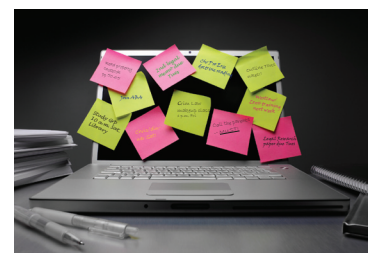


How to *Survive* the First Year of Law School



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Introduction



Rely on the
ABA Law Student
Division for
practical, real-life
advice from
your peers.

It isn't easy. As a law student your challenges are numerous. Coping with demanding course work, understanding the complexities of the law, and cultivating contacts to help you with your future career are all part of the law school experience.

The American Bar Association (ABA) can help. The ABA provides its members — students, lawyers, and judges — with the resources to excel in the profession.

While you're in law school, you can rely on the ABA Law Student Division for practical, real-life advice from your peers – and from those who've already survived. Law Student Division membership gives you access to opportunities that will help you grow professionally, discounts on products you'll use at school and home, and information on legal trends and those who set them.

This publication is designed to help new law students avoid potential pitfalls and take advantage of all the opportunities law school offers. As you advance, the ABA will be there for you every step of the way. Look to the ABA for advice on anything from resolving ethical situations to finding the best internships.

As you enter law school, we hope you'll also become a part of the legal profession's most widely respected organization. For more information, call 1-800-285-2221, or log on to the ABA law student website at www.abaforlawstudents.org. We look forward to meeting you.

Orientation

Testing and grading policies may be discussed at orientation.



Your first-year orientation is your introduction to life at your new law school. If you're tempted to skip it...don't. This is when you meet the faculty, the administration, and your classmates for the first time. And because it will probably be the last time your class is together as a whole until graduation, this is also when the administration and faculty will introduce you to the mechanics of law study at your particular institution. They'll try to instill several years of motivation in your classmates and you, as well. Pay attention. You'll need it.

The mechanical portion of the program is designed to put you at ease and make you feel comfortable. Most of the information presented will be exceptionally helpful as you familiarize yourself with the facility where you'll be spending the majority of your time for the next three or four years. If you learn now where to find your classrooms, the library, food services, restrooms and student lounge, you'll alleviate your first-week anxieties. Pay attention, too, to information such as the names of administrators and faculty and campus parking regulations.

Information on scheduling, testing, and grading is also helpful. As a first-year student, you're unlikely to have a choice about which classes to take, because the school wants to ensure that all its graduates leave with a shared base knowledge of legal principles. Test dates are typically published with course registration material, but your school's testing and grading policies and the purposes for those policies may be discussed at orientation.

You'll be expected to take examinations the same day the rest of your class takes them. If you know you'll need an exception to the published schedule, you should discuss the situation in advance with your academic dean.

Some schools' orientations include simulated classroom experiences that introduce students to the Socratic method and the amount of preparation required for mean-

Orientation, cont.

ingful participation in class. Other schools include simulated tests to demonstrate the preparation required for success on tests. These sessions are extremely helpful in introducing you to the rigors of life in law school.

Some schools' orientations include simulated classroom experiences; others include simulated tests.

Despite standardized schoolwide grading policies, each professor will probably attempt to demonstrate some individuality within the grading system. The only way to discover your professors' individual grading idiosyncrasies is to attend class and note the areas emphasized during classroom discussion and reviews. It is a very good idea to ask each professor what he or she expects from you on the examination. (This point will be discussed in more detail below.)

The axiom "Look to your right and then look to your left. One of you is not going to be here next year" is no longer true at the vast majority of law schools. The economic realities of providing a quality legal education mean schools are looking for qualified students who will complete the entire three- or four-year program. Thus, the first year of law school is no longer a contest where only the fittest survive.

Your first year will still be a challenging ordeal. The first year is critical in your development as a lawyer. First-year grades will determine your class rank (which probably will not change measurably during your remaining years) and may foreclose many opportunities for all but the top few students. There still will be competition for the top grades, which are earned through hard work and study. The research and writing skills you develop now will apply to your practice throughout your career.

