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# Law for Business Students

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NINTH EDITION

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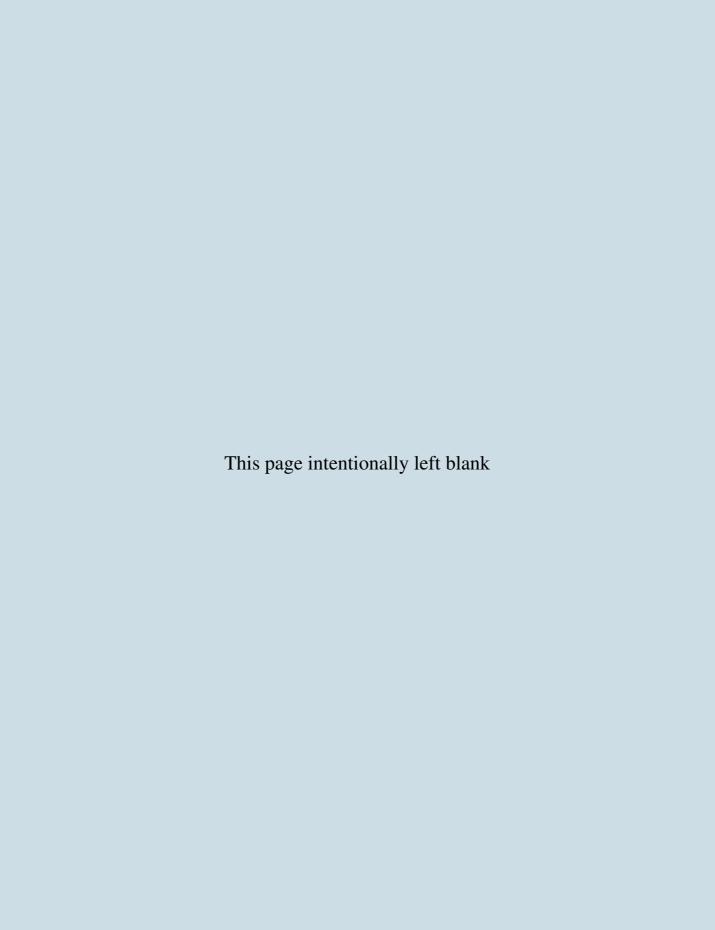
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# **Preface**

Over 30 years of teaching law on a variety of further and higher education courses from GCSE to post-graduate level taught me much about the difficulties experienced by students in grasping legal concepts. It can be particularly hard for students following an intensive course of which law forms only one part. Hopefully, this text will meet their needs. I have tried to make it accessible, without over-simplification of the subject matter.

I have aimed to express the law, as far as possible, in accessible terms for the lay person and with a light touch, in the hope that it may not only instruct its readers, but also entertain them a little as well and maybe encourage them to pursue further study of the law. It is a subject that I love and would like to encourage others to love it at least a little.

Many thanks to all at Pearson who have helped me in the creation of this edition, especially Owen Knight, Vicky Tubb and Carole Drummond. I greatly value their support and practical assistance.



Photo: Alix Adams

Last, but definitely not least, many thanks to my partner Cherry Potts. As ever, her emotional support and encouragement have been crucial to the editing process. She has also given me lots of patient practical assistance and the technical support crucial to a somewhat Luddite author.

