

Hard-Nosed Advice  
**from a Cranky Law Professor**



# Hard-Nosed Advice from a Cranky Law Professor

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How to Succeed in Law School

*Second Edition*

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*for our Nana and Papa Joe*  
CK and LD

*for Leslie, Natalie, and Amelie*  
AP



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## INTRODUCTION

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The idea of approaching law school in a traditional manner is out of vogue. No one right way exists, or so we are told, on how to learn. Students have many different perspectives, depending on their cultural and economic background, as well as where, when, and in what order they were born. Students are often advised that the path to success changes depending on whether they are a Baby Boomer, a Tweener, a Gen X'r, or a Millennial. For many then, the way to achieve success in law school is a personal thing. Students are encouraged to do whatever they feel most comfortable with and to embrace what works for them. Each student has their own way of doing well, and every rule can be bent or broken.

This book takes a different approach. It provides no-nonsense, sometimes hard-nosed, advice that is intended to cut across generations. Students learn in different ways. However, regardless of a student's background, law professors expect specific things. A student either figures out what the professor wants, or is left behind. Doing what "is comfortable" or what "works for you" is bad advice, because when students begin law school they have no idea what works, and the first year of law school is not a comfortable experience. In short, if a student wishes to excel, there are right ways to approach law school. This book explains—hopefully in a straightforward way—what some of those ways are.

The information presented here is intended to help students understand what law professors expect of them. In a straight-talking fashion, each chapter instructs students on how to give themselves the best chance of doing well. The book covers those tasks that students commonly face in law school: from reading and briefing cases, to outlining, to preparing and taking exams, to being called on in class. The book also provides ad-

vice on success outside the classroom. In many ways, the book promotes professionalism and common sense.

This book distinguishes itself in two ways. First, many law school preparation guides are hundreds of pages long and purport to anticipate every tidbit of information an aspiring law student might wish to know, no matter how tangential. Few students read those books cover to cover, and the advice they provide is often, at best, only marginally useful. In contrast, this is a short book. It is not, and is not intended to be, an exhaustive guide to all things law school related. It attempts to be concise and to the point: an accessible book that can be read quickly and provide useful and practical advice on how to approach law school. Second, the advice that some preparation books provide suggests students succeed only by mastering some closely-guarded secret, which law professors know but conspiratorially refuse to reveal. This book rejects that sort of nonsense. Students succeed in law school not through short cuts and tricks, but through hard work. This book provides concrete advice on the fundamentals that students must master to do well.