

Expert Learning for Law Students

Expert Learning for Law Students

THIRD EDITION

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Preface

In the 10 years since the second edition of this text little has changed about the predictive value of LSAT scores and undergraduate grades; they still do not really tell you whether a particular student will succeed in law school. Some law students who have high LSAT scores and excellent undergraduate grades continue to fail out of law school. Some law students who have lower LSAT scores and lower undergraduate grades continue to graduate at or near the top of their law school classes. And some students who study incredibly hard still do poorly in law school. On the other hand, there have been a number of new developments in our understanding of learning theory and human psychology and at many law schools there have been significant changes, in teaching and curriculum, responsive to this understanding. As a result, this new edition of *Expert Learning* retains the core original materials which have helped hundreds of law students to excel in law school, and become “Expert Law Students” while reimagining the text for today’s students and classroom.

The goal of this text is to help you succeed in law school by becoming an “Expert Law Student”. Expert law students study differently. Not necessarily harder, but differently. Any law professor can spot the expert law students. These students approach their law studies with confidence, resourcefulness, diligence and planning. They are in control of their own learning, figuring out for themselves what they need to do to learn law. They know when they understand and know when they need help, and they even prepare better for meetings with their professors and ask better questions. They do better in law school than their peers, seem to have an easier time of it, and enjoy the experience more. Importantly, expert learning can be taught—which means all students have the power to become an “Expert Law Student”.

The text is organized into two parts. Part I provides background information about expert learning. It describes what expert learners do, and how it differs from other study and learning strategies. Part II focuses on specific learning strategies needed by new law students. This edition places greater emphasis on the law school learning process, helping students to understand the connection between pre-class assignments, in-class instruction and post-class study, and how these tasks relate to exam performance. This edition also includes a number of new sections, including sections devoted to developing the right mindset to improve performance, organizing information to improve exam writing, a new way of understanding the connections and differences between thinking and writing; and integrated reflection questions designed to stimulate the type of reflective learning required for significant improvement in any discipline.

This preface would not be complete without an acknowledging colleagues and students who have contributed to the development of the ideas and materials in this edition, including Rory Badahur, Lisa Blasser, Kris Franklin, Russell McClain, Corie Rosen and Erik Oh.