning what will be tested on the bar exam		
Very proficient	Somewhat proficient	Must improve
Understanding the various types and sources of review materials that are available to you		
Very proficient	Somewhat proficient	Must improve
Discerning between necessary and unnecessary outside review materials and sources		
Very proficient	Somewhat proficient	Must improve
Using outside review materials judiciously		
Very proficient	Somewhat proficient	Must improve
Keeping up with your review materials periodically		
Very proficient	Somewhat proficient	Must improve
Classes:		
Attending classes regularly		
Very proficient	Somewhat proficient	Must improve
Being prepared for class		
Very proficient	Somewhat proficient	Must improve
Taking effective and efficient notes		
Very proficient	Somewhat proficient	Must improve
Participating in class discussions		
Very proficient	Somewhat proficient	Must improve
Turning in class assignments that are timely and		
Very proficient	Somewhat proficient	Must improve

Following up on your class notes and judiciously including them in your review materials
Very proficient Somewhat proficient Must improve

Study skills:

Understanding your preferred study style
Very proficient Somewhat proficient Must improve

Understanding your preferred study environment
Very proficient Somewhat proficient Must improve

Studying for maximum efficiency, effectiveness and productivity
Very proficient Somewhat proficient Must improve

Setting an efficient and effective study schedule
Very proficient Somewhat proficient Must improve

Creating an efficient and effective study plan
Very proficient Somewhat proficient Must improve

Keeping to the study schedules and plans you have set for yourself
Very proficient Somewhat proficient Must improve

Making judicious use of study partners and study groups
Very proficient Somewhat proficient Must improve

Taking advantage of the study skills resources available to you at MSLAW
Very proficient Somewhat proficient Must improve

Exam and writing skills:

Writing clearly and concisely
Very proficient Somewhat proficient Must improve

Writing in an organized and readable manner
Very proficient Somewhat proficient Must improve

Writing your exams in the correct format
Very proficient Somewhat proficient Must improve

Ensuring that your knowledge of applicable principles of law comes across clearly
Very proficient Somewhat proficient Must improve

Spotting the correct issues		
Very proficient	Somewhat proficient	Must improve

Using the correct method of analysis		
Very proficient	Somewhat proficient	Must improve

Law school success:

Managing your time wisely		
Very proficient	Somewhat proficient	Must improve

Understanding your law school/academic options		
Very proficient	Somewhat proficient	Must improve

Understanding your opportunities for practical experience		
Very proficient	Somewhat proficient	Must improve

Understanding your opportunities to explore career options and meet attorneys		
Very proficient	Somewhat proficient	Must improve

Remaining professional in and outside of law school		
Very proficient	Somewhat proficient	Must improve

Beating law school stress and burnout		
Very proficient	Somewhat proficient	Must improve

Developed by Ursula Furi-Perry and Michael L. Coyne



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Learning Styles and Preferences

There is not necessarily a “right” or “wrong” way to study law—still, you’ll likely find that some study methods and styles work better for you than others.

Various systems of classifying learning styles exist; one system (often referred to as “VARK”) groups most learners into one of three categories: visual learners, auditory learners, and kinesthetic or tactile learners. You can benefit from pinpointing your learning style preferences, customizing your study time to reflect those preferences, and honing your study skills in all three areas.

Typical characteristics of **visual learners**:

- Learn primarily by seeing
- Learn primarily through the written word
- Tend to be avid readers and writers
- May tend to take down every word
- May remember what they see, but forget what they hear
- Make good use of lists and charts
- Often spend long periods of time studying and need a quiet zone to study
- May turn to written review materials, outlines, diagrams and flow charts when studying for exams
- May tend to study better alone than in a study group or with a partner—such as by reviewing course materials and working on outlines and flash cards

Typical characteristics of **auditory learners**:

- Learn primarily by listening
- Focus their attention on the spoken word and are careful listeners
- Like to talk rather than write
- Relish the opportunity to present, recount or discuss what they have learned
- Are often good at repeating facts
- Can remember the details they hear during conversations and lectures
- Tend to have strong language skills and oral communication skills
- May turn to audio reviews and recorded lectures when studying for exams
- May find study partners or groups helpful, especially in hearing other people’s perspectives on the material
- Often volunteer to participate in class discussions or brief cases in class

Typical characteristics of **kinesthetic or tactile learners**:

- Learn primarily by doing
- Learn best through continued practice
- Often like to think in terms of physical action
- Often like to demonstrate in practice the principles they learned
- May become bored or fidgety quickly when listening to a class lecture or reading (or even sitting still) for long periods of time
- May be able to study with loud sounds and other distractions around
- May turn to flash cards or other interactive review materials when studying for exams
- May consider study groups helpful, especially in demonstrating the material to other members of the group

What study methods might you consider based on your learning style preferences?

