

Tips for Students from Students

ARE READINGS REALLY NECESSARY?

As a wise law student once said, "it depends."

By: Saranjit Dhindsa,

University of Calgary, Faculty of Law, 3L

For first years, it truly depends on the course and the

course content. If you're in contracts or property law, where many of the cases are written in "Olde English," then it's better to look to a CAN or Framework provided by an upper year, or to find the case summary online. There's nothing to be gained by reading and re-reading a case when you don't even understand the facts. But when it comes to recent cases in areas like Constitutional or Criminal law, then it's 100% worth reading the case and any other content assigned. This is because you will learn to follow the "logic" of the courts when making decisions. Completing readings will also help you become better at issue spotting – which is usually what mid-terms and finals in 1L are focused on.

Overall, you want to do readings enough that you can spot the issues before you even get to the part where they outline them. This is an indicator that you know enough to notice areas of concern and points of contention. You also want to be at a point where, when you are reading a court's decision, you can understand why they have made a specific determination. The best way to simplify it is to use the following equation:



[can spot the issues via the facts] + [can understand and follow court's logic] = you don't need to do the readings.

Once you reach this point, a skim or even just using case summaries or old CANs and Frameworks is sufficient. If you're not at this point, continue to do the readings, and use the above-mentioned tools as a crutch, to supplement you on your journey. Additionally, for some classes, doing the readings and understanding them isn't sufficient. Rather, you also need to know how to use them to inform your own analysis of a fact pattern. **So even if you're comfortable with skipping readings (and even if you're not) ALWAYS DO PRACTICE QUESTIONS – those are the only way to truly determine if you know what you're doing in a class.**

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