

# Reading, Writing, Relaxation

## The 3 R's of Preparing for Law School

By, Michelle Rahman  
Director of Admissions  
University of Richmond School of Law



It's summer and you've poured over catalogues, sweated over applications and survived the admissions process. You've been admitted! You've made your deposit...oops...several deposits. Now you've really got to commit!

So - you commit. Now what? Summer looms ahead and surely you're supposed to be doing *something*. Something besides alternating between wondering if everyone in your class will be smarter than you or, "How in the world can I afford this?"

Nervousness alternates with exhilaration. You ask yourself, "Will I be ready?"

Everywhere you turn there is so much advice. Work for a law firm during the summer or you'll be lost; travel for you'll never have another opportunity; have fun, for come August, life as you know it will be over; study the case books so you'll be ahead. Prepare...what?

Well, I'm here to tell you that life as you know it won't be over, you can work at something that pays you money...or pays you nothing. A great adventure is about to begin and the preparation you most need might just be the preparation you thought about least.

Have some fun! Read! Relax! Exercise! Live! And then, read some more.

Everyone will have some advice for you but in my surveys of faculty, current law students, and alumni, the advice all comes back to the same few suggestions stated above.

This advice is serious. It's certainly not that any of these things will have to be given up while in law school but it's important to take the summer to enjoy things that you might have to postpone (just a little) during your first year. It's also a way to gain perspective on your past and your future. Sometimes moments of greatest creativity occur when your mind is at ease and you have time to simply BE. Stepping back from the

burdens of school or work before entering law school is rejuvenating and allows time for you to gather yourself for the renewed vigor with which you'll approach the study of law. So give

yourself permission this summer to have as much fun as time and money will allow. Find as much to laugh about as possible...for at times you'll actually have to laugh at yourself while in

law school and you'll want to prepare by practicing this art, which will keep you sane during stressful times ahead.

Travel, particularly if you never have, for there is no better way to stretch your horizons and be reminded you are an important part of an ever-changing world. Look around you, whether in this country or another, and perhaps visit some courtrooms while you are "there."

Read! Read! Read!

While reading case books is quite different from the reading we do for enjoyment, it's important to read, over the summer, just about anything you enjoy. Reading will prepare you for the heavy reading you will experience in law school. Read cereal boxes, read sides of buses - read anything at all! Read at breakfast, read at lunch, read at dinner. Now you will have an excuse when your mother tells you not to read and eat at the same time.

Seriously, what could be better than a good read over the summer months? Many law schools will provide you, on request, a list of suggested summer reading. Amazon.com has lists of books to whet the appetite...and to challenge your critical thinking skills before law school. You may want to find out what the faculty of your chosen law school has written and read their books. What better way to find out in advance the scholarly endeavors of your faculty...not to mention having a window into their stance on topics they're passionate about? This may give you a real leg up when you encounter your professors in

the classroom or in the halls. Check out your school's web site for a listing of the faculty's publications.

So many schools now require a laptop or other computer. There's a reason...you WILL be using it...it's not simply an extension of your arm. So...if you're not especially fast on the keyboard, here's a great opportunity to hone your skills. Get ready! Learn to type if you don't already know how. Become computer literate if you're not already.

Spend time with family and friends. By necessity you'll have less time for this while in your first year of law school. You may not be physically close enough to spend the time you'd like with old friends and family that first year but time and space will be two of the many new challenges you will encounter in law school. Savor the moments of your free time to renew relationships and strengthen family ties. This emotional support will

carry you through the trials and tribulations of the "down" times (and rejoice with you in the "up") in law school. Trust me...you'll need this support...so cultivate it now.

I am certain for many of you this advice will appear tongue in cheek and disappointingly flip. Let me assure you that I am serious. Consider this summer a reward for your hard work in getting to this point in your life. This is the pause that refreshes. This is an opportunity to do whatever you haven't yet done in your life (or more of what you enjoy) that you promised yourself you'd do before you took on the mantle of full maturity. There are indeed more mountains to climb...and rest assured they are but weeks before you...but take a deep breath and give yourself permission to pause, if only for a bit, before taking that next step on the wild and crazy ride toward your lifetime ambitions!

