

## TIPS FOR STUDENTS FROM STUDENTS

# Five Things I Would Tell My First Year Self

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### **Prioritize finding what works for you instead of replicating what others are doing.**

My first bit of advice goes to having confidence in yourself and fighting imposter syndrome. It can be overwhelming to see other students using study strategies that seem specific and meticulous, especially if these are strategies that you have never seen or thought of. It is easy to get caught up in feeling that your approach to law school is inadequate or unrefined when you're just beginning this journey. When this happens, instead of rushing towards self-doubt and forcing yourself to replicate what others seem to be successful, I would really encourage you to look at your approach to school and first consider what is working for you and what isn't. Then, retain the strategies that have proven to fit your needs, discard those that haven't served you well, and seek alternatives to supplement your approach.

### **The other aspects of your life are just as important as school.**

My second piece of advice goes to seeking balance in your life, which will translate to greater success in all areas including school. By meaningfully investing in parts of your life beyond academics, you will avoid burning yourself out and feeling negative about school because it feels all consuming. To the contrary, fostering balance in your life will allow you to experience the highs and lows of first year law school without feeling that every aspect of your life hinges on what is happening in school at that moment, including grades.



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This is obviously different for everyone but can include meaningful relationships with friends, family, or your partner, as well as keeping up with hobbies, sports, or other activities that bring you joy. Each of these will also form the support system needed to lift you up during some of the more challenging times of first year.

### **Lean on your Community Supports**

This brings me to my third point of advice. Your support system exists for a reason: to support you. Law schools often offer an array of support services for mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical wellness. Although these can sometimes be challenging to find and access, pursue the services that you know will be most beneficial to you.

This support system also includes the relationships and communities in your life. Much of the support I have received has come from communities I have fostered through law school. For example, when I am struggling with something academic or personally, I often find support in connections I've made through school clubs, group work projects, or intramural sports. Communities that you build while in law school are unique in that they know and understand the experiences of law school and are often most able to provide support. That said, support systems outside of law school are also able to bring valuable external perspectives.

### **Don't Second Guess Yourself**

Law school is constantly presenting new and incredible opportunities. This will lead to some tough decision making about what school experience you are looking for and what career path you hope to pursue. Many of these decisions will have no right answer, which reflects how great your options are, but can be challenging to navigate. This could include course selection, co-op or work terms, study abroad, campus clubs and volunteer opportunities. When these decisions present themselves, trust your instincts in pursuing the path that is best for you, rather than being influenced by what you or others think is the typical or correct choice for a law student. Consider how a given outcome will impact

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your future and explore sources to inform your decision, but do so with what is most important to you in your mind's eye, rather than external pressures or comparisons to others.

### Be Kind to Yourself

At the end of the day, what matters most in your law school experience is feeling fulfilled and positive about the path you are on.

Being kind to yourself means being honest with yourself about your learning strategies, what you need to be successful, and what will best serve you in the future. Giving yourself the space to navigate these is key to making your law school experience as positive as it can be. Overall, try not to be intimidated by what you think the “normal law path” might be. Trust your instincts and embrace what is best for you!

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