To summarize, take full advantage of your orientation. There are valuable gems of information amid the barrage of common stones that are thrown at you. The faculty and administration are there to help you. Stay positive, and be prepared to work hard. If you couldn't succeed, you wouldn't be attending orientation.



Case Briefing



You'll use the skills you develop in case analysis and briefing throughout your career.

Class attendance is, of course, mandatory, but it won't be meaningful unless you prepare. Read the assignments and brief the cases before each class. You'll use the skills you develop in case analysis and briefing throughout your career. Each professor will emphasize different information, but basically your brief should include:

1. The case name, citation, and page number in the text-book — the last will be particularly important as a reference when you're preparing your outlines for finals;
2. A statement of the issue or issues presented by the case — the question the court is answering with its analysis;
3. A brief statement of the facts — include enough information so you can remember what happened to cause the dispute (substantive, outcome-determinative facts) and how the case got to the current court (procedural facts); understand the outcome-determinative facts (facts that prove the elements of the rule in question) and how they prove or disprove the elements of the rule;
4. The rule — the rules are universal propositions (statutes and common law during the first year of law school) that apply to the case; each rule can be broken down into elements that must be proven to satisfy the cause of action based on that particular rule;
5. The holding — when the court applied the facts to the rule of law, the answer it determined to the issue question;
6. The reasoning — the thinking the court used to justify the outcome of the case;
7. The policy — the social, economic, or other policy considerations that influenced the ultimate decision and how the case fits into the big picture.

As your briefing skills develop and evolve, your briefs will become shorter. At a certain point in your law school career, particularly after your first year, you may stop formally briefing cases and start to "book brief" instead. Your book brief

Case Briefing. cont.

should contain the same information as a formal brief — issue, key facts, the rule, holding and reasoning. The best advice is to find the briefing method that works for you. You should be able to participate and understand the class discussion with the information contained in your brief.

A few words about “canned briefs.” DO NOT USE THEM. When time is tight, you may be tempted to fall back on commercially prepared briefs designed to follow the most popular casebooks. Unfortunately, there are no canned briefs available in practice. If you don’t learn how to read and analyze cases on your own, you will never be able to practice law competently.



Socratic Method



In law school,
the means
(preparation and
participation) do
justify the end
(understanding).

The Socratic method is used to develop your ability to think on your feet.

The classroom challenge can simulate the exhilaration of arguing a case in the courtroom, and you'll want to try to answer the questions as they are asked even when you are not the one under direct examination.

Paying attention to what's going on will help you understand the discussion, and you'll benefit from personal analysis of each question as it is discussed in class. If you don't fully understand the analysis, ask for clarification. In law school, the means (preparation and participation) do justify the end (understanding). If you believe that what doesn't kill you makes you stronger, you will develop a perverse enjoyment for the Socratic method.



Class



First-year classes are the essential building blocks for upper-division classes.

Your research and writing classes may be the most important classes you'll take in law school.

Daily attendance in class is mandatory. There is no substitute for being there, just as there is no substitute for reading the assigned cases and materials before you go.

Even if you haven't quite developed a perverse pleasure in the Socratic method, when you observe and participate in it you're facilitating your development as a counselor and an advocate. Each class is designed as an integral part of the whole learning experience. If a class seems trivial and boring, remember that you're learning a process – how to think like a lawyer – in addition to the black-letter law. It is the process, not the law, that you'll retain throughout your career.

First-year classes are the essential building blocks for upper-division classes. If you master the material in your torts, property, contracts, and criminal law classes you'll understand criminal procedure, constitutional law, evidence, business organizations, and the other advanced courses that are tested on the bar exam.

Legal writing is the one skill you'll use throughout your entire career. You must develop an effective legal writing style while you're in law school if you intend to impress your employers. To do that, you'll need research. Thorough research will not only help you avoid committing malpractice, but will also help you win cases when you incorporate it into a well-written legal document. Your research and writing classes may be the most important classes you'll take in law school. Don't slough them off.

Notetaking is another important skill — one that will improve as you get more comfortable with the process and your individual professors. Write down the questions the professor asks in class, along with the correct answers. If no one comes up with the correct answer in class, figure it out yourself. Then visit the professor

Legal writing is the one skill you'll use throughout your entire career.

