

## How To: Succeed in 1L

# SERENA

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Starting law school can feel overwhelming. When I began at just 19, coming straight from CEGEP, I felt unprepared and anxious, uncertain about the challenges ahead. My first instinct was to seek out older students for advice and tips on succeeding in school and excelling in class. I soaked up their guidance eagerly, but over time, it left me feeling even more stressed. I soon realized that what worked for them didn't necessarily suit me. That insight prompted a shift in perspective: rather than



simply following their advice, I adapted it to fit my own needs. Through trial and error, I gradually discovered what helped me feel comfortable and prepared for classes and exams. The process took time—even now, in 4L, I'm still learning and adjusting. With that in mind, here's the best advice I can offer.

### **STAY ORGANIZED.**

Staying organized with important dates and deadlines depends on my agenda and wall calendar. I track assignments, meetings, classes, and daily tasks so I can clearly see how my week looks. Planning each day reduces stress and helps me stay productive. I also color-code my notes to focus on cases, legal sections, delays, etc. For example, exceptions are marked in red. During an exam, if I am not certain or aware of an exception, I'll look for the colour. Finally, highlighting in yellow and circling key words helps me read carefully and better understand the material.

### **CHALLENGE YOURSELF.**

Throughout your academic journey, you will encounter a variety of assignments. Developing strong research skills early is crucial, so use each opportunity to get comfortable with different legal search engines. I have consistently used LexisNexis, which has transformed significantly over the years. Despite its evolution, LexisNexis has maintained a user-friendly and organized interface, making it simple to find cases and legal doctrines.

Lexis+ has become an indispensable resource for me—my go-to for legal research, case studies, and highlighting important case summaries and legal principles. While research assignments in law school may seem minor, they play a vital role in preparing you for the demands of law firm work and everyday legal practice. Embrace these assignments now and use them to refine your skills, even if it means learning through trial and error.

### **FIND TIME FOR YOURSELF AND KEEP GOING.**

Remember to breathe, take breaks, and find time for your mental health. During your free time, do things that make you happy, whether that be working out, surrounding yourself with friends, or joining clubs. Often, in times of stress, we

forget to do basic tasks such as drinking water, eating, or resting. However, it's important to nourish your mind and body. The key is finding the right balance between spare time and education. Law school is challenging. But discovering new hobbies, meeting new people, or taking a moment for ourselves allows us to reset and keep pushing forward.

*"Each person's law school journey is unique. It's so important to discover the path that best fits you!"*

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