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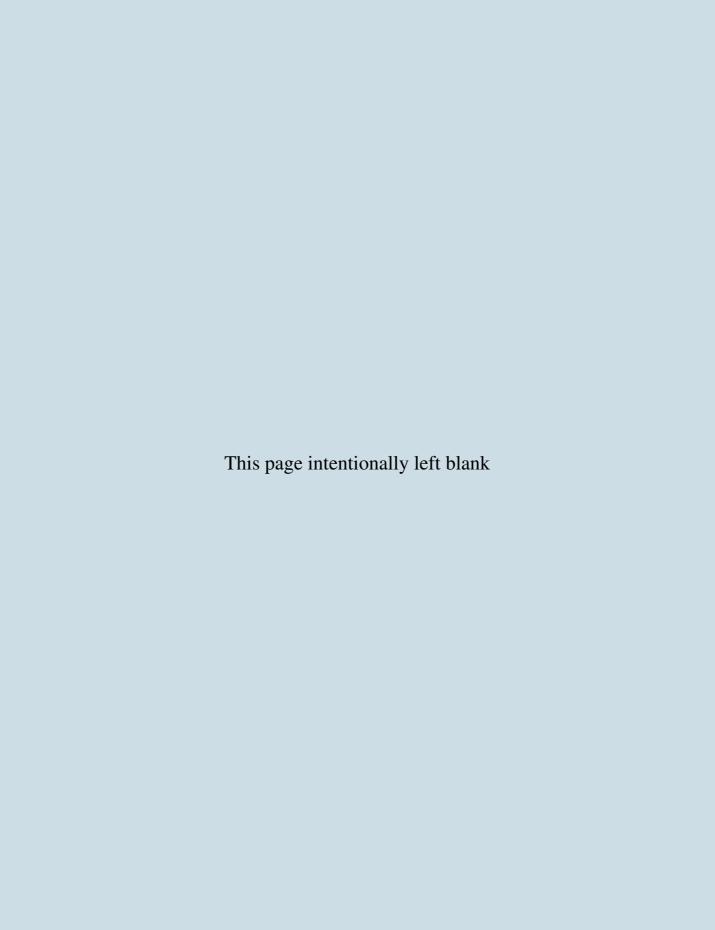
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# PART 1

Introduction: getting started



# CHAPTER 1

# Study skills

# Introduction

This chapter, which aims to help you to acquire the skills essential to the successful study of law, is divided into four sections:

- 1 starting to study;
- 2 good study habits;
- 3 writing law assignments;
- 4 revision and examination technique.



# Starting to study

### Get rid of your misconceptions

Many of you will be studying law for the first time and as one component of a course. You may be feeling nervous about it because it feels remote or difficult and even perhaps boring. In practice (and particularly if you follow the advice in this chapter), you will probably find law much more interesting than you thought when you began your studies. Contrary to common belief, the study of law is not primarily concerned with ancient, dry and precise regulations that you have to learn by heart. Most of your studies are involved with quite modern cases, that have come to court just because the law was not precise and consequently gave rise to the dispute. This book looks at how the law applies to real-life situations, which will help you to recall the legal principles on which it is based. Effective communication of your *understanding* of those principles is the main requirement for examination success.

Remembering all the cases by name and being able to quote extracts from statutes word for word is icing on the cake – impressive, but not essential.

# Law is relevant to you

Remember that the law responds and develops as required by the society within which it operates. For example, until 1935 the driving test was not compulsory because road safety had not assumed the importance it enjoys today. At that time there was much less motorised traffic moving more slowly than today and consequently many fewer accidents. The law affects you personally every day of your life. For example, it determines your eligibility for a student loan, your rights to treatment under the National Health Service and your entitlements and responsibilities as a consumer, business owner, employer or employee.

#### Widen your horizons

Your studies will be more rewarding if you do not consider law as something to be thought about only when you are in class or reading a relevant text. The effects of many areas of the law are widely reported and discussed in the media. Such reports can help you to see how the law works (or does not work), as well as reminding you of what you have studied. Stay in touch with the news, try to look at a quality daily paper and look out for relevant TV and radio programmes. (Some suggestions for resources appear in Appendix 1.) The internet is an excellent research tool. (Try visiting the websites suggested by the web activity references at the end of Chapters 3–25.)

#### Make connections

The more you study, the easier it gets. Studying law is rather like doing a large jig-saw without the help of a picture – progress is initially slow while the framework is established, but patience is rewarded. Once the picture begins to reveal itself you can see more easily how the different pieces fit together and then the task gets easier and quicker.

Try not to think of each topic as a separate entity to be 'done' and neatly filed away in the memory. Exploit the links with other related topics; this aids both recollection and understanding. Exam and assignment questions may involve a problem, raising issues about a number of different topics; the ability to see connections is vital to an effective response. To help you do this, frequent cross-references appear in the text. Pondering on the questions in the 'Worth thinking about?' boxes in this work, and maybe discussing these with your classmates, will help with the process.

### Read and practice, applying your knowledge

Somebody (not a lawyer) once told the author that law is a very 'paper-based subject'. This made it sound a bit like origami, but nevertheless did contain some truth. Reading thoroughly and widely is essential; practising the written skills required by the examinations is also crucial.

Hopefully you will find this book accessible, but if you are new to the study of law it would take magical powers to understand it all fully at a first reading. Be prepared to go back and re-read a section that you do not understand. (The chapter summaries may help you to grasp the main points of each chapter.) Often it is best to try to get a general picture on the first reading of a topic that you find hard, pressing on even if you do not understand it. You will still get something from it, and on each subsequent reading it will become clearer.

