

# H A R V A R D L A W R E V I E W

Below is a very small sampling of the different schedules used by current *HLR* editors in approaching the Competition. This list is *not* exhaustive—it is merely aimed at giving you a sense of the variety of different approaches that you can take and be successful. Please contact Chloe Cotton at [ccotton@jd20.law.harvard.edu](mailto:ccotton@jd20.law.harvard.edu) with any question.

## SCHEDULE ONE

***Before the Write-On.*** I prioritized sleep during my finals period. I tried to envision finals as simply one week longer, with the competition as a sprint at the end. The night before the competition, I read whatever instructions were available online and read one or two student case comments (also online, from the November issue).

***General Schedule.*** I worked as consistently as I possibly could. I slept at least 8 hours a day, every day (except for the very last day of the competition — boxing took me longer than I'd realized it would). I planned to work 12 hours a day, but realistically probably worked 10. I went on runs every afternoon, and cooked dinner every night. I *totally* avoided law school friends, which I think was a good idea. In the evenings, I'd chat with friends and family on the phone, and watch a little TV.

I've copied my ideal schedule below. I sometimes ended up working a little less or going a little over the time I'd planned — but what's below is the reasonable best version that I tried for and ended up approximating.

***This is an intense schedule, but it worked for me.*** I'd been told that the write-on was about who would put in the work — who was willing, after finals, to spend an absurd amount of time in a chair working to make something that's essentially meaningless nearly perfect. So I took a more time-intensive route than some others. You certainly don't need to choose as time-intensive a route as this — but I wanted to maximize my chances, and this worked for me.

### ***Schedule.***

1. **Friday:** watch a movie and go out to dinner and get 8h sleep.
2. **Saturday:**
  - a. 10am–12pm = Pick up packet + photocopy
  - b. 12pm–3pm = Read the case + take notes
  - c. 3pm–5pm = Sort the sources in the packet into piles based on topic. Flip through them to get a sense, but don't read. (Treat sources as a library — knowing that there are *many* articles you won't cite to, except with maybe a *but see*.)
  - d. 5pm–7pm = Sketch out your argument. Write thesis + a short paragraph laying it out.
3. **Sunday**

*All day = Resist the urge to change your topic; if you change it, you won't have time.*

  - a. 7am–12pm = Write reporting section (with footnotes, etc.).
  - b. 12–7pm = Draft entire argument. *Goal = read sources only minimally, or not at all. (Trust that the support you need is in the packet!)*
4. **Monday**

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*All day = Really resist the urge to change your topic; you don't have time to switch!*

- a. 7am–12pm = Read sources & fill out your argument.
  - b. 12pm–7pm = Add footnotes, bluebook, more sources. (*Your argument might change a little during this process — that's okay!*)
- 5. Tuesday**
- a. 7am–11am = Perfect case comment. (*Goal = after this your argument should be set.*)
  - b. 11am–7pm = First ¼ of Subcite
- 6. Wednesday**
- a. 7am–11am = Perfect case comment. (*After this your argument should actually be set.*)
  - b. 11am–7pm = Second ¼ of Subcite
  - c. 7–8 = *If you can stand it, do a little boxing.*
- 7. Thursday**
- a. 7am–11am = Perfect case comment. (*Now it's really done — totally without errors.*)
  - b. 11am–7pm = Third ¼ of Subcite
  - c. 7–8 = *If you can stand it, do boxing.*
- 8. Friday**
- a. 7am–3pm = Last ¼ subcite
  - b. 3pm–5pm = Read subcite comments for errors.
  - c. 5pm onwards = Boxing. (*You should really try to start early evening; I'd say 7pm at the latest.*)
- 9. Saturday**
- a. 7am–9am = Re-read case comment one last time (to catch any errors).
  - b. 9am–11am = Photocopying. (*I was generous about time here just in case.*)
  - c. 11am–12pm = Turn it in!

