

# 10 Tips for Law School Success

**Law School Toolbox**  
LawSchoolToolbox.com



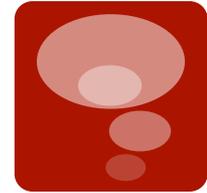
Thanks for downloading  
**10 Tips for Law School Success!**

Law school isn't easy, but it doesn't have to be impossible. With these tips, and your own hard work, you'll be well on your way to success.

And, if you want a little additional help, we've got you covered. Stay tuned for details.

Enjoy!

# #1: You Can Learn to Take Law School Exams



No one is born knowing how to ace a law school exam. It's a learned skill, and YOU are capable of learning it.

Once you start thinking you're "just not good at law school," it's game over. This will become a self-fulfilling prophecy, and you won't do well.

Far better, instead, to look at things realistically:

**Yes, law school is challenging, but you're up to the challenge.**

You have the ability to do well, and soon you'll have the tools you need for success. If you listen to our advice, and work hard to implement it, you are perfectly capable of doing very well in law school.

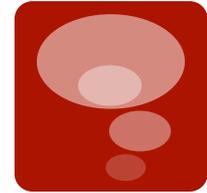
Really, we promise!

# Step One: Prepare



- 2: Understand What You're Trying to Do
- 3: Go to Class & Pay Attention
- 4: Get Serious About Your Schedule

## #2: Understand What You're Trying to Do



Law school exams are very different from most undergraduate exams.

As an undergrad, you memorized a lot of information, then recited it back. If you remembered more than everyone else, you got an A!

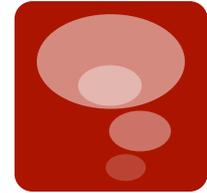
**Law school's not like that.**

Imagine you were studying mechanical engineering. Over the course of the semester, you went to class, did a lot of math problems, and learned some facts and formulas. When you arrive for the exam, however, you find a box of parts on a table. The exam is simple: Build a robot that can perform a specific task, using what you learned.

This is what law school exams are like. The goal is to APPLY your knowledge of the law to new situations, not just to regurgitate information.

Make sure your study techniques prepare you for this new type of exam!

## #3: Go to Class & Pay Attention



Walk in any law school classroom in America, and you'll see the same thing: A sea of students playing Solitaire, reading email, checking Facebook, and ordering from Amazon. (Maybe now they're busy pinning on Pinterest, who knows.)

What are they not doing? PAYING ATTENTION.

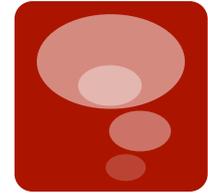
Leaving aside any argument about how much you're paying for the privilege of listening to your professor expound on these crazy hypos, paying attention in class is critical for excellent exam performance.

Why? Because your professor is basically telling you – every single day – what he plans to test you on, and how she'd like to you respond.

**Ignore this information at your peril.**

Law school's graded on a curve, and you know someone's listening.

## #4: Get Serious About Your Schedule



Let's get real. There's a lot of work to do in law school.

To manage it, you have to get serious about your schedule.

### **How are you going to manage your time?**

Commit to a study plan, in whatever way works for you. Do you want to make a habit of studying in a certain place for specific hours each day? Great, do it. Would you rather plan each week out on Sunday night? Fine.

The specifics of what you do hardly matter. The important thing is to **MAKE** a plan, and **TRACK** whether it's working. Are you getting your reading assignments finished? Do you have enough time to regularly review your notes? Are you fitting in exercise, relaxation, and sleep?

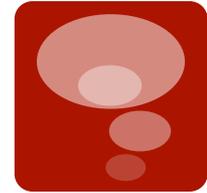
Staying on top of your time might seem boring and dowdy, but it's absolutely critical to law school success!

## Step Two: Practice



- 5: Practice Early, Practice Often
- 6: Use Supplements & Study Groups Wisely
- 7: Accept the Ambiguity

## #5: Practice Early, Practice Often



The single biggest thing you can do to improve your law school grades is simple: PRACTICE.

It's insufficient to possess knowledge of "The Law." By the time you take an exam, everyone knows the law. That's only the first step.

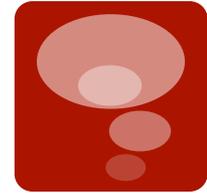
**You have to be able to APPLY your knowledge**, which is a completely different skill set.

If you're a typical law student, you devote 95% of your time to acquiring legal knowledge, and 5% of your time to practice exams. (Or, more accurately, 1% of your time to taking practice exams and 4% to stressing out about the idea.)

Your ratio should be more like 70/30. Yes, there's a lot of material to learn, but it's pointless to LEARN the material if you can't USE it.

Practice early, practice often.

## #6: Use Supplements & Study Groups Wisely



There's a lot of misinformation floating around about study groups and supplements (commercial outlines, old outlines, etc.).

**No, you do not have to join a study group. Yes, they can be helpful.**

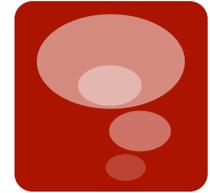
If you know that you learn by talking things out, a study group is an excellent idea. Find nice, helpful people, and get started. If you prefer to process information by yourself, a study group will drive you bonkers. Skip it, unless you want to keep up with the latest law school gossip. (And there are more efficient ways of doing that.)

**Supplements are useful, but you still have to do the work.**

Commercial supplements and old outlines are very useful in certain situations. They can give you an overview of the law in an area, or fill in the gaps for things you didn't understand, or show you how the pieces fit together. Helpful!

However, they can't take your exams for you. You still have to learn the law, which involves more than reading a hornbook.

