

What To Do Before, During, and After Class

Before Class

- ★ **Read the assignment.** It is impossible to do well in law school if you do not complete the assigned readings. Those readings will be important for class discussions, your outlines, and the final exam.
- ★ **Create case briefs.** Case briefs are helpful for recalling the important parts of cases and things that professors may ask you about the cases. For more information on case briefing see *Case Briefing*.
- ★ **Review.** Spend 30 minutes before class reviewing your notes from the previous class, your case briefs, and even skim through the assigned reading if you need to. Whether you did the readings last night, or over the weekend, it is important to have the information as fresh in your mind as possible.
- ★ **Go to the bathroom and fill your water bottle.** While some professors will let you do this during class, it is better to not risk missing anything important and to get it done before.
- ★ **Eat a meal or snack.** It's never fun to sit through class hungry.
- ★ **Get sleep, your brain needs it to learn!** Without a full night's sleep you will not be able to pay attention and absorb the material as well.
- ★ **Attend ASF Sessions.** These sessions are essential for learning how to case brief, outline, study, and how to conform to your professors teaching styles.

During Class

- ★ **Actively listen.** Answer questions that are asked to other students in your head. This can help you overcome the fear and gain confidence for cold calls. It can also serve as a way to self-check yourself and your own understanding of the material.
- ★ **Focus.** We all know how distracting laptops can be. Work on disciplining yourself to not get distracted on your laptop during class. For some, it is helpful to turn off wifi on their laptop while taking notes for class.
- ★ **Participate in class.** If you know the answer to a question, raise your hand and answer it. Some professors grade you on participation, and by participating you are ensuring that you are actively engaging with the learning process. Keep in mind no one cares if you got a question(s) wrong, and no one will remember it except you.
- ★ **Take notes efficiently.** In order to have good notes, you need to be able to pay attention in class and pick out the most important points. You will not be able to write down everything the professor says. Taking notes that are relevant and on the key points will also help you condense material and study at the end of the semester. This may be hard at first because each professor has a different style, so it takes time to adjust to what they think is important. Pay attention to the questions your professor asks and the things they emphasize so you can adjust your notes accordingly.

****Disclaimer: If any law used in this handbook differs from how your professor discussed the law, always defer to your professor. The law used in this handbook is meant to serve as a vehicle for teaching the skills, only. Likewise, if any exam writing advice differs from your professor's expectations, always defer to your professor.****

- ★ **Take notes thoroughly.** Do not try to organize or color-code your notes during class. You will waste time doing this and risk missing something important happening in class. You also risk missing something important if you are distracted on your phone or laptop. It is easy to think you can just go back into the recordings of the class. Not only is this a waste of valuable time, but some professors only keep recordings up for a limited time or don't upload them at all. It is best to take thorough and efficient notes in class. Put both your phone and your laptop on "do not disturb" and to make sure you use your laptop for taking notes solely.

After Class

- ★ **Review what you learned in class.** It is best to do this within 30 minutes after the end of the class so that it helps commit the material to your long-term memory and what was discussed in class is still fresh in your mind. This could mean looking over your notes, outlining, or chatting with your friends about what happened in class, asking them questions, and listening to questions they may have. You need to think critically about everything you learned. Make sure you understand every single word you wrote down, and how each word relates to every other word you learned not only that day, but every other day you talked about that concept.
- ★ **Go to the professor with any questions you have.** Some will allow you to come up after class, but if the professor does not or if you have a more complex question, go to office hours! For tips on how to approach a professor during office hours see *Talking to a Professor in Office Hours*.
- ★ **Use your resources!** If you have questions about law school skills (how to prepare for class, how to effectively take notes, how to review after class, creating study schedules, advice on outlining, hypos, etc) go to your ASFs or academic support! There are also supplements to classes that can be accessed through the school library website that can help aid with understanding.
- ★ **Try to make connections between the material you learned in class that day and the material you had learned earlier on.** This will help you memorize easier and professors like when you can connect something new to something you had learned before.