

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.”