## #7: Accept the Ambiguity



Most students come to law school thinking they'll learn facts.

What rights does someone accused of a crime have? How do you transfer title to a piece of land? What do I need to do to get divorced?

It's quite a shock to show up to class and be expected to discuss all these hypotheticals that fall outside the rules. (Or right on the border.)

Get used to it.

**Lawyers make a living fighting over the grey areas.**

Consequently, law school exams test the grey areas.

It's rare that you'll encounter a straight-forward application of the law you learned to a set of simple facts. It's going to be complicated, and it's going to be messy.

The sooner you're comfortable with this ambiguity, the better.

## Step Three: Perform



- 8: Think Before You Write
- 9: Write With Confidence
- 10: Keep a Close Eye on Your Time
  
- Bonus Tip: Don't Panic!

## #8: Think Before You Write



When you're in a high-pressure exam environment, it's easy to make mistakes. The best way to avoid this is simple: Think before you write.

Read the question, take a deep breath, get out some scrap paper, and start diagramming your answer. (Practice this in advance!)

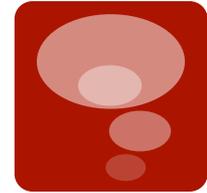
**Take the time to think through all the possible forks in the road.**

It's unlikely there's only one issue, and you need to hit all of them to maximize your point total. The most important issue may not be the most obvious one, either.

Once you've reached the end of all the forks, then, and only then, should you start writing. Use your diagram to structure your answer in a logical way, using headers and formatting to draw attention to the main points of your argument.

And don't forget the most important thing to think about: Did you **ANSWER THE QUESTION?** Your professor **will** notice, if you didn't.

## #9: Write with Confidence



This might be a “Fake it until you make it” situation, but you will do much better in law school if you write with confidence.

If you sound like you know what you’re talking about, people tend to give you the benefit of the doubt (and some extra points).

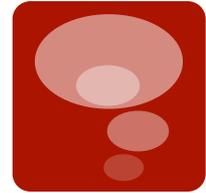
### **What does it mean to write with confidence?**

You get to the point, and tell the reader where you’re going. Imagine having to read 100 law school exams! It’s easy to see why a crisp, focused answer is better than a long-winded, rambling one.

You draw conclusions. If the professor asks you to assess whether a potential plaintiff has a case, do it! Give both sides of the argument, but make an assessment about which outcome is more likely. This is what lawyers do every day.

You use legal lingo appropriately. Don’t go overboard with the Latin, but use terms of art correctly. When in doubt, leave it out.

## #10: Keep a Close Eye on Your Time



No one is ever able to say everything she wants to say on a law school exam. It's an artificially time-limited environment, and you're going to have to leave things out.

### **What's the absolute worst thing you can do?**

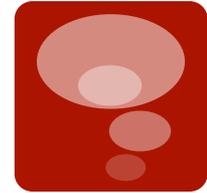
Run out of time and not get to a question.

How many points do you get for a question you never start? Zero. How many points do you get for an answer that leaves out a few details, but hits the main points? A lot more.

At the start of every exam, check the number of questions carefully. Look to see how many points each question is worth. Allocate your time accordingly, on a piece of scratch paper. (Leave a few extra minutes at the end if you can, since you'll inevitably run over.)

When you get to the end of the allotted time on the first question, **MOVE ON**. You must keep going, or you're flirting with disaster down the road.

## Bonus Tip: Don't Panic!



Taking law school exams is stressful. There's no way around it.

**So think about ways you can keep yourself calm and collected.**

Do you feel better when you exercise? Go to the gym (or for a walk).

Are there supportive friends you can lean on? Ask for help, even if it's just someone to go to the movies with when you need a break.

Make sure you're sleeping. Sleep deprivation is terrible for retention and focus, so you can't study effectively if you're not getting enough sleep.

Play some uplifting music and dance around the room. Silly, but fun!

Get out of the law library. Being around stressed out law students can induce an anxiety attack in the most centered person. If your classmates are stressing you out, study in a different library, or in a coffee shop.

Have an exam ritual. Train yourself to be in the zone! Then go for it.



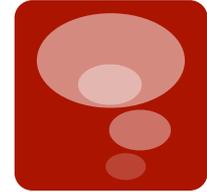
We hope you enjoyed  
**10 Tips for Law School Success!**

If you'd like more personalized assistance, please check out our law school exam success course.

You can get all the details on the [Law School Toolbox website](#).

Remember, law school is not impossible, and YOU can do it!

# Who Are We?



## ■ Alison Monahan

Alison is the founder of [The Girl's Guide to Law School](#), a website that helps people get in to law school, get through, and stay true to themselves. She's a graduate of Columbia Law School, where she was a member of the *Columbia Law Review*, a Kent Scholar, and a Stone Scholar. At Columbia, she served as a Civ Pro Teaching Assistant for Professor Michael Dorf. After graduation, Alison worked as a federal law clerk and a BigLaw patent litigator.

Follow Alison on Twitter at:  
[@GirlsGuidetoLS](#).

## ■ Lee Burgess

Lee is the founder of [Amicus Tutoring](#), which helps law students and bar exam takers find success. She's an adjunct faculty member at two law schools in the Bay Area, and was previously a BigLaw commercial litigator. Lee graduated *cum laude* from the University of San Francisco School of Law, where she received several CALI awards and was a managing editor of the *USF Law Review* and a member of the McAuliffe Honor Society. She was also a Teaching Assistant for Torts and Contracts.

Follow Lee on Twitter at:  
[@amicustutoring](#).



# Law School Toolbox

All the tools you need for law school success