

HOW TO EXCEL IN LAW SCHOOL: A CONCISE GUIDE

HLSA BOOT CAMP

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A. IDENTIFY YOUR GOALS

- Obtain a comprehensive understanding of all class material.
- Apply acquired knowledge effectively on assignments and examinations.
- Maintain unquestionable moral, ethical, and professional standards.
- Realize the significant impact of the legal profession on individuals and society.
- Impact your fellow students, the Tech Law community, your family, your friends, and the community in a positive and pro-active manner.

B. GUIDELINES FOR ACHIEVING YOUR GOALS

1. Before Class

<u>Top of Class Student</u>	<u>Bottom of Class Student</u>
Reads all assigned material carefully, usually multiple times.	Skims required material.
Looks up and learns unfamiliar terms in a legal dictionary.	Ignores unfamiliar terms – “If I don’t know what it means, it must not be important.”
Briefs all cases.	Copies briefs from other students or uses canned briefs.
Practices reciting.	Hopes not be called upon to recite.
Gets a good night’s sleep.	Stays up late surfing the Internet and watching HSN.

2. During Class

<u>Top of Class Student</u>	<u>Bottom of Class Student</u>
Attends all classes.	Attends when “in the mood.”
Arrives early to class.	Makes grand appearance by frequently rushing in late.
Pays careful attention at all times to what the professor and colleagues are saying.	Reads e-mail, surfs the Internet, works on MySpace or Facebook page, and daydreams.
Takes thoughtful notes.	Does not take notes <i>or</i> writes down everything the professor says verbatim; “If being a scribe is good enough for a court reporter, it’s good enough for me.”
Thinks reciting in class is a fortunate event and views it as a rare privilege.	Fears class recitation and thinks of it as cruel and unusual punishment.
Anticipates the professor’s questions and thinks about how to answer them, even if not reciting.	Is surprised by what the professor is asking.
Participates actively – volunteers to recite, answers questions, asks questions, thinks constantly.	Reacts only if absolutely necessary; adopts the “if I don’t look up, the professor won’t see me” technique.

3. After Class

<u>Top of Class Student</u>	<u>Bottom of Class Student</u>
Reviews and reflects on class.	Dreams about getting a date for Friday night.
Fine-tunes notes while class is still fresh in mind.	Waits until a few days before the exam to read notes.

<u>Top of Class Student</u>	<u>Bottom of Class Student</u>
Resolves concerns by consulting the professor; Tech Law professors are known for their availability and approachability.	Ignores concerns; “Later, dude”
Studies in an environment that is conducive to concentration and learning.	Listens to iPod and watches TV while studying.
Works with colleagues in a study group, or not, whichever better fits the student’s learning style.	Spends too much time, alone or in a study group, doing things other than studying, such as wondering what will happen next on Wisteria Lane.
Outlines courses on a regular basis.	Waits until the end of the semester to outline <i>or</i> uses outlines prepared by others.

4. Examination Preparation

All, or the vast majority, of your grade will be based on your performance on one exam.

<u>Top of Class Student</u>	<u>Bottom of Class Student</u>
Starts preparing for the exam on the first day of class.	Prepares for the exam after the last day of class.
Obtains practice examination questions and practices answering them under exam conditions.	Likes the excitement of being surprised on the day of the exam.
Attends workshops on exam success techniques.	Attends Evanescence concerts.

5. Generally

<u>Top of Class Student</u>	<u>Bottom of Class Student</u>
Balances law school and non-law school obligations; manages time effectively.	Ignores obligations; “someone else will take care of them.”
Takes appropriate mental and emotional breaks.	Treats law school as a 24/7 job <i>or</i> as an 8/5 hobby.
Avoids recreational pharmaceuticals.	Takes many trips without leaving home.
Takes good care of him/herself; maintains good diet and exercises; gets flu shot.	Believes the basic food groups are sugar, fat, and salt; takes tequila shots.
Seeks assistance promptly if having any type of academic or non-academic issues.	Waits to seek help not wanting to appear “stupid” although it may then be too late for the optimal solution.

C. CAVEATS

- Law school requires dedication and a commitment to work tenaciously on challenging material.
- Strive to earn high grades but remember that not all “A students” will receive As in law school courses. Do not define your self-image or self-worth on the basis of grades.
- Learning the material and being able to apply it for the benefit of your clients in a caring and compassionate manner is of paramount importance.
- Ethical, moral, and professional conduct must never be compromised.