



THE BEST WAY TO PREPARE
FOR LAW SCHOOL?

RELAX



Congratulations are in order. You've made your decision about where you'll be starting law school in the fall. Now what?

At Temple Law School, the question of how to spend your summer before law school comes up all the time. Nobody wants to start their law school career on the wrong foot.

While there are plenty of ways to prepare for law school, the best method may be doing nothing. Don't believe us? We asked some of our best first-year faculty members to chime in with their best summer advice, and there's a common theme to their answers. So sit back, relax, and get ready to succeed.

Margaret "Meg" deGuzman
Associate Professor of Law



I think it's useful to think of the first semester of law school as a trip to a new place where you know only a little bit of the language and a few people (if any). It will be exciting and take up most of your time and energy, both physical and psychological. To prepare, it is useful to do a few things.

First, it's a good idea to put your affairs in order. Get your house organized, your doctors' appointments done, and reconnect with that friend you have been meaning to call. I always feel better embarking on a journey when I know things are organized at home. Second, do whatever will make you feel relaxed and prepared for your first day. For some people this means reading a bunch of books on what law school will be like. For me, it meant spending time relaxing and hanging out with family and friends in the weeks before school started. I don't recommend studying. You will have plenty of that to do once you get to law school and anything you would do beforehand will likely not be sufficiently tailored to your courses to be useful.

Finally, I suggest putting in place some strategies for making sure you are able to relax if you find the first semester stressful, as many law students do. I am a big fan of a regular meditation/yoga practice for this purpose. For others, going to the gym, gardening, or doing some creative activity helps to center them and keep their mind from worrying. Having something you do other than study (and preferably with people who are not themselves thinking/worrying about law school) is important to many first semester law students. So if you don't do something regularly that you find relaxing and centering, this summer is a good time to start!

Craig Green

James E. Beasley Professor of Law



Take the summer to relax and get poised for the large efforts that will arrive all too soon. Law school can be wonderful, engaging, and fun; but it's also one of the most difficult and demanding academic endeavors anyone can experience. Some prospective students think they can "get a head start" on law school, but for most folks, it's even more important to arrive fresh and ready to work. Your professors will have plenty of materials ready for you on arrival, and if you could choose between one hour of self-directed legal study before law school versus one hour of professor-assigned work during law school, the latter is going to be much more helpful. To put things simply: play at home over the summer, so you're ready to work hard at school when it comes.

Second, if someone really does want something to do, I'd recommend starting to read a little bit about law, especially about its historical context. What to read?

Where to begin? I'd start

with your existing interests. Maybe you like immigration issues, or racial equality, or criminal justice, or global warming, or international trade. Maybe you'd like to know more about the eighteenth-century Constitutional Framers, or the 1960s civil rights movement, or global feminism, or the United Nations. Or maybe you're curious about the Supreme Court and some of its most famous justices or cases. There are far more books on any of these topics than any law student should read -- which is another way to say that there's no one book or set of books that's authoritative or comprehensive.

Start anywhere you like, but know that no start will definitely be The Final Truth. A very different, more eclectic approach is to read newspapers or magazines, find a topic you like, and follow up from there.

"Some prospective students think they can "get a head start" on law school, but for most folks, it's even more important to arrive fresh and ready to work."

Kristen Murray
Associate Professor of Law



What should you do this summer? My short answer to this question is “Relax!” You have a big year ahead of you, and once you get here, Temple Law has lots of programs and resources that will set you up for a successful first year.

Almost no incoming law student accepts my short answer, though, so here’s my longer answer: “Relax, in a way that helps you develop good habits that will serve you well once school starts.”

Read that best-seller you’ve had your eye on, because it will prime you for your class reading assignments. Get on a regular exercise schedule, because good health and stress release are of enormous value to any 1L, and fitting these important things into your weekly schedule will get you thinking about time management (a critical skill for a busy law student). Binge-watch “Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt” because it’s hilarious and has (almost) nothing to do with the law; once you start classes, you will see potential legal issues everywhere.

In short, find the things that help you relax and decompress and remember them once the academic year starts!

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Jaya Ramji-Nogales

Professor of Law



How can you best prepare for the unexpected journey that is the first year of law school? As I am fond of telling my students, law school is a marathon, not a sprint. In order to achieve your own personal optimum performance as a law student and a lawyer, you need to get serious about taking care of yourself. Marathons are not won on two hours of sleep and a Big Mac. Now is the time to develop good habits in four important areas: eating, sleeping, exercising, and relaxing.

Over the summer, you should take stock of your eating habits, and figure out how you can maximize nutrition when you are short on time. Brains are powered by healthy food; if it comes from a vending machine, it can't be classified as "dinner."

If, like me, you are not a good sleeper, think about virtuous habits you can put into place to make it more likely that you will sleep well. Limit caffeine intake after 4pm, keep your sleep and work spaces separate, drink lots of water – you know the drill.

Exercising is key both for good sleeping and for managing the law school workload without turning into a growling ogre. Find a great running trail and a running buddy; sign up for a gym or yoga classes and practice actually going; download the 7-minute workout app, if that's what it takes to ensure you will carve out the time to exercise over the course of the semester.

Perhaps most importantly, figure out what it is that you enjoy so much that it takes your mind off everything else – spending time with friends and family, going to a museum, listening to live music, eating John's water ice, etc. Be serious about maintaining those habits now and they will carry you through the semester. Just before the semester starts, do whatever it is that will make you most relaxed – read some good fiction, head down the shore and get some sand between your toes, hang out with people who make you laugh, maybe do all three at the same time! – and start that marathon with the right foot forward.

LOOKING FOR MORE ADVICE?

Our Admitted Students page contains over 25 summer reading suggestions by members of the Temple Law Faculty. From Supreme Court Justice auto-biographies to books for the data obsessed, there is something for everyone on the list. Find your next summer read at: <http://bit.ly/TlawSummerReading>

(Just promise us you'll read it on the beach, ok?)