

AILET

How to Excel in Law School as a First Year Student

Aditya Anand · 28 Oct 2020

Law school admissions are done and those who made it are gearing up for the next five years.

At the cost of sounding like Veeru Sahastrabudhe from the movie Three Idiots, it is no time to rest and the real battle begins now. Sounds overly dramatic? Think it is one of those hoaxes that are circulated to keep freshers in check? Speak with somebody who graduated recently and verify the state of affairs.

The problem that affects most freshers is that they are mostly straight out of school. The format of competing in school is nothing like College. It does not matter if you scored 40% in Physics 3 years ago. You literally study that subject in every class and might end up scoring the highest if you work hard enough.

However, in law school, if you scored the lowest in Contracts or Companies Act, it stays with you. It will be a part of your mark sheet forever and unless you turn the tides by working hard and publishing quality research work as well as intern in the same practice area, you will have a hard time finding work in that field.

However, it is also true that some students who scored low in contracts are doing well as a corporate lawyer but that happens rarely. It's not impossible, just unlikely.

Our advice?

Do not bet on luck to favour you in the future, work right now. Make your future bright from day one of law school (also enjoy college, plenty of room for both).

Here are a few things that every first-year should know and practice to get a lead early in the race.

Speak with Mentors

A mentor can be anyone. It can be your senior or your teacher, it can also be somebody who graduated recently (so that they know the current college scenario). All they have to do is tell you about the things they did wrong so that you don't repeat them and what they did right so that you can follow them.

Now don't get confused. Just because a senior studied subject X passionately and made it to a good position, you don't have to follow the subject religiously. All you have to do is learn from his passion and the steps he took to get where he is today, that too if you want to pursue the same line of work.

The idea is to know how they navigated their way, not to follow their path or join their journey (unless that is your calling, in which case follow your gut).

To avoid risking everything on one advice and the chances of it being factually wrong, we suggest you speak to multiple people. These people can be from different stages in their life.

One can be one year senior to you, others can be someone who graduated 3 years ago. This way, you get to have a varied insight.

Join LinkedIn

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and every other social media platform will have to take a backseat. You're in the big leagues now, LinkedIn is your go-to social media now (please maintain professionalism on LinkedIn at all times, even with friends).

The first thing you should do is register and then pause to think. Going berserk with connection requests might be something everyone suggests but that will not be beneficial to you as a first-year. Follow a few of your college professors and seniors who are in some way related to the area of your interest.

Take a week to understand the platform and then start sending requests but always ask whether this connection will add value to your profile. Remember, the number of connections does not mean your profile is good.

Fill out every detail and update it regularly so that if somebody stumbles upon your profile, you can make an impression.

Befriend the Library

Think about all those times you saw a law student in a movie and how she/he used to be buried in the library. Well, that was a slight exaggeration but it wasn't entirely pointless.

Being a law student is about reading a lot. It does not have to be a certain mainstream subject, it can be anything of your choice. However, there is no substitute for reading when in law school. It will not only enhance your knowledge but also make sure your vocabulary gets better, your reading speed increases, and you will write better.

Let's say you like subject A and are thinking of writing a research paper on the same. While it can be done by reading a single book and a couple of blogs, quality research comes when you compare and analyse. In order to do that, you must read the same concepts from different writers.

Long story short, reading a lot will add to your chances of being successful in this line of profession no matter which road you take.

Remember to relax and take breaks.

Focus on Academics

I cannot stress this enough.

There will be voices that will say academics does not matter. **You need to shut those voices.**

It is never a good idea to ignore academics, especially in law school. While practical skills are essential, the first step is to get the theoretical part right.

Additionally, all your scores combine to form the final CGPA at the end of five years. So, if you choose to take it easy for a couple of years, landing in the top 5% of the batch will become a distant dream.

As a student, during internship interviews or while participating in a competition (let's say moot court), a good knowledge of your subjects always comes in handy. The person on the other side may or may not expect you to know the practical know-how but they WILL definitely look forward to testing your theoretical knowledge.

Participate in Competitions

Try your hand at the co-curricular and extra-curricular competitions that take place in your college and if you feel confident, travel to different places to participate.

Not only does it brings a refreshing change to all that studying, but it also helps develop your interpersonal skills and exposes you to the outer world. A person who has a career in law should have good people skills. Even if you're an introvert who finds peace away from people, try to expose yourself to these competitions every now and then.

All the best for the coming five years of law school