

Tips for Success

1) Ask Questions!

If you don't understand something, don't be afraid to ask. No one expects you to know everything right off the bat. Get clarification for anything you don't understand in an assignment. Ask about sources that might be helpful. Find out if the assigning attorney wants you to use a particular source.

2) Go to training.

Any time it is offered

3) Remember the Ten-Minute Rule.

If you've spent more than ten minutes on Westlaw or in a book and haven't found anything that looks right, STOP! It might be time to get some clarification.

4) Remember to keep track of your time as you go.

It's easier to keep track of time up front than to try to reconstruct. It will also help you figure out if you need to stop and try something different because you've spent a while going down a path that is not leading to answers.

5) Try a book.

Westlaw and Lexis aren't always the best place to start. If you know nothing about a topic, find out if there is a treatise or article that gives you an overview. Footnotes can lead you to good starting places. Don't forget to try AmJur or CJS to get started.

6) Watch for repeats.

If you've seen the same case or found the same thing several times, you might be done. Once you've come back to the point where you started, it's usually a good clue that you've found what you're going to find.

7) Remember that there might not be an answer.

Not every question you are asked has a definite answer. If you feel like you've looked everywhere, checked all of the obvious sources, asked for clarification, asked me for help and still haven't found anything, it's possible that there is no answer. Don't be afraid of the possibility.

8) Don't rely exclusively on full-text searching.

Remember to use headnotes and topics and key numbers to find cases. The opinion writer may have used a different term or terms than you are searching. Don't get too hung up on matching a fact pattern exactly.

9) Have Fun!