

Seven Keys to Law School Success






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 Go To
www.NILAS.us
 - There is a nice online inventory here, plus explanations of archetypical learning styles.

Like all the students around you, doubts exist. In the end, the best students will be the ones who master being law students. But merely working hard won't get you there, you must also work smart.

The future holds? We don't really know, but if law school looms in the future, you must take the initiative and conquer your fears.

- 1. Really know yourself**
- 2. Stick with the basics, No need to be a hero**
- 3. Master the Language of the Law, be a Master Reader**
- 4. Brief the cases – Its what lawyers do**
- 5. Practice Writing, then practice some more**
- 6. Manage your time, instead of being managed**
- 7. Be true to who you are, because in the end, you have to live with yourself**

I C O N K E Y	
	Valuable information
	Highlighter Moment
	Laptop friendly
	Mark in the Case Book.
	Caution

NILAS LawNavigator

How to “Really” use the personality inventory tests


The personality inventory tests tell the student what kind of a learner he or she is. The main point to this style of testing grows out of the need for educators to understand the diverse population in the classroom and not in adaptation of the student to the educational style of the teacher. To illustrate the point, imagine a first grade teacher saying to the class, “I understand that many of you are visual learners, but, you are just going to have to adapt!” Of course this is non-sense. In the real world of education, instructors, teachers, professors and professionals use a variety of methodologies to teach. But this is law school. The problem is that “one size fits all education style” is the prevailing mentality in most law schools. Since you are new law student, you don’t really know what your “problem” areas are or will be.

1. Really know yourself -
you can adapt your learning style to the method of instruction, but, you need to know how.

Knowing your learning type is a great entry point, but it is like knowing the make and model of your car, it is great to know, but it doesn’t get you anywhere. To really know yourself, you also have to understand your real ability to process analytical, analogical and deductive reasoning. The skill set you will need the most during law school stem from your ability to process new languages and solve problems similar to math. Sorry to burst your bubble, but the type of reasoning used is more like math than pure logic.

The main way to develop your analytical skills, analogical reasoning and the ability to deductively come to a conclusion is to practice doing it. This is the core reason behind reading, briefing, note-taking and writing study guides and outlines. So, you may be an intuitive person, or have an outgoing personality, but neither of these indicators will determine whether or not you have been trained in reasoning. In the end, it is skill you cannot practice law without.

At www.NILAS.us, you can take a legal inventory that will help you understand the learning process and determine what kind of legal learner you are. At the NILAS site you will also learn about a more active approach to legal learning. Use the material given to you at NILAS to better understand not only what kind of learner you are, but how to approach your studying. Know thyself!

 - **Save Time, only do things once, don’t re-read a case unless you are writing a legal brief to the court.**

Law School has been the same for hundreds of years

Law School has changed only a little over the years. True we now have computers and electronic data but the time-proven methods are still largely the same. As you become more in tuned to the subtleties of legal study, some interesting trends develop. First, this is a profession deep in tradition and is also shrouded in secrecy, but it is not rocket science. Stick with the basics of reading, writing and the practice of analysis, because law was built upon the shoulders of the same education. Take courage in the fact that every Supreme Court Justice, every law student from Harvard to Hanover have the same basic education. All those who have gone before you survived, so can you.

2. Stick with the basics

There is no “secret” to law school.

- **History is filled with famous lawyers;** some of the most famous Americans had degrees in law. You have chosen a noble profession.
- **Remember, the study of law and the practice of law are not the same thing!**

The First Cornerstone of Legal Education

An assumption can be made if you are in your first year of law you are at the top of the educational food chain. Chances are that you did very well in undergraduate school, and were able to get by with little or no excessive work load. But if you were able to cut out some of the reading in undergraduate, you can't in the study of law.

3. Master the language of the law, be a master reader –

The legal profession is founded on the ability to read and understand case law.



- You have to **pass** the bar exam, **NOT** just graduate, **always keep this in mind.**



FIGURE 1 - This figure should remind you that being in law school is like being in a foreign country. When overseas, you need to learn a new custom, a new language and develop a new understanding of the culture.

Master readers only - First day of class you probably realized that legal case books are not your typical text. There are no pictures usually, and the answers don't appear clearly and concisely, you really have to dig for the answers.

To be a master reader, you have to have “legal” fluency. Just like learning a foreign language, you must have input, internalization, output of the subject material and

feedback to verify accuracy or some form of correction. During law school, this form of feedback will be self-regulated with the exception of a single final exam. To increase fluency you must read often, speak it often and write it often. When in doubt look up the meaning and remember that you may think you know the meaning.

