Lawrite Consulting
Legal Writing Solutions

Achieve Law School Exam Success

1. Exam success begins with understanding the challenge. For most students, that means breaking assumptions about what constitutes a well-written answer. Here, you must be skilled at spotting and analyzing complex legal issues under difficult testing conditions. These skills don't come naturally and they are rarely taught in Law School.

2. Working smart is better than working hard. That requires students to bridge the gap between doctrinal law and legal writing. It also requires the ability to consume and apply vast amounts of information. Developing these skills transforms students from passive information gatherers to self-directed problem solvers.

3. Practice testing is the most effective essay exam prep technique. There is no close second. Grades are based on how well you use the law, and practice testing trains you to spot and analyze legal issues. Begin regular practice testing by the middle of the semester. But, of course, that first requires knowledge of doctrinal law.

4. Learn doctrinal law by drafting and memorizing comprehensive, well-organized outlines. As noted above, success requires a great deal of self-directed learning. Waiting to learn the law until only weeks before exams is a recipe for disaster. Instead, take the initiative to draft basic outlines before the middle of the semester by relying on your syllabus, casebooks, lecture notes, hornbooks, and outline banks.

5. Adopt a strategy for drafting high scoring exam answers. That strategy must spot obvious and hidden issues, generate legally sound analyses, and produce answers in the structure and style expected by professors. It must work well for differing types of exam questions. Finally, the strategy must account for exam time constraints. Rely on your strategy during practice testing.

6. Consider a broad range of exam writing strategies, but do so with a critical eye. The goal is to resolve all legal issues by drafting an analysis that is logically sound and easy for the busy, skeptical professor to read. Make no mistake – spotting and analyzing issues is only the goal. It's not a strategy. Beware of advice that fails to specifically instruct you "how" to achieve exam goals.

7. Be disciplined about time management. But that advice only works if you understand the challenge of exams and have effective time management skills. Many bright students struggle because they misjudge the workload. Falling behind in Law School is not an option. Develop the skills needed to stay on schedule.

8. Maximize scoring opportunities by knowing your audience. Do your professors have a preferred or unique writing style? How long have they been teaching and what's their background? What does the structure and style of their writing look like? Do they devote equal attention to rule explanation and application? Are they impressed with policy considerations and references to prominent authorities? Effective exam prep accounts for audience expectations.

9. Respect the grading process. Professors read many exams in a relatively short period of time. It is difficult, time consuming, and mentally exhausting. Accordingly, embrace a writing style that makes it easy for them understand your analysis. Draft short paragraphs and sentences. Select vocabulary that is precise, simple, and unambiguous. Avoid legalese, wordiness, passive voice, and self-serving adjectives. Doing this within the parameters of a sound analytical structure requires practice. For most students, it also requires training.

10. Finally, be your own harshest critic. Overcoming the challenges of Law School exams requires that you honestly assess your weaknesses and be intellectually nimble enough to identify effective prep strategies. It also requires that you modify your strategy when confronted with grades that don't match your effort.

Successful law students avoid poor performance by training for exams. We all did that for the SAT, ACT, and LSAT. Law School essay exams are even more challenging. Make the effort to recognize these challenges and adapt your exam prep accordingly.

Better yet, consider enrolling in Lawrite's exam prep training, where you will discover our methodical, process-oriented, and user-friendly strategy. Visit us at www.LawriteConsulting.com to learn more about the challenges of exams, read Blog posts, view helpful Resources, or request a free consultation.