If you use a computer to take notes, you might consider investing in one of the legal notetaking tools now on the market.

Class, cont.

during office hours to discuss your analysis. Be selective in writing down your colleagues' questions: They have roughly the same subject matter knowledge you do.

How you take your notes may matter, too. Handwriting notes requires you to think about what you are going to write. You probably can't write as fast as you can type, so handwritten notes must be more selective and thoughtful. Depending on your learning style, handwriting your notes may help you process the material.

The alternative is to take notes on a computer. While computers continue to become smaller and more portable, there is still an ongoing debate over whether professors should allow them in classrooms. Check with your professors on their individual policies. If you are allowed to use your computer to take notes, focus on the class material and avoid checking email or surfing the Internet during class.

If you use a computer to take notes, you might consider the legal notetaking tools available for use on your laptop, such as MS OneNote, EverNote, Aspen Studydesk or West LiveNote.

Different professors will emphasize different material, and each professor will prefer to discuss the material in a certain way. The only way to figure out what the professor is emphasizing and how it relates to the professor's overall view of the course is to show up for class every day. As in any endeavor, showing up is the first step to success. Understanding your professor's idiosyncrasies can pay off in points on the final exam.



Study Aids & the Internet



Study aids will prove very valuable throughout your law school career. A law dictionary, for starters, is a must. Words are the lawyer's tools, and if you don't understand the trade vocabulary you can't expect to excel. You'll hone your communication skills through intelligent participation in class, and that requires an understanding of the vocabulary.

Hornbooks, written by law professors, are outstanding research tools.

Preparing an outline is a valuable learning experience.

Other study aids to consider include:

Hornbooks. These scholarly treatises, written by law professors, are outstanding research tools. If a number of hornbooks are available in a particular area of the law, ask which ones your professor prefers. You can also check with upper-level students to learn which hornbooks may help in a particular professor's class.

Commercial outlines. Outlines are designed to help you organize your notes in preparation for finals. While commercial outlines can be very helpful, they aren't a substitute for your own. Preparing an outline is a valuable learning experience. Use commercial outlines only to supplement your own.

"Canned briefs." As mentioned previously, these are designed to replace personal briefing. Again, don't use them. You learn by doing the work, and briefing is a skill to be developed. Also, it will be obvious to the professor if you used a canned brief – cans rattle.

Bar review materials. These aids cover first-year courses and are an excellent substitute for commercial outlines. In addition to providing rules of law, bar review materials include tips on answering questions that cover the rules of law. They also provide essay and multiple-choice questions for test preparation. Your school bar review representative may host taped lectures by the bar review professors at the end of each semester. Additionally, ABA Law Student Division members may apply for BarBri scholarships and receive discounts on Kaplan PMBR review courses.

Study aids are designed to supplement your primary materials. They may be used to help you organize your material for final exams and to clarify rules and their

Pictures of whatever you did on spring break won't aid your efforts to enter the legal profession.

Study Aids & the Internet, cont.

elements for analysis. Study aids should not, however, be used in lieu of the course materials required by the professor.

Online resources are vital tools for lawyers and law students. Online research is taught in all research and writing programs. In addition to Westlaw and Lexis/Nexis, there are a number of free research sites available. Many law school libraries offer specialty materials online, and the ABA distributes a variety of content in webzines, webcasts, and in connection with continuing legal education teleconferences.

Professors use Westlaw, Lexis/Nexis, school websites, and personal websites to disseminate information and conduct online chats. Notes and discussion materials are commonly posted on the Internet, and students routinely post outlines for particular courses on personal webpages. Blogs exist on every possible subject, including the quality of your school and its individual professors.

If you decide to blog or comment, remember that your diploma will have the name of your school on it for the rest of your life. Before you trash a particular professor or course, become very familiar with your state's defamation laws.

Keep in mind, too, that what you release into cyberspace will orbit there forever. YouTube, Facebook and other social networking sites can be valuable tools, but some posts have caused employers to withdraw job offers or terminate employees.

