

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

EXAMPLE WRITING COMPETITION SCHEDULES

Below, you will find a sample of the schedules used by actual *HLR* editors when they took the Writing Competition. If there is one takeaway from these schedules, it is this: There is no single “correct” approach to taking the Competition!

Successful applicants take a wide variety of approaches to Competition week. Some editors started with the Subcite, some started with the Case Comment, and others switched back and forth between both parts of the Competition. Some editors worked late into the night; others preferred starting early in the day. Many editors juggled other obligations alongside the Competition, including personal, family, and job responsibilities.

We encourage you to consider your own work style in planning your week. You need not copy any of the schedules included in this document to be successful in taking the Competition!

Please email lawrev@harvardlawreview.org if you have any questions.

Schedule 1

Overview: I worked from about 8:30 am to 10:30 pm every day of the Competition. I'm most productive in the morning, so I preferred to wake up early and go to bed early(ish). I meal prepped in advance for the first few days of the Competition but took time off on Wednesday to meal prep for the rest of the week. I treated every meal as a break from the Competition, and I went on walks throughout the week.

Sunday:

- 9:00 am: Get breakfast & coffee before packet is sent out.
- Competition Launch: Spend the day reading the Recent Case for the Case Comment and brief its opinions and the provided sources until 4:00 pm.
- 4:00 pm: Draft reporting section.
- 6:00 pm: Dinner.
- 6:30 pm: Plan out the week.
- 7:30 pm: Review the Subcite.
- In bed by 11:00 pm.

Monday:

- 7:00 am: Wake up, have breakfast.
- Goal for the day: Finish drafting reporting section, develop initial thesis by EOD.
- Take breaks for lunch, dinner, and a meeting with OCS.
- 8:00 pm: Switch to Subcite because it was easier for me to do at the end of the day.
- In bed by 11:00 pm.

Tuesday:

- 7:00 am: Wake up, have breakfast.
- Goal for the day: Finish drafting argument section.
- Took breaks for lunch, dinner, tea, and a walk to think about my argument.
- 8:00pm: Switch to Subcite because it was easier for me to do at the end of the day.
- In bed by 11:00 pm.

Wednesday:

- 7:00 am: Wake up, have breakfast.
- Goal for the day: Adjust my thesis and flesh out footnotes.
- Take breaks for lunch and dinner.
- In bed by 11:00 pm.

Thursday:

- 7:00 am: Wake up, have breakfast.
- Goal for the day: Subcite as much as possible.
- Take breaks for lunch and dinner.
- In bed by 11:00 pm.

Friday:

- 7:00 am: Wake up, have breakfast.
- Goal for the day: Subcite as much as possible.
- Take breaks for lunch and dinner.
- I was worried about sleeping through the deadline, so I chose to submit at 1:30 am on Saturday.

Saturday:

- Celebrate!

Schedule 2

Overview: I offer this schedule mainly to say that it *is* possible to write on successfully with another significant commitment (in my case, getting married). A few things to note about my process:

- I could not have written on and gotten married in the same week without an incredible support team. I could only have this schedule because they took care of everything else.
- I did some form of movement to begin every day, usually either running or yoga. I also took five-minute juggling breaks roughly every hour, which helped me maintain focus.
- I generally worked on the Case Comment in the morning/afternoon and the Subcite in the evening. I'm a morning person, and writing is much easier for me when I am more alert.

Sunday: Get my feet under me

- 10am-12pm: download files and read instructions
- 12-12:30pm: lunch and wedding logistics
- 12:30-1pm: read the case once without taking notes
- 1-3pm: read the lower court decision(s), then the case, while taking notes
- 3-4:30pm: sort the source materials by subject matter, skimming abstracts/syllabi
- 4:30-5:30pm: sketch thoughts about the case with some thoughts in each topic
- 5:30-7pm: read through and take notes on the provided the Bluebook/*HLR* internal rules
- 7-8pm: dinner and wedding planning discussions with soon-to-be in-laws
- 8-8:30pm: read through the Subcite document once without taking notes
- 8:30-10pm: begin Subcite, starting with grammar errors (not opening sources/Bluebook)

