

# JURISMAR



coaching services for legal professionals  
**1-888-582-4072**

## **Survival Tips for One Ls A (Somewhat) Lighthearted Guide**

By Linda Tancs

So, you're about to embark on a journey into what English jurist Edward Coke once called "the gladsome light of Jurisprudence." Congratulations! For those of you who've read Scott Turow's *One L* or seen *The Paper Chase*, you know the hard part is just beginning. For the uninitiated, remember these rules for survival.

### ***Rule #1: Don't Compare Yourself with Others***

People come into law from all walks of life: recent college grads, accountants, doctors, property managers, business owners, and so on. Some classmates will boast of a long family history of law graduates. Other classmates might have even studied constitutional law as far back as high school. The point is this: don't sweat the small stuff. Someone will always be smarter, quicker, better dressed, better connected, you name it. Rely on your inner strength and remember what makes you unique. Let the rest size each other up. You've got better things to do—like follow Rule #2.

## ***Rule #2: Buy the Hornbooks***

What are hornbooks, you ask? These tomes are your law-related equivalent to CliffsNotes,<sup>®</sup> those handy guides that helped you decipher King Lear—or was it calculus? Of course you'll bust your book budget buying these things, but you'll be glad you did when it's 1 a.m. and you're trying to absorb the nuances of the Erie doctrine in case you're called on in the morning to recite the case, which brings me to Rule #3.

## ***Rule #3: Answer the Question***

There is no privilege against self-incrimination in a first-year law class. If you didn't read the case, or you don't know the answer, take your lumps and just say so. Or better yet—guess! Woe begets the student who dares to utter the words "I pass" in a first-year class. This action will be met undoubtedly with an icy stare likely to be followed by much bellowing and—perish the thought—early dismissal from class. Save your passes for the upper classes.

## ***Rule #4: Manage the Paper Chase***

Yes, it really is a paper chase. During your first year you will contribute to more deforestation than other groups of citizens are able to do in a lifetime. The only environmentally sound thing to do now is to recycle. So how do you part with these various and sundry hand-outs, assignments, charts, graphs, notes and summaries? The answer is: outline. Read and synthesize the information as you move along. When it's all in one place, you'll remember it better, even if it takes some time to get it together. As A.A. Milne said, "organizing is what you do before you do something, so that when you do it, it is not all mixed up." My sentiments exactly. There are shortcuts to doing this. See Rule #5.

## ***Rule #5: Locate the Outline Keepers***

The wise ones waste no time locating 2Ls or 3Ls (or graduates) with great outlines. Eventually, word leaks out. You can seek out these outline keepers yourself or befriend those already in possession of the documents. If you're lucky, one of your own friends (or relatives) will convey this prized asset to you. Sharing is caring, which leads to the next rule.

### ***Rule #6: Be Sociable***

No doubt you've heard it said that the law is a jealous mistress. It's true, but don't give up on life as you knew it. The scales of Lady Justice are balanced—you must be, too. Make time for the people and pleasures you enjoyed before becoming a 1L. Otherwise, you'll lose yourself to the madness that surrounds you. As writer John Updike put it, "to be sane is, to a great extent, to be sociable." You might stay sane by joining a study group, but don't fall prey to the theory that you can't succeed without one. There is no empirical evidence to support this notion. If you'd rather study on your own terms, then do it. Remember Rule #1.

### ***Rule #7: There's More Than One Right Answer***

Remember, law school teaches you "how" to think, not "what" to think. You'll find that the correct answer to most questions is "it depends." This isn't science class, doctrines notwithstanding. Learn to appreciate the shades of gray.

Now consider yourself armed with the necessary rules for the game of life as 1Ls know it, and enjoy the ride.