

HINDSIGHT IS TWENTY-TWENTY

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Looking back on my first year in law school, I remember being stressed about the assignments, assessments, midterms, and finals. Each day had its own challenges, so it was not the best idea to leave unfinished work for the next day because you really did not know what eleventh hour assignment would be given that required a quick turnaround. However, now that my first year is over, I realize that it was not as stressful as I thought it was; hindsight is twenty-twenty. The assignments were necessary to enhance my analytical skills, which are vital for law school and the practice of law.

Prior to starting law school, I was warned about the Socratic method¹ that most professors use as a teaching method. The method is extremely intimidating but requires you to be well prepared. My first class in law school was contracts and unfortunately I was the first person to get called on. I was so nervous because I really did not know how to brief a case, so I had to answer the questions from memory. The professor was very lenient, which really helped with my anxiety.

After that class, I learned how to brief a case, which is beneficial because you can rely on the brief to help jog your memory about the facts and the court's reasoning. Additionally, it is beneficial because when a teacher is intimidating, I tend to forget everything that I read, but I can just read directly from my brief to answer questions.

During my first year of law school, I felt inundated with information regarding organizations and groups that I should join, what area of law I should chose to practice, and where I should work during the summer. There were so many options to choose from while trying to remain focused on my courses. My plan, which was effective in the long term, was to focus on exams and occasionally research places to work over the summer. I am happy that I chose this strategy because it allowed me to concentrate on getting good grades, which is my main concern in law school, and still was able to work with a great attorney who previously worked as in-house counsel for a few major retail companies. She subsequently went on to start her own practice providing in-house counsel services on an outside counsel basis. After working with her, I decided that I wanted to practice intellectual property focusing on the fashion industry.

What was most interesting about my first year was learning to adjust to studying with a group and using outlines to do so. Prior to law school, I always studied alone by consistently reviewing my notes. However, studying with a group forced me to explain my thoughts and reasons for choosing a certain answer. It was also effective because if you are able to teach someone else what you know, then you are able to efficiently explain your answer on an exam and it will focus your attention on the areas of the law that you may need to review. Using outlines to study was also a new learning experience for me and, for the most part, it helped with the majority of my courses. However, in some courses I found it most useful to use index cards. The index cards are useful when memorizing black letter law; the outlines are useful in honing my analytical skills.

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Even though the first year in law school is about learning and developing new skills that I will need for my professional career, it was equally important for me to maintain my self-care: staying connected with loved ones, going to the gym, listening to music, etc. To keep a level head, I dedicated approximately 6 hours on the weekend to accomplish these tasks.

Overall my first year in law school provided me with amazing skills that I will use throughout my law school career and will continue to use in my professional life. My advice to anyone embarking on their law school journey is to complete the assignments ahead of time and know what study methods work best for you. Also, remember to efficiently manage your time.