Get all the writing practice that you can. Homework provides safe space to make mistakes; and it is much better to make them then rather than in the exam. Try the quizzes and assignments in this book. Prepare written answers to tutorial questions and be prepared to participate when attending them. This is much more valuable (and more fun) than listening mutely to other people's answers.



# Good study habits

## Create a structure for learning

Success in your studies depends more on being well organised than having a flair for the subject. Settling yourself into a reasonably structured regime is very helpful but isn't necessarily all that easy when you are starting something new, maybe away from home for the first time and excited by all the attractions on offer in this new phase of your life. Possibly all this newness is a bit daunting and you are feeling a bit anxious or homesick. Either way, some structure will help.

# Taking care of yourself

This is your first priority. Remember that your brain is part of your body! This very obvious statement still needs reinforcement for many students who ignore their need for proper food and sleep and relaxation. It is easy to let these apparently simple requirements slip under the pressure of a new and taxing academic course, pursuit of a social life, and the part-time job that most students will find necessary. Many of you, particularly mature students, may have caring responsibilities that may have to take priority.

However, try to eat a balanced diet and get a reasonable amount of sleep. Be prepared to acknowledge that you may from time to time need some extra support. If you are ill, or having any other problems that hinder your studies, tell your lecturers or personal tutor what is going on, as they are often able to help. Counselling services may also be available at your university or college that can be very helpful.

#### Time management

It is important that you set aside a sensible amount of time each week for your private study, as this is a crucial supplement to the tuition that you receive. It is not realistic to expect your lecturers to provide you with more than 5 per cent of what you need. The other 95 per cent is up to you. Attending a lecture is the first step towards understanding a topic, but you must personally reinforce this initial learning in your own time by reading and preparing for and participating in tutorials. It's what you do for yourself that really counts.

Make yourself a study timetable with realistic goals. Short bursts spread across the week may be more appropriate than aiming to study in lengthy blocks, particularly in the early stages of your course.

Be punctual for lectures and tutorials to ensure that you get the most benefit from them and do not distract the other students or lecturer by your late entrance.

Keep your diary up to date and double check dates for assignment submissions. You really don't want to find your assignment refused for late submission or discover that the exam you have come for one afternoon has already taken place that morning.

#### Note-taking

Your lecture notes are an essential lifeline. It is probably best not to make them 'in rough'. Your good intentions to write them up later may not be fulfilled. Use a loose-leaf folder and write on one side of the paper only. That enables you to add notes later on when you read the textbook. Do not take unnecessary notes. If your tutor provides lecture outlines, you may not need to write many extra lecture notes.

You will probably want to take some notes from your reading. Use your own words with plenty of side headings. Note the sources of any extra notes you take, you may need to cite them later in an assignment.

If you copy something, be sure to use quotation marks and indicate the source. This will ensure that you do not later represent this great thought as your own in an assignment, as you could be penalised for plagiarism (see below).

### Reading

The library is your second home. It is very important that you always read the relevant section of the textbook, as soon as possible after each lecture, as well as any cases or other materials recommended by your tutor. At first you may find this heavy going, but if you persevere it does get easier. Do not worry about understanding every word. If you get bogged down at the beginning of the course do not struggle endlessly with the early topics. Keep up with the reading relevant to your lectures and light will eventually dawn.

While you need to read your chosen texts thoroughly, it is always useful to consult others (see Appendix 1). Make good use of the index or contents section of additional texts to find the bits you need. Do not be afraid to skim. Use the search facility when reading PDF documents online. This can be a real help in isolating the bits you want in a law report, for example.

So far this section has been a counsel of perfection. There may be times when you find a particular study topic very tough, either because it is not exciting you, or is complex, or worst of all both. Possibly your life is not going smoothly in other ways. That is the time to retire to the basic materials and try to get a grip on them. It is better to keep up basically than fall behind because you are temporarily finding it difficult to see the wood from the trees.

# Checking your learning

It is a good idea to check that you have understood what you have been reading about. This book also helps you to check your progress in four ways.

