

Do's & Don'ts of Exam Taking



- Do's:**
- Get a full night of sleep and eat before the exam.
 - Arrive early and give yourself time to set up before the test.
 - If you are easily distracted, consider bringing ear plugs with you and sit near the front of the room.
 - When you first get your test, skim the entire exam looking for time allocations. Quickly jot down the times when you should be finished with each question. Make sure to stick to the suggested times (or your own time estimates) for each question.
 - Check the call of the question before reading the entire fact pattern.
 - Read the question twice before writing. Organize your answer before you write it by making a quick outline or list of the issues and parties.
 - Pay attention to dates, odd facts, and relationships between the parties. These usually signify important issues or claims.
 - Use headings to organize your answer. Depending on the question, you can organize your answer by parties, claims, or the specific call of the question.
 - Use a concise IRAC approach for issue spotter questions: Identify the issue first; articulate the Rule of law; Apply the rule by explaining the main argument, opposing argument, and rebuttal; then Conclude by stating who will win and why.
 - **Make sure to apply the rules to the facts.** Use the names, locations, and specifics mentioned in your fact patterns. The "A" in IRAC is usually the most important part of your answer.
 - Argue both sides of an issue unless the professor or call of the question says otherwise.
 - If the question calls for it, include relevant policy arguments, exceptions, Uniform Codes/Restatements, etc.
 - If you find that you are running out of time on a question, write down a brief outline of the issues that you are not able to cover.
 - Take a break after completing an exam and before you start to study for the next one.

- Don'ts:**
- Make up facts or discuss law not raised by the fact pattern.
 - Begin writing in a panic before you have processed the question and organized an answer.
 - Write in one long impenetrable paragraph.
 - Use shorthand or abbreviations unfamiliar to the reader.
 - Recite the fact pattern in your answer. Use the facts as part of your analysis, but don't waste time rewriting the facts in an introductory paragraph.
 - Assume that your reader knows anything about the law.
 - Make conclusions without doing a complete step-by-step analysis for the reader.
 - Spend too much time on one question to the detriment of answering other questions.
 - Post-mortem exams with your classmates!



Do's & Don'ts of Exam Preparation

- Do's:**
- Create a study schedule — and stick to it.
 - Complete most or all your outlines before Reading Period.
 - Get enough food, sleep, and exercise while you are studying.
 - Research your professor's style of exams. Find out what types of exams and questions he or she is likely to ask. Remember all of the suggestions a professor makes about answering his or her exam questions.
 - Check your outline for completeness and accuracy by comparing it to the professor's syllabus, hornbooks, or other people's outlines.
 - Incorporate the professor's focus and style into your studying. If the professor emphasized particular concepts, counter-arguments or policies in class, you should be prepared to incorporate those ideas into your exam answers.
 - Study for open book exams as though they were closed book exams.
 - Memorize key definitions and elements of law, especially for a closed book exam.
 - Take as many practice exams as you can under exam-like conditions. Compare your answers with model answers or with your friends' answers.
 - Try alternative study techniques, including making flashcards or creating flowcharts.
 - Make a spark sheet or checklist and use it to help memorize key terms and definitions.
 - If you have an open book exam, make your outline accessible by creating a table of contents or tabbing key parts.
 - Study each subject in small increments over a period of many days.
 - Prepare for the exam by gathering supplies (water, watch, earplugs, pens, etc.) or making sure that your computer is working properly.

- Don'ts:**
- Wait until the Reading Period to write your outlines.
 - Rely primarily on someone else's outline, commercial outlines, or study aids.
 - Study materials and topics not covered in your class.
 - Assume that an open book exam requires less study time. It is unlikely that you will have much time to consult materials during an open book exam.
 - Cram your studying into the few days before the exam.
 - Pull an all-nighter before an exam.
 - Forget successful study techniques you used as an undergraduate. If you have a method for studying that has worked for you before, try it in law school, too.
 - Study for long periods of time without taking breaks. Studies show that the average person can only concentrate for 50 minutes. After that, your ability to learn and attention span decline.
 - Procrastinate.