State bars include the Internet in their background checks on applicants. Pictures of whatever you did on spring break won't aid your efforts to enter the legal profession. Your friends and family probably won't be very impressed, either. Delete potentially embarrassing photos, and untag such photos to which you are tagged. Bear in mind that political or personal rants can hurt you, too. Use search engines regularly to see what comes up for your name.

Lastly, be sure the information in your social Internet sites matches your resume. Consistency is key.



Outlining

An outline is not a transcript of the class; it is a concise study aid.



Outlining is a means of organizing your class materials to facilitate finals study. Outlining should be an ongoing process each semester, as it forces you to understand concepts and organize them in a logical order.

Your course syllabus or textbook table of contents is a good place to begin a skeleton outline. Organize your material by topic and include rules of law with the reasoning that supports each rule. That will help you apply your rules to new fact patterns. Reduce each case to a single-sentence, hypothetical situation; include the outcome with the reasoning for a meaningful, relevant class outline. Also include a single-sentence synopsis of the hypothetical questions your professor poses to the class, along with the solution's analysis. Remember, an outline is not a transcript of the class; it is a concise study aid.

As discussed previously, commercial outlines should just be supplements to your own material, but they can very useful in that capacity. A commercial outline should include more information than your notes, and you can use it to fill in gaps in your personal outline. Consult commercial outlines, hornbooks, and treatises to verify that you have the correct black letter law for your outline.

One caution: Don't let a failure to outline become more burdensome than the actual outlining process. Your goal is to learn the process. If you don't outline a course, it doesn't mean you won't pass; it only means you didn't outline the course. Outlining is a means to an end. Many other means exist. While outlining is highly recommended, you should use the study methods that work best for you in preparing for finals.



Study Groups

Look for different strengths in members, and then put them to best use.



Study groups are another means to the end, and you should assemble yours with care. You may start working with a study group early in your first semester, or you may prefer to use a study group only in the weeks leading up to finals.

Either way, you'll want to study with people you enjoy, whom you can rely on to keep up with the reading and who have reasoning skills as good as or better than your own. In your first year, it will be easy to find study group members who have all the same classes you do, because everyone takes the same classes. In later years, study groups may make sense only for certain classes. Having one group per class can create scheduling nightmares when everyone's schedule is different.

Every study group should establish why it exists and how the work will be divided. Look for different strengths in members, and then put them to best use.

Most study groups review individual outlines for adequacy and clarification. Review the hypothetical questions your professor raises in class and discuss past mid-term and final examinations so you have an idea of the scope and challenge of your professor's tests.

As you work, remember that your study group is a support group, not a loose band of mercenaries. Keep the group small so that everyone can get individual attention. Your group should include only those who actually contribute to the process. You may want to consider having a maximum of one group member per substantive course per semester.

Study groups should be sources of support rather than sources of drama, gossip and law school scandal. Members should be able to get by with a little help from each other. If the group is impeding your mastery of the material, quit the group. Study groups and outlines are tools. Use them only if they're in good working order.

Tests

Begin by briefing every assigned case for class participation.



Every first-year law school course will culminate with a final exam (except for your research and writing class). Whether you have one exam at the end of the year or one at the end of each semester, your preparation for it will be the same: intensive.

Begin by briefing every assigned case for class participation. Attend class and take notes on the discussion. Periodically outline the class information that's been covered, and supplement your outline with hornbook and/or commercial outline material. (Note: Your school library should have the hornbooks and commercial outlines available on reserve.) If you keep up during the semester, your material should be ready for your finals week review. Take a minute to map out your finals study schedule on a calendar, and then stick to it.

Typically, your final exams will be scheduled over a two-week period. Law school finals are marathons rather than sprints. Schedule time to study, eat, and sleep while you prepare for your final exams. You want to be awake, alert, and studying at the same times your exams will be given. Practice sitting at your study space for three-hour blocks to simulate test conditions (assuming you have three-hour tests).

Studying for finals requires concentration, and concentration requires discipline. Avoid trips to the refrigerator, phone conversations, and other distractions during your test-block study time. And never allow yourself to nap during the hours in the day the test will be given. Train yourself to remain alert during this time period.

