

IRAC

IRAC is the typical organizational structure that most professors require on law school exams. IRAC is an acronym, standing for **I**ssue, **R**ule, **A**pplication, and **C**onclusion. Thus, the acronym IRAC tells you the exact order of your paragraphs. You start with the issue, then provide a rule, then analyze, and then conclude.

Let's consider this hypothetical as we work through IRAC: *Professor Joe was teaching a torts class with 100 students in a packed lecture hall. To illustrate some rules about intentional torts, Professor Joe took his shoe off and threw it directly into the crowd of students. He was not aiming for anyone in particular. His shoe hit Sally in the head and she suffered a severe concussion as a result. Did Professor Joe have intent?*

Issue

The I in IRAC stands for issue. This means you start by defining the issue that you are going to analyze at the very top of your answer. When writing the issue, you should start with "The issue is whether..." or "The issue is...". Make sure to define the issue correctly and include what your professor prefers. Some professors will want the issue to be narrower in scope than others.

The issue is whether Professor Joe has intent.

With the above example, the reader knows immediately what the issue is. The issue is whether Professor Joe has intent. The issue is clear and does not include details that are not relevant to the issue you will be exploring in your answer. This is not the time to give an entire introductory paragraph, keep it short and to the point.

Rule

The R in IRAC stands for rule. The rule includes all the relevant law that you will be using in your answer. You will want to include any law that you believe is relevant to your answer. You will get information for this paragraph from what your professor has taught you in class, and it will be a combination of black letter law and rules from the cases you read throughout the semester.

When creating your rule paragraph you want to keep two things in mind. First, you want to work from general to specific. You do not want to start your rule paragraph with the definition of harmful contact because that is too specific, your reader will be confused. Instead, you need to back up and talk about the definition of battery, the element of harmful or offensive contact, and then you can define what harmful means. Second, you want to be both broad and narrow at the same time. As stated above, you want to be broad enough that you include any law you will be using in your application section, but also narrow enough where you are not including irrelevant rules.

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Intent is the first element required for a battery. Intent can be satisfied through either purpose of knowledge (Garratt). Purpose means the contact was the defendant's desired outcome. Knowledge means that the defendant knew to a substantial certainty that contact would occur.

As you can see above, all the rules regarding intent are present. The paragraph starts broad, by explaining what intent even is. Then it defines intent (and cites the authority in which that definition came from). Finally, it gets even more specific and defines what purpose and knowledge means. This paragraph includes all the rules that will be applied in the application section below.

Application/Analysis

The A in IRAC stands for application or analysis. This is where you apply the law that you just wrote in the rule paragraph above and apply it to the facts that your professor provided in the hypo. The application section is often the most important part of your answer and is often where the most points are allotted to. For tips on how to write a good analysis, see *Conclusory Statements and How to Avoid Them*. It is best practice to start off your application sections with the word “here”, so your professors know that you are now applying the law to the facts they provided you.

Here, Professor Joe had the requisite intent. He did not act with purpose because he was not aiming for any one person in particular which fails to rise to the level of desired outcome. However, he did have knowledge to a substantial certainty. He knew that by throwing a shoe into a packed lecture hall harmful or offensive contact is bound to occur. Thus, this court should find that Professor Joe had knowledge to a substantial certainty that the contact would occur.

As you can see, this paragraph takes each of the rules stated in the rule paragraph and applies them to the set of facts given in the hypothetical. A good way to judge if you are on the right path with writing the application is that the application should be longer than the rule section of your answer. The application section is often where you will earn the most points, so you want to ensure that you have a well-thought-out answer, which goes through every applicable part of the rule and fact pattern your professor provides.

Conclusion

The C in IRAC stands for conclusion. You want to keep your conclusion simple and to the point. Your conclusion should answer the issue that started off your entire response.

Thus, Professor Joe had intent.

All Together

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The issue is whether Professor Joe had intent.

Intent is the first element required for a battery. Intent can be satisfied through either purpose or knowledge (Garratt). Purpose means the contact was the defendant's desired outcome. Knowledge means that the defendant knew to a substantial certainty that contact would occur.

Here, Professor Joe had the requisite intent. He did not act with purpose because he was not aiming for any one person in particular which fails to rise to the level of desired outcome. However, he did have knowledge to a substantial certainty. He knew that by throwing a shoe into a packed lecture hall harmful or offensive contact is bound to occur. Thus, this court should find that Professor Joe had knowledge to a substantial certainty that the contact would occur.

Thus, Professor Joe had intent.