## SCHEDULE TWO

My general plan was to write the case comment at the start of the week, subcite in the middle of the week, and then revise the case comment at the end of the week when I was a bit removed from it and had fresher eyes. This approach worked well for me and I made major improvements to my case comment on the final day that I definitely wouldn't have noticed without some space between writing and revising. I approached the competition with the following schedule: Day 1 (Saturday) pick up the competition and make copies of the subcite, then take the day off to relax after a week of finals. Days 2-3 (Sunday-Monday) write the case comment. Days 4-6 (Tuesday-Thursday) do the subcite. Day 7 (Friday) revise the case comment and print.

Most days I spent around 6 hours working on the competition (with the exception of a very late night on Friday), and like most people I was behind schedule within the first few days. I didn't have a set daily routine, but I usually worked at home for the first half of my day then found a room in the WCC, library, or other space for the latter half for a change of scenery.

### SCHEUDLE THREE

After taking Saturday off, I started on Sunday from the principle that I knew there were more errors in the subcite than I either could catch or was expected to catch, so it would absorb as much time as I put into it. I'm also a pretty quick writer, so I knew that I wouldn't need all that much time for the case comment. On this basis, I began on Sunday with the subcite, giving myself a goal of 15 pages per day, so by the end of Monday I would at least have something to hand in for the subcite, with the intention of returning to it with any leftover time after I had finished the case comment. On Tuesday, I started with the case comment and gave myself the goal of having the reporting section written by the end of Tuesday, then spend Wednesday coming up with and writing the second half of the case comment, containing my argument. That meant I could have a full draft done by the end of Wednesday so I could spend Thursday editing, rewriting as necessary, and trimming down to length. I finished the case comment by the end of Thursday, and spent Friday returning to the subcite. I started printing everything Friday night, which was an error -- start printing earlier. I cannot recall if I developed this schedule on Saturday evening or Sunday morning, but I certainly didn't have it before the competition started. The first thing I did was sit down with the competition and break it up into daily, manageable chunks. I would say this schedule was the most important element of the week for me: especially given the constricted timeframe, it really helped me to have a target to hit by the end of each day, which also permitted me to feel comfortable stopping for the day because I knew that I was on track to finish in time.

On the more micro level, I tried to set as much of a daily routine and stick to it as possible. I did the competition at the Cambridge Public Library (great view across the lawn from the second floor; glass windows give great summer light throughout the day; lots of open desks!). I got to the library when it opened at 9am, left when it closed at 5pm. At noon I took an hour for lunch, using the full hour to walk around, clear my head, get fresh air. When I left the library at 5pm, I was done for the day, even if that meant stopping writing in the middle of a paragraph or even the middle of a sentence -- a trick I learned from daily creative writing: if you stop writing mid-idea, you can pick it back up the next day right from where you were because you know the ensuing train of thought, rather than trying to claw your way back to the mindset you were in when you stopped the previous day. When I left CPL for the day, I put the competition in my backpack and didn't take it out until the next day at 9am; I went to the gym, made dinner, watched movies/TV, and went to bed early. This was critical for me. The competition is long and takes as much time as you put into it. But at a certain point you receive diminishing returns for the extra hours you spend on it. The most important thing is to finish, and for me that meant being explicit about taking care of myself. I relied on daily targets that I knew from the start would be reachable and would keep me on track for the week. Not only did that make the competition feel more manageable: it also allowed me to feel comfortable stopping for the day in the early evenings. I am confident that if I had worked all day every day throughout the week, I would have burned out and not finished the competition.

### SCHEDULE FOUR

*Before the Write-On.* I prioritized sleep during my finals period. I watched the tips session on 1.5x speed the night before I picked up the Competition, and I also read a couple of Supreme

Court Case Comments from the November 2017 issue.