- 1 *Chapter summary*: the bullet points should act like triggers and bring to mind more information from the chapter when you read them.
- 2 *Key terms*: check that you have grasped the meanings of these. Try writing them down using your own words.
- 3 *Quizzes*: these provide a simple way to check that you have grasped some of the important basic issues covered by the chapter.
- 4 *Join a study group*: getting together informally with a group of fellow students to discuss your work can be both fun and helpful. Having to voice issues is a very good way of finding out how well or otherwise you understand them. In the event of a dispute, having to provide a reasoned answer is also an excellent academic exercise and good preparation for tutorials. The group can provide valuable mutual support near the exams too. Doing stuff together is also a good way of making friends.



# Writing law assignments

#### General advice

Before we examine the specific techniques for writing law assignments it is useful to check that you are aware of what an assignment at degree or diploma level requires.

#### 1 Style

Remember that you are not writing a personal account. Avoid saying 'I think' or 'I believe', however passionately you feel about your argument. Get used to using the third person instead and say something like 'it may be thought/argued that . . .'

#### 2 Evidence

Back up your arguments: indicate your sources by referring to the relevant case reference, statute section, book title and page, date of newspaper article or website address. Make sure that you develop your arguments rather than just giving a string of case or other source names. You must show how the evidence you cite supports your argument.

Always use primary sources as far as possible. This means the first publication of the document. For instance, if you cite a case you should footnote the actual law report reference, not the page in the textbook where you first found it. Footnotes are a neat way to show your references and they do not usually form part of your word limit. It is best to keep to a bare reference. While you may come across texts that seem to have more footnote than content, don't be tempted into using this device as a subterfuge to exceed the word limit. It is unlikely to fool your tutors.

#### 3 Avoid plagiarism

In simple terms, plagiarism means passing off someone else's work as your own. An obvious example is copying a chunk of text without using quote marks, but altering some words in that text while leaving the sentence structure the same may also be plagiarism.

Plagiarism is easily avoided by clearly marking any direct quotes with inverted commas. Otherwise anything you write should be in your own words, however difficult it is to find them. In the early stages of a new course of study it may be tempting to mirror someone else's text too closely but, with practice, your confidence in yourself will grow as you acquire a better grasp of new concepts and get better at self-expression.

So far we have been considering what might be called careless plagiarism, though even this may lead to your work being downgraded. Sadly a minority of students set out to profit from intentional plagiarism. This is a form of cheating and carries heavy penalties including permanent exclusion in the most serious cases. Don't fool yourself into thinking you will get away with it. Apart from the fact that your tutors will notice blatant copying from sources they have recommended, all manner of plagiarism detection techniques are now being used which can spot much more subtle tricks.

#### 4 Submission requirements

Your student handbook will spell out the submission requirements for your course work. It is crucial that you make sure that you know and understand them, as failure to comply may jeopardise your success in your course. Each institution has its own very specific requirements. The devil is in the detail, so make sure that you know when, where and in what form and format your institution wants you to deliver your assignment. Promptness is crucial, miss the deadline and your work may be rejected, or only accepted if you are able to produce a really good reason with proof for the delay. Excuses are not reasons. Give yourself enough time to avoid last-minute disasters such as a computer failure or a non-running bus, causing you a fatal delay. Although we live in an electronic age, you may still be required to deliver hard copy rather than emailing it in A minimum font size may also be stipulated. A special cover sheet may be required. Check all the details before you submit.

### Writing technique for law assignments

Your written assignments may take two forms:

- 1 *Problem or 'situation-based' assignments*. These involve a scenario to which you are expected to apply principles of law and draw reasoned conclusions.
- 2 Discursive assignments: essays and reports.

Very different types of answers are demanded by these two methods of testing your knowledge and abilities. However, we first need to examine the requirements which both types of work have in common at degree or diploma level.

#### **Problem questions**

A good answer to such a question will require the following:

- a clear explanation of the relevant points of law;
- an analysis of the given facts in the light of the relevant law, indicating likely outcome.

Sometimes the facts will be deliberately vague to encourage you to indicate that a decision could go either way. It is crucial that you give reasons to support your arguments. It is not good enough to write at length about the general legal principles raised by the problem, and follow that with an assertion that X or Y will win Giving clearly analysed reasons why you are making such an assertion is what earns you marks. Here are some tips to help you.

1 Read the problem thoroughly and think about what is involved. This is crucial to spotting the relevant legal areas and to your grasp of the relationship of the parties and their names. Underline the 'triggers', the points of fact in the scenario which indicate the points of law to be applied. Refer to your books and notes to make sure that you understand these points of law.