

ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

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TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE STUDY HABITS

Time management and study skills work together. The key to success in law school is to put the proper effort into studying. You must treat your study time as if it were a job. As a general rule, you should spend three (3) hours of study for every hour of class per week. This equates to approximately forty-five hours per week.

During your three hours of study you should read and brief the assigned materials. Reading is important because this is the way you are introduced to the materials for learning purposes. Reading, however, is a passive style of learning. Briefing is important because it allows you to learn the material by writing the information. This is an active style of learning and should not be disregarded. The active style of learning helps you to obtain a more in depth understanding of the material. You should study for a consistent 45 minute block and then take a 10 minute break. During this break, reward yourself (walk, play a video game, get refreshments) but be certain to limit the reward to a 10 minute time period.

Take the time to take notes during class. Prior to or in the first week of the semester you should type the table of contents of your course book and compare it to your syllabus. Add parts of your syllabus to the table of contents. This will be your skeleton outline. Take this outline to class and insert class notes in the relevant topic areas. Be certain to include important information given to you during the professor's lecture. In other words, do not limit your notes to lecture information given on the cases alone.

You should review and update your outlines over the weekend. The weekend should not be used as days to catch up because it can cause you to easily fall behind. The key is to treat your study time as you would a job. Consistently follow your schedule. Take needed breaks. Be effective in your approach, i.e., use both passive (reading) and active (writing) methods of learning. Remember you will get out of this experience what you put into it. Time is of the essence. Use your time wisely ---- you will obtain successful results in your law school studies and optimum results on your exams.