*General Schedule.* I woke up at about 8 a.m. every morning and hoped to get at least 8 hours of sleep at night, but that steadily crept down starting on Wednesday night, and I pulled on all-nighter on Friday night. I did not cook or go to the gym during the week, but I did go out to dinner with non-law school friends one or two nights. I made it a point to avoid all encounters with 1Ls, as I did not want to talk about the Competition (I worked in Widener Library or the Design School Library to accomplish this.). I thought this was helpful because I wasn't thinking about how other people were doing—I was just focused on my own performance.

This is an intense schedule, but it worked for me. I'd been told that the write-on was a marathon that you needed to sprint. I heard that a lot of people gave up because it is exhausting, and I went in with the mindset that I would forever be wondering "What if?" if I didn't give it my all.

*Schedule.*

1. Saturday:

- a. 10am–12pm = pick up packet + make 10-15 copies of the Subcite
- b. 12pm–3pm = read the instructions; re-read the instructions; read the case and take notes
- c. 3pm–5pm = read the underlying cases, list the possible issues, and sort the source packet into piles that correspond to each issue
- d. 5pm–11pm = start thinking about a thesis; read available sources about issue that seemed the most promising

2. Sunday

- a. Morning = outline argument; note relevant sources
- b. Afternoon & Evening = write reporting section (with footnotes, etc.)

3. Monday

- a. Morning = finish writing reporting section; read sources, finalize thesis, and fill out your argument.
- b. Afternoon & Evening = Begin writing argument

4. Tuesday

- a. Morning = Continue writing argument
- b. Afternoon & Evening = Goal was to be done w/ case comment by Tuesday night, but I did not accomplish that; I hoped to be editing, but I was still figuring out how to incorporate sources and trim lines

5. Wednesday

- a. Morning = Edit case comment
- b. Afternoon & Evening = Subcite

6. Thursday

- a. All day = Subcite

7. Friday

- a. Morning = Return to case comment for spelling, Bluebooking (loosely), grammar, and logical flow editing
- b. Afternoon = Subcite
- c. Evening = Structural Part of Subcite (cutting out sentences and rearranging them)

d. Night = Boxing and drawing lines (and finding new errors to correct); this took me through the night

8. Saturday

- a. 7am – First trip to FedEx to copy Subcite
- b. 8am – Reread Case Comment
- c. 9am – Return to FedEx to print Case Comment and assemble packet
- d. 10am – Uber back to campus from downtown Boston
- e. 11am – Turn in submission and eat breakfast

### **SCHEDULE FIVE**

I went in with a set schedule — I planned to finish the case comment by Monday night, work on the subcite Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and use Friday for and last edits. I ended up slightly drifting from that schedule. While I did finish the case comment completely before I moved onto the subcite, I didn't finish the case comment until mid-day Tuesday. I worked on the subcite from Tuesday afternoon to Thursday night and left Friday for subcite boxing and last case comment edits.

On Saturday and Sunday I worked for around 4-5hours/day. Monday - Thursday I worked for around 12 hours. I would wake up, get breakfast and work until lunch. I'd then take a break to get food and go for a walk before I got back to work. I made sure to be in bed by my regular time each night because 8hrs of sleep is a priority for me. I worked for the longest amount of time on Friday, probably around 14 hours. I mailed in the competition from home on Saturday morning.

### **SCHEDULE SIX**

I initially thought I would follow a schedule similar to those above, but ended up going back and forth between the subcite and the case comment throughout the week. I found this a more flexible schedule, especially given that I had some outside commitments during the week.

I picked up the competition packet in Cambridge on Saturday morning and then flew home that afternoon. I read the main case and the lower court's opinion on the flight and looked through some of the sources. Sunday-Tuesday I worked 3-5 hours per day. Beginning on Wednesday, I started doing 12 hour days, with Friday probably being closer to 14. I went to bed by 1am on Friday though (with the boxing process complete), and woke up around 6 or 7am on Saturday. I read over my case comment one last time, and then went to the copy shop (which I had scoped out earlier in the week). After that, I went over to the post office and had it postmarked around 10:30am.