

Law School Study Aids

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Many law students use study aids at some point during their law school education.Â Study aids are materials other than your casebook that help explain the law.Â Study aids often provide plain English explanations and useful examples.Â However, study aids are not a substitute for the course casebook, other required reading material, or your hard work.

A study aid can be especially useful to double-check your understanding of a topic or to update and assist you in the preparation of your course outlines.

The following is a brief listing and description of various study aids used by law students:

LAW SCHOOL STUDY AIDS

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Student Prepared Course Outlines:Â Legalnut offers law students a way to share their self-prepared outlines with other law students by uploading their outlines on Legalnutâ€™s database.Â Check out Legalnutâ€™s database of FREE Course Outlines.Â Student prepared outlines are an excellent way to get started studying for a course or check to see if your outlines are complete.Â

The benefit of using Legalnutâ€™s FREE Course Outlines page is that we organize student prepared course outlines by date, university, and professor.Â By doing this, law students can get a course and professor specific outlines to aid in their own outline preparation.Â Â

Based on Legalnutâ€™s experience, law students in their second and third year tend to draft better course outlines because they have more experience in defining the black-letter-law, pin-pointing case issues for analysis, and developing arguments and conclusions.Â Therefore, check out Legalnutâ€™s outline bank to see which outline will help you the best.Â Â Â

Commercial Outlines: Just about every law student will create his own course outline. These commercial outlines can be helpful in laying out the black-letter law and giving you rules to memorize.

The problem with commercial outlines is that some students use them in place of reading their casebook or in place of preparing their own self-prepared course outline. These outlines are intended to supplement your work, not replace it. Also, some law school professors will allow you to bring in a self-prepared course outline to the final exam. Therefore, if you didn't create your own outline during the course of the year, you will be prohibited from using a commercial outline on exam day.

The best-known commercial outlines are Gilberts and Emanuel. Some other commercial outlines are Roadmap (by Aspen), which contains both a "capsule" summary of the law, with examples and hypotheticals, exam tips and sample questions and Crunchtime (by Emanuel) which has capsule summaries, flowcharts, exam tips and sample questions.

Canned Briefs: Think of Canned Briefs as Cliff's Notes version for law school subjects. The popular Canned Briefs are Legalines and Casenotes: Legal Briefs. Canned briefs can't be used as a substitute for reading the cases in preparation for class.

Hornbooks: Hornbooks provide detailed and annotated black letter law to help you with class preparation. A hornbook may read like an undergraduate class book. Hornbooks usually go into great detail explaining the reasoning behind a series of cases. Please note, that while a hornbook provides detailed explanation of the law, it will not lead you to the correct answer Socratically.

The problem with hornbooks is that they are big (which means they are heavy to carry around) and expensive. Some students automatically purchase hornbooks at the beginning each semester and rarely use them during the semester. It's best to sit through the first few weeks of a course and then determine whether you should buy a hornbook from the bookstore, or you can save yourself money and buy it used through LegalNut's Buy/Sell Page.

Nutshell Series Books: A Nutshell can be thought of as mini hornbook. West Publishing Company publishes Nutshell Series. Nutshells are little paperback books that explain the law in a condensed format. Because Nutshells are small, they are not as detailed as the hornbooks.

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Examples and Explanations by Aspen Law & Business:

These are good tools that give a brief explanation of the law with sample questions and model answers. However, the model answers are usually not in the proper law school essay writing style (i.e. Issue, Rule, Application, and Conclusion - IRAC). See LegalNut's Page on how to write an essay.

CALIs: CALI is short for Computer-Assisted Legal Instruction. This is an interactive computer exercise and question program, which test your knowledge of the material and help improve your test-taking skills. The CALI lessons provide interactive exercises whereby you enter responses to questions based on fact patterns and receive an instantaneous evaluation of your answer as well as prompts that guide you to the "right" answer. CALIs are often offered in the law

school library.Â