You'll also need discipline to succeed in law school. If you haven't been disciplined before, now is the time. Discipline yourself to complete class preparation, outlining and studying, as well as to focus and be impressive on the test. If you've been disciplined in preparing your outlines, your final review period will be an invigorating challenge. If you haven't prepared properly, the study period will be nerve-

The most important factor in any essay is to answer the question asked.

Tests, cont.

wracking. You cannot learn a semester's worth of law and analysis in one all-night cram session. You must prepare for finals throughout the semester.

That said, once you've prepared, be comfortable with what you know and don't fret over what you don't know. Your classmates will try to psych you out. Don't listen to them. No one will know everything; everyone has personal strengths and weaknesses. You'll do best if you channel your energy into positive, productive exam preparation rather than concentrating on gaps in your knowledge. Strong study habits will carry you through your exams. A positive attitude will give you the energy to deliver your optimum performance.

Law school finals now include multiple-choice questions as well as the traditional essay questions. This is because most states include the Multistate Bar Exam, a national standardized test, as part of the state's bar exam.

Practice writing essays from past years' exams, along with as many multistate questions as you possibly can prior to the actual final test. Many professors will review your answers with you. While practice multistate questions will not improve your writing ability, they will sharpen your knowledge of the substantive law as it applied to various fact situations.

As you write your practice essays, remember that the most important factor in any essay is to answer the question that is asked. Follow the professor's instructions, and organize your thoughts before you begin writing. A brief outline of your approach will keep you on track as time becomes a factor.

Don't write a dissertation on the area of law being tested (or on the area of law you wish had been tested). The IRAC (Issue, Rule, Application, Conclusion) structure is preferred for most law school essay examinations, but ask your professor how he or she expects the essays to be organized.

You may need to discuss the issue from the point of view of each party.

Tests, cont.

Begin your presentation by stating the issue and the applicable rule of law. Be as narrow as the question will allow. If you've written a rule with elements that must be proven to establish a prima facie case, you will have an internal outline created by the elements of the rule to keep your analysis organized. Next, apply the facts from your professor's question to the rule of law and reach a conclusion. You should address each element of the prima facie case to prove or disprove the result of applying the facts to the rule. You may need to discuss the issue from the point of view of each party. Ask your professor what's expected in your analysis. Normally the outcome is irrelevant as long as you support your conclusion with logical law/fact analysis.

If your professor would prefer a policy discussion in addition to or in lieu of straight law/fact analysis, integrate the policy discussion with the appropriate element. If a policy discussion doesn't fit with a discussion of the elements, include it in the paragraph that immediately follows the analysis of the facts. Again, ask your professor how he or she would like the material presented. Review past exam questions and sample answers if they are available.

Budget your time so you address each question required. If you stay cool and demonstrate your organizational and writing skills, you'll do just fine.



Clubs & Activities

Many larger firms
won't hire you
if you don't
participate in
law review.



While law school and the study of law will be omnipresent for the next three or four years of your life, you can enhance your experience through a number of extracurricular activities. Potentially there is a club or organization for every interest and affiliation. You'll learn about the unique extracurricular opportunities available at your school, but you should limit your participation during your first year. You don't want to get distracted by activities at the expense of your grades. After your first year, you will have a better feel for time management and the activities and groups that interest you.

The following are some of the more notable activities:

Law review. A law review is a scholarly compilation prepared and edited by students. Membership on the law review board is considered an academic honor and is normally reserved for the top students in the class after the first year. Some schools also conduct writing competitions to complement the grade selection process.

Law firms look very favorably upon law review participation — so favorably that many larger firms won't hire you if you don't participate in law review. If you're interested in a challenging program that opens many doors, you should look into what's required for law review participation. Your professors can familiarize you with the selection process at your school.

Many schools now have more than one student-edited publication, and participation on these publications can also help open doors to work opportunities. If you have the opportunity to be a part of your school's law journal, you should.

Moot court. Moot court is a simulated appellate experience in which you research and prepare an appellate brief and then argue the merits of your case. Moot court

The ABA Law Student Division sponsors national competitions that enable participants to practice the skills that are so important during their law careers.

Clubs & Activities, cont.

competitions usually involve two- or three-person teams at intraschool and interschool levels, including city, state, regional, national, and international competitions. The competitions are stimulating, challenging, educational, and fun. The ABA Law Student Division's National Appellate Advocacy Competition is the largest and most prestigious in the United States. Many schools require students to participate in moot court.

