

Guide for studying, making outlines and taking law school exams.

Law School Survival guide

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# **LAW SCHOOL SURVIVAL GUIDE**

## Introduction

So, here we are! You have spent, or are thinking of spending, about 10 bucks for this book, and I begin by telling you what it's for—what I hope to achieve.

For me, entering law school was both an exciting and a frightening time. The style of teaching was unlike anything I was accustomed to—and this was my **third** college degree, so I considered myself an expert.

Then too, the advice I had been given by other lawyers was incomprehensible:

“Don't forget the forest for studying the trees.”

What does that **mean**? I understand this phrase in a general sense—don't lose sight of the overall picture for studying the details—but how can I possibly **apply** such cryptic advice to law school?

Well, lucky enough I figured law school out **before** writing exams and here I hope to provide you with some advice that is more useful. What follows are practical tips for how to study,

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what you are supposed to learn from your classes, how to use outlining effectively, and how to present answers in an exam to the satisfaction of your Professors.



*LAW SCHOOL SURVIVAL GUIDE*

You won't learn much **law** from this little book. You **will** learn how to study and apply the law in what Professors consider the customary manner. I will give you some pointers, though, on good places for learning black letter law.<sup>1</sup>

The best time to read this book is about 3-4 weeks after you have started law school, but well before the Thanksgiving break. If you are reading this before law school has begun—that's fine—but please promise me you will reread it after you have been in class a few weeks. It will be more meaningful to you after you have some experience with classes, case law and the Socratic method.

Good luck, have fun, and remember that law school is a marathon, not a sprint, so get plenty of exercise, keep up a good attitude, and share.

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<sup>1</sup> What kind of law book would this be without a footnote? "Black letter law" is a fancy term for "the rules." I promise to never use a footnote again in this treatise. While I'm at it, I promise not to use silly words like "treatise" either. If you catch me at it, please send me a handwritten complaint on the back of a ten-dollar bill (a dollar bill will do if you are paying for school all by yourself).

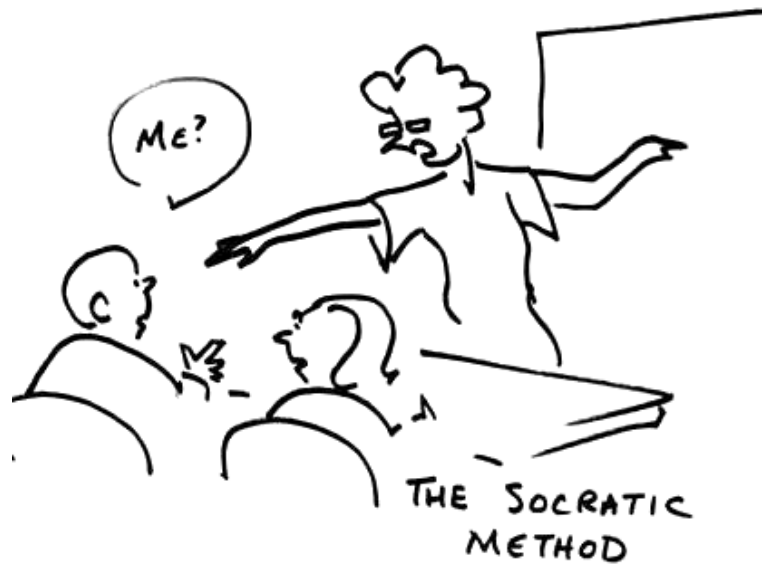


## 1. The Socratic Method: What Is It?

The Socratic method is a style of teaching whereby the teacher does not **explain** any rules to the class, but rather asks a series of **questions** and allows each student to gradually perceive the rules from the various answers. Each subsequent question is similar to the one before it, but the fact pattern differs in some slight respect. In this way, the student is led to explore the boundaries of a given rule, and even the rationale for the rule.

No explanation will suffice, however. To know the Socratic method, you must experience it. With any luck, your law school will have an introductory class during orientation to give you a feel for this style of teaching. If not, you will encounter it first-hand soon enough because many first-year Professors teach, at least partially, in the Socratic way.

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