

CHAPTER 15 (READING ON A SCREEN):

Practice Exercises:

1. In the law school setting, in what ways are reading on a screen and reading in print similar?

Reading on a screen and reading in print both require a reader to be an engaged, active participant in the process of “creating new knowledge” through reading. The acronym E.M.P.O.W.E.R. used throughout this book is as applicable to on-screen reading as it is to print reading.

2. Before you came to law school, how often during a typical day would you check email and social networking sites?

Students' responses will vary considerably. The important thing is to be self-aware and brutally honest about how time-consuming checking in to both email and social network sites can be.

Do you expect to have to change those habits in law school or law practice? Why?

Any student who has had the luxury of having time to check email and social networking sites all day will have to carve out distinct, protected periods of time to read, focus in class, and study in an uninterrupted environment that allows him or her to delve deeply into the material at hand. Time is an invaluable asset in law school. The time that is lost when students shift back and forth among various tasks (checking email, reading a few lines, checking Facebook, reading a few more lines) can significantly interfere with a student's success. The same is true for lawyers in practice. It is smart to let people you have heretofore socialized with online know that you are starting law school (or going into a billable-hour lawyering situation) so that they can modify their expectations of you. Some lawyers find it helpful to draw a bright line between their business email and their personal email. Whether you are a practicing lawyer or a beginning law student, think about ways to monitor your use of these tools so you have time to think about law for an uninterrupted period of time.

3. This chapter references the fact that most readers continue to prefer to read important, long, or dense material in print, even if they could access it online. Why is that?

Reading online requires additional “new technology” skills (such as the ability to take notes smoothly online or to file important information found online where it can be easily retrieved). Also, many students find reading online to be physically uncomfortable for long periods of time and, hence, energy-draining. Additionally, scrolling through long documents taxes short-term memory, which exacerbates the stress that students might already feel from the pressure of studying law. Even students who have previously done a lot of online reading may find they may sometimes be able to focus better on printed documents.

4. Some people can read long or important documents as effectively on screen as they do in print. Are you one of those people? If so, what is it about your electronic reading that sets you apart? If not, what is one thing you could do to improve your electronic reading skills?

As a rule, students who are proficient at online reading are also proficient at using “new technologies.” Students interested in improving their online reading skills have many choices, ranging from attending workshops conducted by the IT team at your school, to googling for advice, to asking a friend for help discovering new technologies that would help enhance your online reading experience.

5. Do you know how to turn off the auditory alert feature for email and texts on your computer and your phone? Why might you want to turn that feature off?

To avoid interruptions and protect your thinking time. You might even consider adding an automatic reply like “I am in class” or “I am studying and will check for messages at the end of the day.”

6. Assume you are using a brand-new eBook in lieu of a traditional casebook for your Contracts class.

(a) You are reading a case about offer. In the first paragraph of that case, the court cites a case in support of its definition of offer. Should you click on the hyperlink to that supporting case? Why or why not? Should your answer always be the same?

Most of the time, you should not click on that hyperlink. Unless your teacher says otherwise, you can assume most of the time that the primary case (not those cited in it) should be the focus of your reading energy. When you are practicing law, this assumption, of course, does not always hold.

(b) Your electronic casebook contains a link to a site that contains the full, unedited Pepsico ad that is the subject of *Leonardo v. Pepsico*, the case you are reading (also appearing in this book in the exercises to Chapter 12). Should you click on the link to that ad? Why or why not?

Clicking on the link to the ad could be a distraction (in which case you should not do it), or it could be a valuable contextual clue to help bring the case to life for you (and wake you up, too!). If you decide to click on the link, only stay as long as it is motivating and informative. Return as quickly as possible to the edited case in your casebook

7. Why might you need to take more frequent breaks if you are reading on a screen than if you are reading a printed document?

Studies show that reading on a screen can cause eye strain and muscle fatigue. Physicians recommend that you take a break from on-screen reading every twenty minutes or so, focusing on something in the distance to rest your eyes. (You can think of this break as the 20/20/20 rule: Break every 20 minutes to look at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds or more.). Taking that time will increase the energy you have when you return to the reading task.