Monday: Case Comment- draft reporting, brainstorm argument; Subcite- substantive editing

- 6-7am: movement and prepare for the day
- 7-10am: first draft of reporting section using suggested structure
- 10-11am: get marriage certificate
- 11am-12pm: choose topic area for argument
- 12-12:30pm: lunch
- 12:30-2pm: begin reading and taking notes on sources in topic area for argument
- 2-4pm: free write on argument
- 4:00-7pm: begin finding support, characterization, substantive, and basic Bluebook errors, one source — not footnote — at a time (AKA substantive editing)
- 7-8pm: dinner and wedding planning discussions with soon-to-be in-laws
- 8-10pm: continue finding support and basic Bluebook errors

Tuesday: Case Comment- choose thesis; Subcite- finish substantive editing

- 6-7am: movement and prepare for the day
- 7-10am: read and annotate sources for Case Comment argument
- 10am-12pm: choose thesis (pretty much what my final thesis turned out to be)
- 12-12:30pm: lunch
- 12:30-3pm: outline argument
- 3-6pm: Subcite substantive editing
- 6-7pm: first dance practice
- 7-8pm: Subcite substantive editing
- 8-9pm: dinner and spa night with soon-to-be in-laws
- 9-10:30pm: Finish Subcite substantive editing (no more opening sources)

Wednesday: Case Comment- draft argument, revise reporting; Subcite- technical editing

- 6:30-7:30am: movement and prepare for the day
- 7:30-10am: first draft of argument (VERY rough)
- 10am-12pm: reporting second draft, using proper footnotes
- 12-12:30pm: lunch
- 12:30-2pm: reading sources to slot quotes/ideas into the argument
- 2-3pm: re-read Bluebook and Blackbook, listing more technical errors to check for
- 3-6pm: begin technical editing, focusing on punctuation, typeface, etc.
- 6-7pm: first dance practice
- 8-9:30pm: dinner with both sets of parents
- 9:30-10:30pm: finish running through list of technical errors

Thursday: Case Comment- revision and substantive editing; Subcite- structural editing

- 6:30-7:30am: movement and prepare for the day
- 7:30-9:30am: finish reading for the Case Comment
- 9:30-10am: make sure topic sentences form an argument
- 10am-12pm: argument second draft, using proper footnotes
- 12-12:30pm: lunch
- 12:30-3pm: substantive edit for Case Comment
- 3-6pm: Subcite sentence and paragraph placement
- 6-8pm: dinner with my half of the wedding party
- 8-10:30pm: hang out with full wedding party

Friday: Case Comment- cutting and technical editing; Subcite- formatting and typos

- 6:30-7:30am: movement and prepare for the day
- 7:30-10am: third draft of Case Comment, primarily to cut length
- 10am-12pm: sentence-level and final technical editing of Case Comment
- 12-12:30pm: lunch
- 12:30-2pm: check Subcite comments for formatting errors and typos
- 2-3pm: final read-through of Case Comment
- 3-4pm: Wedding Rehearsal
- 4-5pm: Submit, delete competition materials, and leave for rehearsal dinner

Schedule 3

Note: This is not how I planned my schedule; this is how I actually spent my time.

Sunday – Read Materials

- No work until 5pm (Sabbath observance)
- Read all competition materials, sort Case Comment materials
- Write out thesis ideas

Monday – Case Comment

- Choose thesis, outline
- Write

Tuesday – Case Comment

- Write

Wednesday – Case Comment/Subcite

- Finalize until Noon; switch to Subcite
- Begin Subcite first pass

Thursday – Subcite

- Finish first pass

Friday – Subcite

- Morning: reread Case Comment; make final adjustments
- Second pass Subcite
- Work through the night

Saturday

- Second pass Subcite

Schedule 4

Overview: I went into the Competition hoping to spend 40 hours total — in the end, I spent more time on it than I had planned (more like 65 hours). However, throughout the Competition I made time every day for my non-negotiables (going on a run, cooking myself dinner, phone calls with my fiancé).

