

# **Law School Basics**

An Academic Success Lecture

**UBC LAW | AT ALLARD HALL**

# Today's Lecture

- Pre-Class: reading, note-taking & briefing
- Engaging in Class
- Post-Class Review
- Time-Management & Procrastination
- Podcasts
- Print Resources



# Pre-Class: Reading



- Be sure to complete all of your readings before class.
- Active Reading – read for learning now!
  - This means making notes, selectively highlighting or underlining, and questioning the reasoning in the decision.
- Vocabulary: look up words you don't understand – online; law library dictionary; Black's Law Dictionary (pricey! iPhone app - \$50)

# Pre-Class: Notetaking and Case Briefing

- Note-taking and Case Briefing
  - Recommended: brief all cases & take notes
  - BUT: methods may change as term progresses
    - Some students find briefing every case inefficient.
  - Use your first briefs as a learning tool.
    - Compare your briefs to what your prof mentions in class – it will help you learn what details are important.



# Pre-Class: Notetaking and Case Briefing

- How to brief a case:
  - Use a consistent format to organize briefs, such as FIDA (facts, issues, decision, analysis) or IRAC (issue, rule, analysis, conclusion).
  - Ensure you have a sense of the ratio of the decision and make note of policy considerations.
  - Evaluate the decision:
    - Do you agree with reasoning in the decision?
    - What is the relevance in the context of the course?



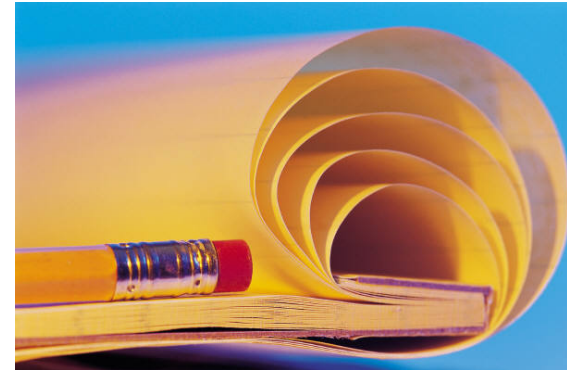
# Engaging with Class

- Attend Class: 98% of all exam issues come from classroom discussion
- Prior to class, review:
  - Notes from readings and notes from last class
  - Syllabus or table of contents to understand how class topic fits into course overall
- Avoid Zoning Out; Actively Engage with Class
  - Sit near front; stay offline; ask questions
- Hand write notes or use laptop?
- Always write down: prof's hypothetical, conclusions, and legal tests/steps to analysis



# Post-Class Review

- Review regularly to cultivate long-term memory
- Fill in missing information by:
  - Chatting with classmates; form a study group!
  - Reviewing textbooks, eg. Hogg
  - Meeting with professor
  - Rereading cases
- Start canning – compile class notes, and case reading notes into a CAN (more info in October Academic Success Lecture)



# Time Management & Procrastination

- Create a set schedule of study and downtime in order to be successful and remain caught up
- Consider where and when you study best
- Give yourself permission to procrastinate at set times
- Unwire yourself. Various programs allow you to customize the amount of time they block access to the outside world:

**Freedom** – simple productivity application that blocks all internet access for set periods of time. Mac or Windows. By Fred Stutzman – Free but not open source. <http://macfreedom.com>

**Spirited Away** – automatically hides windows you're not using anymore. Mac only. By Drikin – Free but not open source. <http://drikin.com/spiritedaway/>

**Concentrate** – allows sites, launches and quits apps, and more (but you can disable it) by Rocket Software. Mac only. Free to try, then costs, and not open source. <http://getconcentrating.com>

**RescueTime** – scheduler, timetracker, etc. Free plan, but full features are \$/mo. Not open source. Will block distractions and remind user of commitment to undistracted time. Mac or Windows. <http://www.rescuetime.com>

# Podcasts



By Professor Herb Ramy, guru of academic support in the US:

- To access the podcast open up iTunes and then search for "Suffolk University Law School." One of the folder options should be "Law School Academic Support Program".
- Example of available podcasts:
  - Succeeding in Law School
  - How Reading Strategies affect Law School Grades
  - Creating a Course Outline
  - Successfully Writing an Exam
  - The Inside Scoop on Study Groups

# Print Resources

## Books (copies in Kaila's office)

- A.C. Hutchinson, *The Law School Book: Succeeding at Law School (Canadian)*
- A.J. McClurg, *1L of a Ride: A Well-Traveled Professor's Road Map to Success in First Year Law*
- H.N. Ramy, *Succeeding in Law School*
- R.M. Fischl and J. Paul, *Getting to Maybe: How to Excel in Law School Exams*

## Handouts

- *Law School Basics*
- *Legal Vocabulary*
- *How to Focus in the Age of Distraction*
- *Effective Listening & Notetaking (optional)*