Speak up in class. Never be afraid to ask questions and engage the professor. The risk is that you say nothing and in ignorance lose the benefit of the new language.








Briefing - The Second Cornerstone of Legal Education

To a better understanding, you have to brief the cases. While there are many methods, it is the process of briefing that is the real benefit. Briefs come in two general varieties, the **in-class** brief and the **legal brief**. The first is a tool to be used in class to de-compress the cases, understand what is going on and find the law. The second is a persuasive paper written to the court taking a position or defining the law on a subject.

4. Brief the cases, it's what lawyers do

Practicing lawyers understand the need to brief their cases before trial and during research. There is no substitute.

Try this: Format your brief (for in-class use) into 7 topical areas:

-  Case name, location and venue
-  Headliner, a quick sentence describing the case
-  Procedural Facts, how the case came to this court
-  Facts of the case that help you understand what happened or have legal effect
-  Issue (s) that the court is working out
-  Analysis of the facts to the law
-  Ruling, holdings and disposition of the case

As you read the case, make your marginal notes and develop the case with your brief in mind.

To create a great brief takes time, so practice.

Note: NILAS recommends the use of the Speed Brief, for more information contact the staff at NILAS on how to speed brief....it will save you time!

MAXIM-

Briefing creates the mental pathways needed to transport the law from the abstract to the concrete, from the passive text to an active tool of understanding

Writing - The Third Cornerstone of Legal Education

The Typical Problem-Most students don't really write enough!

To be an excellent lawyer you have to be able to write like a lawyer. Yet, one of the biggest complaints we hear is that students lack good writing skills when taking final exams or the Bar. Writing skills however don't come from just reading, you have to practice the "art" of legal writing. What better place to do this than your daily briefs. Sadly, most students give up on briefing early in the semester thinking it is a waste of time.

5. Practice writing, then practice some more

Legal writing is different than other types of writing.

Briefing creates the mental pathways needed to transport the law from the abstract to the concrete, from the passive text to an active tool of understanding. At NILAS, students learn how to use several very helpful writing techniques that help turn them into top notch writers. Remember, legal writing must be practiced, but if you practice poor writing skills, from the start you will be at a disadvantage.

One excellent way to learn how to be a great legal writer stems from reading great writing, but don't be fooled, good writing must be actually practiced. I have learned in my own law practice that being great at writing motions requires a lot of time doing it.

For the exam, the importance of practice writing cannot be over emphasized. When working with students in review sessions, I routinely realized that most students who did not have a passing grade needed more writing skills. NILAS has an excellent online writing seminar that helps you refine these skills.

How to Control your OWN time

In the big scheme of things, time control may not seem to be that critical, but this can really be a make or break issue for both the study of law and the Bar Exam.

6. Manage your time instead of being managed.

Legal students must learn to master the clock.

The clock is not your friend. Many times in law school I observed students who still had the undergraduate mind set. This mind set grows out a need to feed the darker side, the indulgent side. Don't get me wrong, I really like to play, in fact, finding time to study often interrupts my play time, but you must put the animal back in the cage to really excel in law school. Here are some excellent tips that helped me:

1. **Play to your strengths** - If you have a weakness for something, avoid it. If you are better at night, stay up late, better in the morning, get up early.
2. **Set your own schedule and don't let others barge in** – Non law students don't really understand the tremendous strain on your time, so don't give them the chance to micro-manage it!

- 3. Be realistic about how much time it will take** – Reading cases and briefing takes a bit of time. At first, when you are still at the beginning, it will take longer, but take heart! You will get faster. Create a schedule that makes sense, and then stick with it.

How to Save Time in the Future

When you are weeks into the semester, burn out is not only possible, but probable. Re-visit the basics and remember that there is a special word given to the person who graduated dead last in the class...counselor. You can do this, just remember that the easy questions are easy to answer, it is the tough questions that can trip you up. The way to save time in the future is to keep doing the basics and keep the prize in focus. If you burn out, take time out, it is better to slow down, than to get down. In the end you will save time by keeping fresh.

7. Be true to who you are, because in the end, you have to live with yourself.

A Legal education takes work, but in the end you will be a lawyer.

Finally, www.NILAS.us suggests the use of **Legal Rubrics™** to really understand the law. In law school you will have hundreds of people telling you to outline the material to really understanding the legal testing process. The NILAS approach will save you time by teaching you to place the information in your legal rubric to better understand the whole subject.

Remember working harder is good, but smarter is better