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## Tips for L1

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## Tips for L1

**Law school is an incredible adventure. It can also be overwhelming. Luckily, there are thousands of people who have made it through.**



By [Heather Donkers](#)

**OPINION** 24 Sep 2018 / [Share](#)

You have finished your first few weeks of 1L. You have finally figured out in which rooms your classes are (maybe) and memorized some of your classmates' names. You may have also started buying food instead of bringing your lunch to school much to the chagrin of your line of credit, signed up for a few too many clubs (best place for free food!) and are confused as to which area of the law you like (or hate) the most.

More than anything, you are excited for what is ahead. Scared, but excited. And so you should be. Law school is an incredible adventure. It can also be overwhelming. Luckily, there are thousands of people who have made it through.



Take Ava Williams, for example. Ava is an articling student and recent grad from Western Law. Her best advice is that you should “give yourself permission to mess up” in law school. These years are meant for making mistakes and learning from them; better now than any other time in your career.

When entering law school, for almost everyone, the learning curve is steep. But articling student and recent University of Ottawa grad Jolene Hansell says that the “B curve will save you, more often than not.”

And, if you do not get the grade you wanted, “meet with your professors and get feedback,” says Rick Frank, who is in his final year at Osgoode Hall Law School.



Do not get lost in what can sometimes be the “hyper-competitive environment of law school,” says Yadesha Satheaswaran, a 3L at Osgoode.

“Be kind,” she says, “because the legal community is small, and your classmates will become your future colleagues.”

Take the energy that you would otherwise use on worrying about what others are doing and “use it toward your own studies and passions instead,” says Sara Little, who is in her second year at Windsor Law.

And remember, everyone having different goals and study techniques is what “ultimately makes the legal field so diverse and interesting,” according to the Manitoba Law Students’ Association.



Marcela Ahumada, who is in her last year at Osgoode, opened up about learning to trust your colleagues — and yourself — in law school.

“The first time after a group study session,” she says, “I went home in tears because I didn’t understand a concept they were really comfortable with. But when the issue my study partners helped me with was on my exam, I realized why studying in a group was so beneficial.”

Rebekah Ferriss, a 2L at Western, quips that “a little kindness can go a long way” in forming these connections that will ultimately help you.

Sometimes, it will feel like law school is swallowing you. Maybe you have let your readings pile up or do not know where to start with an assignment.

Even if you “should have done it yesterday or a week ago or maybe a month ago, the second-best time to start it is right now,” says Sam Jowett, a 3L at Osgoode.



Cassandra Jarvis, also a 3L at Osgoode, suggests dividing the work among your friends. In 1L, she and her friends each picked a class for which they wrote a master summary and shared their notes with each other.

"You're better off for each other's learning," says Jarvis, "and this also helps ease the workload, so you have time for extra-curriculars and self-care."

On the topic of self-care, Chloe Hendrie, in her final year at Osgoode, says that while it is important to work hard in law school, "it is equally important to take breaks while studying." She suggests that anything from an extra-long lunch break to going to the gym or taking a nap can help.

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"Take this time to get out of your comfort zone and find out what it is

you are truly interested in,” says Jessica Karjanmaa, a 3L at Osgoode.

Finding a new passion can make the workload seem much less daunting — and make it feel much less like work.

As I look back on what will soon be three years of law school, it is not difficult to remember that overwhelming feeling during the first few weeks that I did not belong; that somehow, the law school made a mistake and that soon they would discover they gave an offer to the wrong person. I still feel that way sometimes. My friend, Laura Brown, says, “To battle imposter syndrome, I found it most helpful to talk about my worries to a close friend outside the law school bubble. They provided a safe space and the reinforcement I needed to remember why I belonged in law school.”

And what is my best advice? Well, that is the only easy question I have had to answer in law school.

A group of friends, like the ones who helped me with this article, are your best asset. My law school friends have become like family to me — a family who will celebrate your wins and mourn your losses with you. And the best part is: They understand you deeply, because they are going through it, too.



I am always humbled — yet never surprised — at how many law students jump at the opportunity to share everything from advice, notes or a snack to the couch in their apartment. The people you meet in law school are the people you will share this profession with for decades to come. Be courteous, be professional, but also be open. Be open to the possibility of developing lifelong connections. Be open to everything that law school has to offer.

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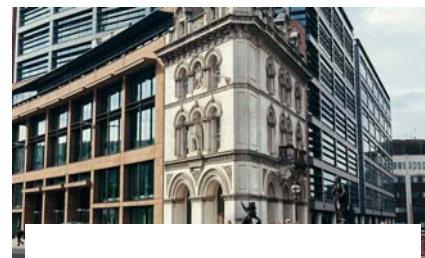
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