

Foreword



How to Be a Successful Paralegal Student By Michael Frazier, Paralegal

In order to be a successful paralegal student there are a variety of factors that must be considered. While there is no single right way to approach an education, the factors that determine a student's level of success can generally be categorized as attendance, attention, participation, and studying. Every student has his own methods and learning curves, which makes determining the right formula for any one student quite difficult. The following are my suggestions on the aforementioned categories of success.

Attendance is the first and most obvious step toward being a successful student; in order to be successful you have to attend class. However, there is more to attendance than just showing up. A successful student will arrive early and be prepared for the day's lecture or activity. This not only shows a desire to learn but allows for time to get organized before the start of the lecture. Though it should go without saying, it is worth mentioning the importance of attending every class session. There is vital information discussed in every lecture and missing one could make a noticeable difference, not only in the class grade but in the workforce as well. If it is necessary to miss a class, arrange to copy the notes of another success-oriented student.

Once class starts, pay attention. For many students, it has been quite some time since they were last in school. Remembering how to stay attentive for a long period of time can be a daunting task at first. The best

way to maintain focus is through taking notes. Even if printed notes are provided by the instructor, taking down notes of what is discussed in the lecture may provide added information that is not in the handouts or textbooks. Additionally, since learning is such an individualized process, taking down personally significant notes will increase the likelihood of being successful.

Another way to maintain focus, other than note taking, is to participate in class discussions and activities. Contributing to class discussions is a litmus test for both the student and professor to gauge whether the material is being absorbed and retained. Participation can also bolster confidence and help students to understand the material more thoroughly. Also, learn from other students' participation. Most of the time students will have the same questions and struggle in the same areas of the material. The instructor's interaction with each student then becomes quite valuable to the class as a whole, whether as a clarification for similar confusion or as a reinforcement of the fundamentals.

The most important tool for success is to study. There is much to be done outside of class in order to be a successful student. Assignments and required readings should be completed BEFORE the start of class. Being punctual with assignments is a fundamental aspect of being successful in school as well as in the workforce. Having required readings done is necessary in order to participate in class

discussions, take accurate and meaningful notes, and staying current with lectures and activities. Most course material builds from beginning to end with the fundamentals being taught first, then more difficult concepts coming later. As the concepts become more complex, students who have not kept up with the assignments and readings will find themselves slipping further behind. It is recommended to spend two hours studying and reviewing outside of class for every one hour spent in class. While this is not a hard and fast

rule, it serves to show the dedication and commitment that is required to be a successful student.

There is no specific model for being a successful paralegal student. Nevertheless, all successful students share many of the same practices. They all attend class, take meaningful notes, participate in class discussions and activities, and spend a good amount of time outside of class studying and preparing. Using these fundamental categories will put any student on the path to success!