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# Preface

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Since 1989 I have been a full-time teacher in, and coordinator of, an ABA-approved paralegal program. Before that, I was a transactional lawyer in private practice and worked with many excellent paralegals. My experiences in practice, combined with countless surveys of graduates and employers and working to obtain initial and re-approval by the ABA, have taught me the importance of:

- Teaching students to be independent learners so that they can arrive, on the job, as “self-starters”;
- Integrating ethics into every topic;
- Integrating the use of research and communications skills into every topic;
- Ensuring that students have adequate computer skills;
- Making students engage with the material, so that they retain what they learn; and
- Teaching state-specific law and procedures.

It is not easy to achieve these goals with a traditional textbook. Books marketed throughout the country tend to speak in generalities. Many paralegal teachers are adjuncts and may not have the time or resources to create challenging, practical, state-specific assignments to supplement the texts. They may want to develop alternatives to lecture format or they may be trying to offer the class alternative formats: online, hybrid, or even independent study.

This book is intended to:

- Engage students by making them responsible for finding local law.
- Require students to use computer skills to complete assignments.
- Include enough hands-on assignments (and guidance for doing those assignments) to ensure that a course offered in an alternative format will be the equivalent of a traditional class.
- Include assignments requiring student-led discussion of cases, as an alternative to lecture in a classroom setting or to stimulate interaction in an online setting.
- Ensure hands-on experience doing legal research, summarizing cases, and finding their own answers so that students can “hit the ground running” in a law office.



- Make students aware of job opportunities and the skills required for those opportunities.
- Be adaptable to schools that schedule in semesters, trimesters, or quarters and to schools that integrate contract law into a course that includes other topics.

The sample cases are not cases that were highly controversial or that were landmarks in the development of law. Paralegals must understand legal theory, but they are not responsible for developing strategy or arguing cases. The cases were chosen to provide short, easy-to-read vignettes of the real-life practice of law. Many involve lawyers and paralegals as parties. They are intended to give students insights that will make the transition from school to the law office easier.

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