The following questions might help you determine what type of learner you are:

1. When studying new material, you're most comfortable using:
 - A. Your own course outlines and flow charts
 - B. Your professor's audio lectures and reviews
 - C. Flash cards and practice essays
2. In class, you typically:
 - A. Sit close to the professor and take copious notes
 - B. Participate in class discussions frequently
 - C. Have a hard time sitting still for long periods of time
3. Which of the following study techniques has the most appeal to you?
 - A. Color-coding your study materials
 - B. Making audio recordings of your class notes *after* you've taken them down in class
 - C. Using memory games to study and help you retain the material
4. In your opinion, study groups:
 - A. Don't add much to your preparation for exams
 - B. Are indispensable, especially in being able to discuss the material with others
 - C. Are indispensable, especially in being able to present the material to others
5. You do best when you study the black letter law in which of the following ways?
 - A. Writing it down repeatedly
 - B. Hearing and repeating it to yourself

- C. Presenting it to others
6. Which of the following techniques would you find most helpful in reviewing for exams?
- A. Diagramming your courses
 - B. Small group discussions with other students
 - C. Reviewing by role playing

If most of your answers are A's, you may be a visual learner. Consider the following ideas that may fit your study style:

- Produce and use flow charts, lists and diagrams to help you study the black letter law
- Make thorough use of your course outlines
- Use highlighters or colored pens
- Color code your study materials, class notes and reading notes
- Use picture association techniques to help you retain definitions and key legal concepts
- Rely on the written word to help you process information

If most of your answers are B's, you may be an auditory learner. Consider the following ideas that may fit your study style:

- Record class discussions
- Repeat facts (such as definitions and black letter law) with your eyes closed
- Participate in group discussions; use your study group to your advantage
- Use audio CD's and recorded lectures while you study
- Use word association techniques to remember facts, lines and black letter law
- Make an audio recording of your class notes *after* you've taken them down in class
- Record yourself reciting the "black letter law" or the rule of law you've culled from a case, and then use the recording to structure and write your outlines

If most of your answers are C's, you may be a kinesthetic/tactile learner. Consider the following ideas that may fit your study style:

- Hold your books and review materials in your hand rather than laying them on the table while you read
- As you read, use a highlighter or colored pen to make notes in the margin
- Make use of flash cards and other review materials that require you to perform some movement while you study
- Make use of interactive study methods, such as multiple choice questions presented online or in CD format that require you to click on your answer choice
- Study in short blocks and take plenty of breaks
- Use a study partner or study group; aim to "teach" or demonstrate the material to your peers
- Use memory games (or even rhythm/beats) to study and help you retain information
- To the extent possible, write while you read or talk

WITH THAT SAID...

Whatever your learning style, you **must** ensure that you:

- **DON'T** structure your study techniques entirely on your preference—these three study styles all interact in some way, and you will benefit from embracing all three styles. For best results, work with materials, techniques and skills that reflect all three study styles.
- **DON'T** think you won't need (or may refuse) to do some of the work in your courses based on your particular learning style—for example, you have to read the assigned cases even if you prefer visual over verbal information!
- **DO** strengthen all of your study skills, regardless of your preferences. You may prefer the spoken word over visual methods, but that doesn't mean you can't improve on your visual learning skills. You can and should work to improve your study skills in all areas, whether it's careful and engaged reading, culling the most important information, or putting the material together in a readable, organized and comprehensive manner.

Want more information about learning styles? Take the **VAR K Guide to Learning Styles Questionnaire** at <http://www.vark-learn.com/english/page.asp?p=questionnaire> or the **Index of Learning Styles Questionnaire** at <http://www.engr.ncsu.edu/learningstyles/ilsweb.html>

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