I wasn't sure I would join *HLR* if offered a spot. Even so, I thought the Competition was a worthwhile experience. It was cool to write a free-flowing piece compared to the rigid LRW pieces, and I became *much* more familiar with the Bluebook. These skills directly translated to my 1L summer internship.

Day Before: I hadn't attended any of the Tips Sessions, so I watched the recordings on YouTube and read over the tips packet, as well as a few "Recent Cases" on the *HLR* website. I also relaxed!

Day 1 (4 hours)

- 12pm–4pm: Downloaded the Competition materials, read through rules, read through the Recent Case, and sorted the secondary sources.
- 4pm: Ended work for the day and went out to dinner with friends for the rest of the evening.

Day 2 (10.5 hours)

- 9am–4pm: Writing reporting portion of Case Comment. As I wrote, I was waffling between two topics/theses and did a little bit of reading various secondary sources.
- Afternoon break for run and dinner. Noodled on thesis during run.
- 8pm–11:30pm: Settled on topic/thesis and did secondary source reading.

Day 3 (10.5 hours)

- 9am–4pm: Outlined, then wrote in full, my argument portion. Shelved the Case Comment.
- Afternoon break for run and dinner.
- 8pm–11:30pm: Started Subcite — read instructions, Bluebook rules, and began correcting.

Day 4 (11 hours)

- 9am–4pm: Subcite. My Approach: I went through each sentence and source and tried to catch all the errors in one go. I did not make a second pass at the document once I was done.
- Afternoon break for run and dinner.
- 8pm–midnight: Subcite.

Day 5 (11 hours)

- 9am–4pm: Subcite.
- Afternoon break for run and dinner.
- 8pm–midnight: Subcite.

Day 6 (14.5 hours)

- 9am–1pm: Incorporated edits to Case Comment. Did a quick pass-through for technical edits.
- 1pm–4pm: Subcite.
- Afternoon break for run and dinner.
- 7pm–2:30am: Subcite. Worked late to ensure I gave each page a good faith effort.

Day 7 (4 hours)

- Planned to sleep in, but unexpectedly woke up at 6am and worked three hours on the Subcite
- Final Check: Read through Case Comment and made sure Subcite comments were anonymized.
- Turned in the Competition a few hours before the deadline.

Schedule 5

Friday, May 10: Finish Exams, have a few drinks, celebrate with my section

Saturday, May 11: (My birthday) go out to lunch with my family, try my best to rest and recharge. Grocery shop for the week so that I have fun meals to cook and also easy quick meals if I'm strapped for time. Also picked up some of my favorite snacks and (non-alcoholic) drinks.

Sunday, May 12: Began competition immediately. Read through all the materials in the packet. Start on the Case Comment. Read through the district court and circuit court case in depth. Go for an hour long walk. Start thinking about a thesis (using the secondary sources as a guide for permissible theses). Cook a delicious dinner. Finish around 1 am.

Monday, May 13: Wake up at 7 am. Write the reporting section while constructing my thesis in the back of my head. Go for an hour long walk. After finishing the reporting section, settle on a thesis and begin pulling from the secondary sources. Eat a delicious dinner (cooked by my fiancé). Finish around 2 am.

Tuesday, May 14: Wake up at 8 am. Write the argument section. Review entirety of the Case Comment. Style the Case Comment and cut words to be right at the word count. Around 7 pm, put the Case Comment aside and begin looking at the Subcite for a few hours. Finish around 2 am.

Wednesday, May 15: Wake up at 7 am. Subcite all day. Daily walk. I think I ordered sushi this night. Finished around 2 am.

Thursday, May 16: Wake up 8 am. Subcite all day. Play in men's league basketball game in the evening. Finish around 2 am. I think at this point I had gotten all the way through the Subcite.

