Taking Law School Exams – Quick Summary

1. **Read the question at least 3 times**
   a. Begin with the call of the question (what are they asking you to do). Read it three times.
   b. Read the fact pattern actively:
      i. Identify the sub-area of the law and note any legal relationships between the parties.
      ii. Circle amounts of money, dates, locations, quantities, and ages.
      iii. Note the words “oral” and “written”.
      iv. Get the actors straight. Be VERY clear about who is doing what to whom.

2. **Outline Your Answer**
   a. Organize ideas into an outline based on a consideration of the relevant issues.
      i. Use your checklist questions from your outline!!
   b. For each issue, compile the building blocks for the rule of law by considering, as appropriate:
      i. The general rule
      ii. Elements/factors
      iii. Exceptions to the general rule
      iv. Distinctions/limitations
      v. Defenses
   c. Within the law-based outline you’ve just created, insert the facts from the exam into your outline as they relate to the rules.

3. **Write the Essay**
   a. Begin with the identification of the issue.
      i. Eg. “Can D be found guilty of murder?”
   b. State a rule for the issue.
      i. Eg. “Murder is the unlawful killing of a human being with malice aforethought.”
      ii. Sometimes it’s necessary to identify where the rule comes from.
         1. E.g. “At common law, murder is the unlawful killing of a human being with malice aforethought”. OR “Under the MPC, however, three forms of criminal homicide are recognized, including murder…”
      iii. Remember you’ll have sub-issues within issues. Address those using IRAC as well.
         1. Eg. “Did D act with malice aforethought?” “Malice aforethought is to kill either deliberately and intentionally, or recklessly with extreme disregard for human life.” “Here....”
   c. Apply the facts to the rules.
      i. Eg. “Here, D was aiming his gun at B, but the bullet actually killed V.”
      ii. Use “because” throughout your analysis to make the connection between rule and fact.
      iii. Match each element or factor in your rule of law with a “fact”.
   d. Provide a conclusion as to the original question presented in your issue statement.
      i. Eg. “Therefore D can be found guilty of murder.”