



TOP 5 MISTAKES THAT TANK IL GRADES

for 1Ls targeting Big Law



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

After graduating UC Berkeley's Boalt Hall, Franklin began innovating the path 1L's take to earn top grades. A pioneer in the industry, he developed a strategic system that focuses his clients on exam performance at all stages of the 1L semester.

Franklin's greatest joys are end of semester phone calls from students that have aced classes, were accepted as transfer students to better law schools, negotiated full scholarships after 1L, or landed several Big Law offers during on-campus interviews.

FRANKLIN SIMS

HERE'S MY TOP 5!

AFTER CHRISTMAS BREAK A SURGE OF ILS CONTACT ME TO HELP LIFT THEM OUT OF ACADEMIC PROBATION OR MEDIOCRE GRADES. HERE ARE THE TOP 5 MISTAKES THEY MADE.



#1 TOO NAIVE ABOUT LAW SCHOOL

Law schools aren't neutral institutions—they're gatekeepers. With exclusive control over entry to the legal profession, they have no real incentive to create fair or supportive learning environments. Their primary obligation isn't to students, but to the legal industry—to law firms and the judiciary who rely on them to filter and identify high performers under pressure. That's why the system is structured to deliberately withhold exam-specific preparation to test which students can independently master the material.

The sooner you understand the real incentives driving legal education, the sooner you can stop relying on the law school's self-serving academic success advice and start making strategic academic choices that serve your goals—not the school's agenda.

#2 NOT UNDERSTANDING THE STAKES

Only your 1L grades will determine your access to elite career opportunities. Your law school is the gatekeeper between you and top law firms. If your grades aren't high enough they won't even let you interview with elite firms and won't recommend you to top judges. This is why 1L is when you know the least but face the most risk.

#3 CONTROL THE CLOCK

Law school fills your calendar with tasks: reading and briefing cases, attending lectures, taking notes, completing legal writing assignments, outlining, and eventually taking exams. These activities feel productive, but here's the trap: none of them actually prepare you to perform on the final. Without consistent practice exams and feedback you're rehearsing law school, not playing to win it. If you let the school dictate your time, you'll stay busy but unprepared. Top students take control of the clock early, building in time for practice exams so they're not just working hard, they're working smart.

#4 LEVERAGE THE RIGHT RESOURCES EARLY

Not all 1L resources are created equal—timing is everything. Tools like Quimbee or commercial briefs, are widely available and should be used early to accelerate comprehension. But remember, they're only effective if they sharpen your thinking, not if they replace it. More powerful, however, are resources like outlines, notes, and especially past exams from students who had your exact professors. These insider tools are invaluable blueprints. Don't wait. The students who succeed are the ones who start gathering these resources from day one.

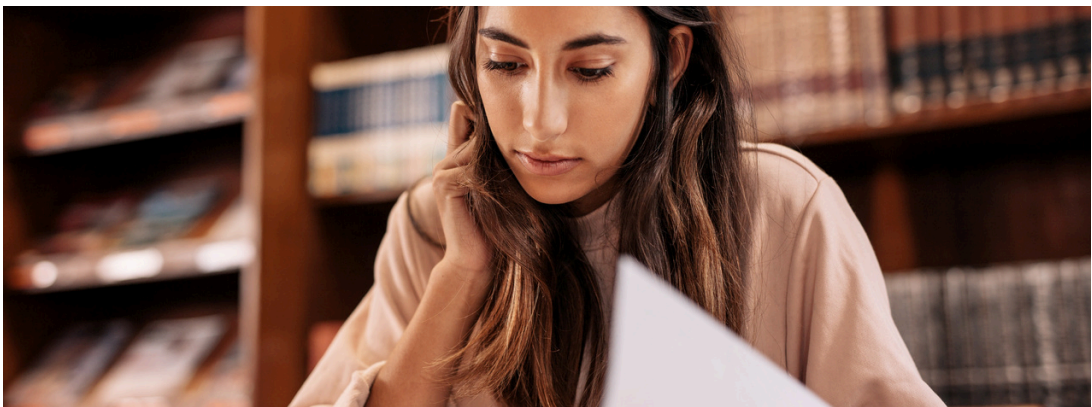


#5 WRONG EXPECTATION FOR PROFESSORS

Most 1Ls assume their professors will guide them through the material like traditional teachers. They won't. Law school demands self-teaching—professors are there to filter you, not teach you. The most successful students treat lectures as review, not instruction, and use their professors for what they're truly valuable for: mentorship and access to the legal network. Waiting for your professor to teach a topic is a losing game—by the end of the semester, the pace doubles and the volume spikes. Use the slower weeks early on to get ahead while others are just settling in. That's how top performers stay ahead—and stay there.

PRO TIP

On a law school exam, flattery will get you everywhere. Most professors are intellectuals. They love ideas and nuances. It is in your best interest to organize the types of policy considerations they mentioned in class into a specific section of the outline you will study from. I actually have my private clients create an outline that connects these policy considerations right beside the rule elements they most relate to. However you go about it, be sure that on any exam answer, you sprinkle your professor's policy interest into your response and increase the points you're awarded.





FREE ONE-HOUR SESSION

You've got questions about how to best approach your 1L doctrinal courses and Franklin has the answers. Book a free one hour session now and cover any and everything from how best to read cases, brief cases, outline for top exam performance, what resources to use and how to use them or what exactly to do in a course with a problem professor.

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