Friday, May 17/Saturday, May 18: Wake up at 7 am. Work through the Subcite until around 2 pm. Return to the Case Comment to do some light editing. Nothing major changed, but I improved some things. Returned to the Subcite at around 7 pm. Worked through the night until about 8 am on Saturday when I realized I needed brain power to submit the competition. Submitted it around 9 am.

Schedule 6

Note: With apologies for some missing sections, here is the schedule I made for myself. I had time for personal activities and for moving out of the dorms, but I will highlight the importance for me of powering down my phone and software blocking distracting websites during work hours.

5/12/24 Sun

- 4:00 - 5:15 read key article(s) in the pack for the topic I want to cover
- 5:15 - 5:30 chill/text
- 5:30 - 6:00 non-HLR work
- 6:00 - 8:00 write outline
- 8:00 - 8:30 pack
- 8:30 - sleep

5/13/24 Mon

- 6-8 morning workout/meditation
- 8:15 at Langdell
- 8:15 - 8:45 non-HLR work
- 9:00 - 2:00 write reporting section
- 2:00 - 2:30 get food/go to storg
- 2:30 - 8:30 write argument section

5/14/24 Tue

- 6-8 morning workout/meditation
- 8-8:30 non-HLR work
- 8:35 - 2:00p clean up ALL citations
- 2:00p - 8:30p Subcite

5/15/24 Wed - Subcite & pack

- 9:30 - 10:30 reread the document
- 10:30 - ... (?)

5/16/24 Thu

- Subcite & pack

5/17/24 Fri

- 8:30 - 12:00 Subcite
- 12:00 - 2:30 pack
- 2:45 - 4:45 write statement
- 5:00 - 8:30 clean up article

5/18/24 Sat

- make sure all comments on Subcite are formatted correctly; submit
- pick up car
- go to wedding!

Schedule 7

Overview: I planned to spend days 1–3 on the Case Comment and days 4–6 on the Subcite, with the goal of returning to the Case Comment midway through day 6. I got stressed out early in day one, so I used the Subcite as a distraction. Other than that, I was able to stick to this schedule closely enough, and moved fast enough on the Subcite to spend the *first half* instead of *second half* of day six on the Case Comment — which was super helpful because I had enough energy to substantively revise the argument (which wasn't necessary but definitely improved the piece).

Overall, I spent a little over 40 hours on the Case Comment and about 35 hours on the Subcite. I ate lunch and dinner every day, attended a family event, helped a friend with a crisis, and slept 6–7 hours each night with time to shower every morning. I worked in different places around campus to force me to “get exercise” by walking around, and I made the decision to live off of takeout food so I wouldn't have to spend time cooking. My wallet was unhappy, but I think it was worth it.

Day One:

- 10:30–12:00 CC Read case (closely)
- 12:00–12:30 NA Lunch
- 12:30–3:30 CC Read wave of external sources
- 3:30–6:45 SC Bluebooking (quotes)
- 6:45–7:15 NA Call parents
- 7:15–7:30 SC Bluebooking (quotes)
- 7:30–8:00 NA Dinner
- 8:00–11:00 CC Start writing the background section
- 11:00–11:45 NA Walk back to apartment
- 11:45–1:15 CC Reporting section

Day Two:

- 9:30–12:30 CC Reporting section, up to the dissent
- 12:30–2:00 NA Lunch and relocate
- 2:00–3:00 CC Finish reporting section
- 3:00–9:00 CC Argument section
- 9:00–9:30 NA Dinner
- 9:30–1:30 CC Argument section

Day Three:

- 10:00–1:00 CC Argument section
- 1:00–1:30 NA Lunch
- 1:30–6:45 CC Argument section (finished!)
- 6:45–8:30 NA Dinner
- 8:30–12:30 CC Revision

Day Four:

- 7:00–8:30 SC Bluebooking (page-by-page)
- 8:30–2:00 NA Family event
- 2:00–3:00 NA Massive headache
- 3:00–5:00 SC Bluebooking (page-by-page)
- 5:30–10:30 SC Bluebooking (page-by-page)
- 10:30–11:15 NA Dinner
- 11:15–2:00 SC Bluebooking (page-by-page)

