

REALITY 101: PREPARING FOR LIFE BEYOND LAW SCHOOL

DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK QUESTIONS.

If you are not familiar with the subject area, do some basic background research to identify key words and concepts **before** you go on-line.

Being tied to your computer can lead to tunnel vision - you see only what is on the screen in front of you. There are many other resources just waiting to be discovered.

You need a healthy respect for how much online systems such as Westlaw and LEXIS cost - they are not "free." Forget the habits you developed in law school. Take advantage of the research assistance that is offered when your representative is in the firm. Take advantage of the training sessions offered by your law school. Online systems are constantly evolving and databases are being enhanced and/or added.

Keep track of your online searches - use the "history/research trail" available on LEXIS and Westlaw. This will come in handy when you have to update your research at a later date. You can also use this to determine in refining your search strategy.

You need a basic understanding of:

- the court system - state and federal
- the legislative process - i.e. bill > act > statute > code
- the difference between a code and a regulation.

Basic English 101: Proofread your documents

- will the person reading your document understand the points that you are making
- check for incomplete sentences
- check your grammar
- spellcheck goes only so far

Basic English 101: - If you are quoting a case, then you need to attribute the source of your quote.

Basic English 101: - Do not cite a case without having read it - at least once. You cannot be sure that the person who wrote the document from which you are "cutting and pasting" had done their homework.

Become familiar with the professional requirements of the state(s) in which you are licensed - and do not wait until the last minute to complete your CLE requirements.

If someone has done research at your request, please have the courtesy to read it first, then ask questions - the answer to your follow-up question may have already been answered.

Take advantage of your law librarians - both at school and at the firm. They can be an invaluable resource.

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