Trial advocacy competitions. These contests help sharpen trial advocacy skills. A team typically consists of four students who serve as advocates and witnesses. A thorough understanding of the Federal Rules of Evidence is essential.

Skills competitions. The ABA Law Student Division conducts competitions in areas such as arbitration, client counseling, mediation, and negotiation. The national champions in the client counseling and negotiation competitions represent the United States in international competitions.

Student Bar Association. SBA is your school's student government body. Each class representative works with SBA officers to influence changes in school policies and to sponsor social events. Contact your current SBA officers for more information on your school's organization and opportunities.

American Bar Association Law Student Division. This division of the ABA enables students to participate in the leading professional organization for lawyers. One goal is to provide students with a voice in the ABA House of Delegates, giving them the chance to influence the future of the profession. In addition, the Law Student Division sponsors national competitions that enable participants to practice the skills that are so important during their law careers, and serves as a clearinghouse for clerkships, scholarships and internships available to student members.

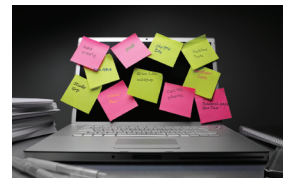
Active ABA student members also benefit from the opportunity to meet and work with other students across the country.

Clubs & Activities, cont.

As a member of the Law Student Division, you'll receive both the *ABA Journal* and *Student Lawyer* magazines. You may also take advantage of numerous other membership benefits such as health and life insurance, specialty sections, divisions, and forum memberships, discounts on bar review courses, and many more.

In addition, if you're interested in more active ABA participation and wish to have a voice in the Law Student Division, there are opportunities from the local school level (school representative) up to the national level (circuit governor, national officer, liaison to sections/committees, and division delegate). Active ABA student members also benefit from the opportunity to meet and work with other students across the country, as well as with practicing lawyers who are the best in their fields.

If you are interested in becoming an active participant in the Law Student Division, please contact the Division staff in Chicago at abalsd@abanet.org.



Your Physical & Mental Health



Make sure your schedule includes time to exercise, eat, sleep, commute, enjoy your family and/or significant others, and observe your religion.

When you're in law school, it can be easy to put everything else on hold. That is a mistake, particularly in regard to mental and physical health. Life continues while you're in law school, and you should address personal issues as they arise.

Drugs and alcohol may have been part of your undergraduate lifestyle, but they can't be a part of your law school experience. Not only can drugs and alcohol affect your performance in school, they also could prevent you from becoming a member of the bar. Keep in mind that your role as a lawyer will be to help people who need legal counsel. You need to get your act together before you attempt to help others get their acts together. You don't have to be a saint, but you do have to be in control of your life if you expect to provide competent counsel.

If you need help, you may turn to your law school or campus resources for mental health care. Additionally, the ABA and most states offer lawyer and law student assistance programs. For details see www.abanet.org/legalservices/colap.

Organization will go a long way to getting you through law school successfully. Make sure your schedule includes time to exercise, eat, sleep, commute, enjoy your family and/or significant others, and observe your religion, as well as attend classes and study. You'll be busier than you've ever been in your life, and thoughtful scheduling and discipline will enable you to fit everything into the 24 hours you're allotted each day. You will definitely need to change your lifestyle and discuss your priorities with your significant others. Everyone close to you will have to make some sacrifices while you're in law school. The old cliché about the law is true; it is a jealous mistress.

EXERCISE

If you take care of your body, it will take care of your mind. The study of law is a marathon for the mind, but it's a sedentary activity for the body. And for law

Health, cont.

students, just like everyone else, if you make exercise a part of each day's routine, you'll not only look better, but you'll also feel better.

You'll find that exercise takes your mind off the law. Take that break regularly. Even a brief exercise session, whether organized or informal, leaves you more alert and better able to concentrate on the material you're studying.



Working



Work gives you a chance to apply your research and writing skills in the real world.

Working outside of school is best avoided during your first year of law school. If you must work to support yourself, consult with your financial aid director and your dean before you commit to anything. One option is to try to find a job in the library or some other department at the school so you don't have to add another commute to your already over-booked schedule.

