

# Do's & Don'ts of Exam Taking



- Do's:**
- Get a full night of sleep and eat before the exam.
  - Arrive early and give yourself time to set up before the test.
  - If you are easily distracted, consider bringing ear plugs with you and sit near the front of the room.
  - When you first get your test, skim the entire exam looking for time allocations. Quickly jot down the times when you should be finished with each question. Make sure to stick to the suggested times (or your own time estimates) for each question.
  - Check the call of the question before reading the entire fact pattern.
  - Read the question twice before writing. Make sure to read actively — underline or star important sections of the facts and legal issues that you need address in your answer. Organize your answer before you write it by making a quick outline or list of the issues and parties.
  - Pay attention to dates, odd facts, and relationships between the parties. These usually signify important issues or claims.
  - Use headings to organize your answer. Depending on the question, you can organize your answer by parties, claims, or the specific call of the question.
  - Use a concise IRAC approach for issue spotter questions: Identify the issue first; articulate the Rule of law; Apply the rule by explaining the main argument, opposing argument, and rebuttal; then Conclude by stating who will win and why.
  - **Make sure to apply the rules to the facts.** Use the names, locations, and specifics mentioned in your fact patterns. The "A" in IRAC is usually the most important part of your answer.
  - Argue both sides of an issue (counter-analysis) unless the professor or call of the question says otherwise.
  - If the question calls for it, include relevant policy arguments, exceptions, Uniform Codes/Restatements, etc.
  - Keep an eye on the clock. If you find that you are running out of time on a question, write down a brief outline of the issues that you are not able to cover.
  - Take a break after completing an exam and before you start to study for the next one.

- Don'ts:**
- Make up facts or discuss law not raised by the fact pattern.
  - Begin writing in a panic before you have processed the question and organized an answer.
  - Write in one long impenetrable paragraph.
  - Use shorthand or abbreviations unfamiliar to the reader.
  - Recite the fact pattern in your answer. Use the facts as part of your analysis, but don't waste time rewriting the facts in an introductory paragraph.
  - Assume that your reader knows anything about the law.
  - Make conclusions without doing a complete step-by-step analysis for the reader.
  - Spend too much time on one question to the detriment of answering other questions.
  - Post-mortem exams with your classmates!