

---

## MEMORANDUM

---

TO: Student Extern  
FROM: Your Field Supervisor-to-Be\*  
DATE: Now and Always (last updated 11/15)  
RE: What You Should Know *Before* Your Externship Begins



---

As your field supervisor for your upcoming externship, I want to share with you the following few things you should know, and a few things you should do, to prepare for your externship:

### Workplace Etiquette

Dress for success. If I think you should dress more casually, I'll tell you. And if I do tell you "business casual," that does not mean what you would wear to school or to a club. No flip flops, tank tops, sequins or shorts, please.



Don't be shy. Introduce yourself around. Everyone may look busy, but they are never too busy to say hello to the new kid, especially the new kid who is friendly and eager to help.

Talk to my support staff as you talk to me, and show them the respect you would want to be shown. The guy in the copy or file room really runs the show. If you cop an attitude, believe me, I'll hear about it, and you'll feel it.

Even if I start behaving more casually, that doesn't mean you should. Don't call me "dude" or "man," or tell me about something "retarded" that happened to you last weekend. I may like you, but this is still a 14-week job interview.

### Workplace Attitude

Demonstrate your maturity. The extern with poise and confidence inspires confidence in me (even if you have to fake it until the self assurance actually kicks in). When I talk with you about your work or a position you have recommended, don't back down too quickly. Be articulate and firm in your convictions.

Don't be afraid to ask questions when getting an assignment. Make sure you understand exactly what I'm asking, the meaning of unfamiliar terms, key background

---

\* By means of dictation to Carolyn Larmore, Externship Director, Chapman University Dale E. Fowler School of Law, and Barbara Blanco, Externship Director (ret.), Loyola Law School.

facts, when it is due, what research sources you might use, and anything else that seems relevant. In fact, you might repeat the assignment back to me to make sure you've gotten it right and I haven't forgotten to tell you something important.

Take the initiative and demonstrate self-reliance. Always try to figure something out for yourself before asking me for help. That said, don't spin your wheels for too long before letting me know you are stuck. Your time (and mine) is valuable, so don't waste it.

When I call you to my office, bring paper and pen with you. I may not be giving you a new assignment, but you need to be prepared in case I am. Please don't keep me waiting as you run back to your desk to get a pen and paper, and don't think you will remember everything I tell you without writing it down. Trust me, you won't.

Show up on time. I rely on you to be there when you say you will. Getting all your hours in by staying late or working through lunch is not enough. If you are supposed to come in at 9 am, I expect you to do so.

Don't goof off. Put your phone away so you aren't even tempted to text, and shut down facebook (assuming our office hasn't blocked it already). These things are a huge distraction, for you and for me. You may get away with surfing and chatting while at the back of the classroom, but in my office, we are all business, all the time.



Turn your work in on deadline. If I forget to ask for your work when it's due, you should come to me. And never leave tasks unfinished, especially if you know you won't be in the office the next day.

When you are finished with a project, seek me out to ask for another. Although you might get away with an afternoon of slacking off if I'm too busy to notice, when I *do* notice it will not look good.

I didn't go to law school to make photocopies either, but even the best lawyer has to Bates stamp exhibits or catch up on filing now and again. I'll do my best not to give you too much of this work because I know you are here to learn about the practice of law, but realize that the practice of law includes stuffing the occasional envelope.

### Brush Up Before You Show Up

Review the applicable area of law or procedural rules before you start. For example, if you are working at the Court of Appeal, review the standards of appellate review and the California Style Manual to familiarize yourself with citation form. If you are working in the bankruptcy courts, read an article on the new changes in the bankruptcy law and be somewhat familiar with the basics of the Bankruptcy Code. If you are not sure what would be most useful for an overview of the subject, ask me for my suggestions – I'll probably be impressed by your initiative.



- Read about my chambers/court/office/agency, so that you have a basic idea of what we do, how we work, and who we work for. “Google” me or read a few cases I have handled or decisions I have written. That way when you show up your first day, you won’t say something silly about wanting to work on a type of case we don’t handle.
- Research and writing are the most important skills an extern can have, so I expect you to remember how to plan a research strategy and draft a memo. It has probably been a while since your first-year research and writing class, so review your notes or flip through your course book.

What I Want from Your Research and Writing

- Before you begin, go over the file or issue thoroughly first and pay attention to the details – you just might catch something I’ve missed.
- Brainstorm about the issues with the blinders off. Think about all the possibilities, not just the legal issues the parties have raised or I have asked you about.
- Outline, or at least jot down, a research strategy. That strategy should rarely begin with a term search for cases on Lexis and Westlaw, especially if the issue you are researching is new to you (and most will be). Start with treatises (Witkin or a relevant specialist), practice guides (Rutter), and digests (West). These all come in book form (an increasingly foreign concept to law students, I understand), and luckily for you are also online.
- Outline before you begin writing. “Build” your memo or brief from there.
- Keep your writing clear and concise. Edit out unnecessary words and phrases and legalese. If you want help in this area, try *Plain English for Lawyers* by Richard C. Wydick, or one of Bryan A. Garner’s many books.
- Remember the hierarchy of authority.
- Remember the standard to be applied.
- Cite with Bluebook\* (not that silly ALWD).
- PROOFRD!
- PROOFRAD!!




---

\* Or the California Style Manual, if you are working for or filing in a state court.

PROOFREAD!!!

It is your writing, not your eyes, that is the window to your soul. I will expect you to produce thoughtful arguments and legal analysis. Never take shortcuts by substituting conclusory statements for careful reasoning.

Besides the Bluebook and the Rutter Guide, your most important legal tool is your common sense, so don't leave it at home. Try to understand the issues as they play out in the real world, and worry less about whether your memo sounds like a lawyer wrote it, and more about whether it says what you want it to say clearly.

If you take the time to follow these rules both before and during your externship, our work together will be more beneficial to both of us.