



# Legal Writing Center

## Conquering Time Management Issues When Writing Your 1L Year

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In law school, time is the enemy. As a 1L law student, you may feel as though you have so *many* tasks to complete, yet only so much time available to complete those tasks.

For example, it is the first semester of your 1L year. Your Introduction to Lawyering Skills (ILS) professor assigned the class a short 5-8 paged open office memorandum to complete. You have five weeks to complete the assignment.

You may be pondering: how much time will this office memorandum take to complete? How many hours per day, or per week, should I dedicate to completing the office memorandum? These questions will assess a pivotal skill to being a successful law student and, eventually, lawyer – time management skills.

Time management skills is considered as a “soft skill” that, often times, is not taught or discussed during your first year of law school. In general, time management skills consist of *planning* the amount of time that you will allocate to different tasks and *sticking to the plan* by minimizing distractions. Procrastination is the antithesis of good time management. By planning ahead (and sticking to that plan), your old buddy – procrastination – will be a thing of the past.

What are useful tools to manage your time?

- Push out negative thoughts! You can successfully complete the assignment before the deadline provided by your professor. You *can* do this!
- You can develop a “task list” for each week. That list will specify tasks that you would like to complete on particular days during each week.
  - Back to the office memorandum, you know that you have five weeks to complete the assignment. Whenever you have a deadline, create your weekly task list by working backwards:
    - **Week 5:** Office Memorandum is due on that Tuesday. Considering such, my paper may need to be completed by Sunday. Slightly changing your deadline to an earlier date (e.g., that previous Sunday) minimizes stress by providing yourself with additional time to re-read



your paper to check for typos, strengthen your [writing techniques](#), revise your [citations](#), or complete other types of [proofreading](#).

- **Week 4:** During this week, you may want to continue writing your paper on that Thursday and Friday.
  - **Week 3:** You may want to focus on outlining your paper on that Thursday and start writing your memorandum on that Friday.
  - **Week 2:** You may want to continue only focusing on researching the law and compiling sources of information from Westlaw or LexisNexis every Thursday and Friday.
  - **Week 1:** You may want to focus on researching the law and compiling sources of information from [Westlaw or LexisNexis](#). You decided to block off 8 hours per week to dedicate to the office memorandum. You plan to dedicate 4 hours on Thursday and 4 hours on Friday *every week* to complete the office memorandum. You blocked this time off in your agenda book, Google calendar, or other way to keep track of your time. You may need more (or less) time per week to commit to the office memorandum. However, try not to spend less time than the time allotted for the assignment in your task list.
- The takeaway from this example is to make a task list that fits your schedule, and stick with that plan.
  - If you need to, share your task list with someone (e.g., professor, legal writing fellow, classmate, family, or friend) and tell them to hold you accountable to that schedule.
  - Take breaks while completing tasks (e.g., 10-minute break for every hour of work).
  - Say “no” to interruptions while completing tasks. Also, jot down repetitive distractions. Why are these distractions reoccurring?
  - Breathe, relax your mind, and get started!

Happy Writing!