After the first year, a law clerk position may actually enhance your educational experience. Whether at a firm, a government agency, or a legal services organization, work gives you a chance to apply your research and writing skills in the real world. You'll also have real experience to use in evaluating your areas of interest, deciding whether to specialize in a specific substantive area of the law, and determining the practice setting that is most likely to suit your professional and personal goals. And you'll have an income, too, of course. Before you begin your job search, consult your career planning office (discussed below).



Career Planning



You may think a job search is far in your future as you enter law school, but you're mistaken. NALP — Association for Legal Career Professionals — rules permit you to begin working with your career counselor in November of your first year in law school. Make an appointment in November to learn what services are available through your school career planning office and how to use them to your advantage. Your

career counselor can help you with resumé preparation, career planning, and job solicitation, as well as suggest firms that practice the type of law that interests you.

File a bar application during your first year of law school, to give the bar time to conduct a thorough background check.

The Career Series publications from the American Bar Association can be valuable tools in your career planning process, and the ABA's Career Counsel website and job board (www.abanet.org/careercounsel) includes a section for law students, as well as career resources and articles, complimentary audio and video downloads. You can use these and any other available resources to enhance your planning, but begin the process with a counseling session early in your law school career.

BAR APPLICATIONS

Most states request that you file a bar application during your first year of law school, to give the bar time to conduct a thorough background check. If you wait until your last year in law school, the bar will still do a thorough background investigation, but then it may hold up your admission to the bar. Additionally, the filing fee is usually lower if you submit an application as a first-year student.

Regardless of when you submit your application, remember that you are applying to become a member of a trusted profession. Full disclosure is required; withholding information about your past may mean you're denied admission to the bar for failing to be candid. If you admit any past transgressions, it is possible they may be excused. Also, if your bar application doesn't match your law school application,

Career Planning, cont.

you may be disciplined by your law school before the bar declines to admit you. If you realize you omitted something on your law school application, contact your admissions office to see how you can go about amending your application.

If your circumstances change while you are in law school (marriage, divorce, counseling, drunk driving, assault and battery, or some other arrest), notify the bar association immediately and ask your academic dean whether you need to formally report the incident to the law school.

First and foremost, however, believe in yourself. File your bar application during your first year and sign up for a bar review course.



Conclusion



Law school is a challenging experience. It is also a time you will cherish for the rest of your life. Success depends on your individual desire and willingness to work. Many before you with lesser skills and abilities have succeeded – so can you. Success depends on you.

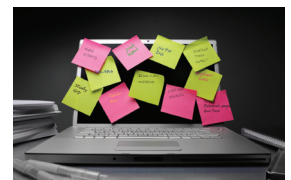
Good luck.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bill Henslee is an associate professor of law and founding faculty member at Florida A&M University College of Law. He teaches entertainment law, theater law, sports law, labor law, torts, copyright, and travel law. Prior to moving to FAMU, Bill taught for twelve years at Pepperdine University School of Law. He is a member of the California Bar. Bill earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Hawaii, where he won the Clark Award for Creative Writing, given to the university's most promising writers. He received his J.D. degree from Pepperdine University School of Law. While in law school, Bill served as a circuit governor and then chair of the ABA Law Student Division. Bill was awarded his masters of fine arts degree from UCLA's Graduate School of Theatre, Film, and Television.

In 2005, Bill was a co-producer of the film: The Karaoke King. In addition, he was the producer and co-writer for Michael Reardon's Climb On! series videos: Joshua Tree and Bishop. Over the years Bill has represented numerous entertainment and sports clients. He recently retired as a certified contract adviser for the National Football League Players Association and the Canadian Football League Players Association.

In 2004, he co-authored two textbooks: Entertainment Law: Cases and Materials on Film, Television, and Music, and Cases and Materials in Theatre Law. In 2006 he co-authored the fifth edition of the American Bar Association publication Non-Legal Careers for Lawyers, and in 1998, the ABA published the second edition of his Entertainment Law Careers. In 1997, Carolina Academic Press published Bill's first co-authored textbook, Travel Law.



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