Day Five:

- 9:30–1:00 SC Bluebooking (page-by-page)
- 1:00–1:30 NA Lunch
- 1:30–4:00 SC Bluebooking (page-by-page)
- 4:00–5:00 SC Bluebooking (page-by-page)
- 5:00–6:00 SC Bluebooking (page-by-page)
- 6:00–6:30 SC Bluebooking (page-by-page)
- 6:30–7:00 NA Dinner
- 7:00–7:30 SC Bluebooking (page-by-page)
- 7:30–9:00 SC Bluebooking (page-by-page)
- 9:00–10:30 SC Bluebooking (page-by-page)
- 10:30–11:45 NA Call friend
- 11:45–12:00 SC Sorting sentences
- 12:30–2:15 SC Blackbooking (checking every rule / spot-checking)

Day Six:

- 9:30–10:30 CC Reread case comment with line edits
- 10:30–12:30 CC Substantive edits
- 12:30–1:00 NA Lunch
- 1:00–4:00 CC Substantive edits
- 4:00–7:00 SC Blackbooking (checking every rule / spot-checking)
- 7:00–8:30 NA Dinner
- 8:30–3:15 SC Blackbooking (checking every rule / spot-checking)

Day Seven:

- 9:30–10:30 CC Print and reread final version, submit

Schedule 8

Note: During the competition, I was starting a relationship with my now-boyfriend and absolute love of my life. I am sharing this to show: 1) it's possible to have some semblance of a life during write-on, and 2) if he wanted to (wait hours if only to speak to you for some minutes), he would!

Sunday: 11 hours 55 mins

- 11:08am-12:08pm: read instructions
- 12:10pm-12:50pm: read sample Case Comment
- 1pm-1:55pm: read Case Comment recent case
- 2:10pm-2:35pm: read a bit more
- 2:50pm-4:30pm: read more
- 5:40pm-6:30pm: looked through titles in table of authorities for inspiration; started typing bullets for both reporting and argument
- 6:45pm-7:15pm: reread sample Case Comment for more inspiration
- 7:30pm-8:15pm: bullets for Case Comment reporting section
- 8:20pm-9:15pm: bullets for Case Comment reporting section
- 9:45pm-1am: bullets for Case Comment reporting section
- 1pm-2am: sorted Case Comment secondary sources, skimmed through some to brainstorm theses

Monday: 10 hours 50 mins

- 11:10am-12:05pm: reading Case Comment secondary sources
- 12:07pm-1:07pm: reading Case Comment secondary sources
- 1:15pm-2:10pm: reading Case Comment secondary sources
- 4pm-6:45pm: drafting Case Comment reporting section
- 8:15pm-11pm: drafting Case Comment reporting section
- 11:45pm-2:15am: read Subcite rules

Tuesday: 11 hours 25 mins

- 11:15am-12:40pm: bullet point Case Comment argument
- 2pm-3pm: Case Comment reporting section (finished paragraph 2)
- 4:30pm-7pm: Case Comment reporting section (finished para 4)
- 7:30pm-10:30pm: Case Comment reporting section (finished para 6)
- 10:45pm-11pm: plan Subcite strategy
- 11:45pm-12:15am: Subcite
- 12:45am-3:30am: Subcite

Wednesday: 12 hours 35 mins

- 11:40am-3:40pm: finish Case Comment reporting section
- 5pm-6:15pm: Subcite
- 6:30pm-7:40pm: Subcite
- 7:55pm-9pm: Subcite
- 9:35pm-10:35pm: Subcite
- 10:45pm-11:15pm: Subcite
- 12am-12:30am: Subcite (until my laptop crashed)
- 12:40am-3:45am: Subcite (finished 6.5 pages)

Thursday: 11 hours 55 mins

- 11:35am-1:15pm: Case Comment argument section
- 1:45pm-2:15pm: Case Comment argument section
- 3:30pm-6:30pm: Case Comment argument section (only 3 paragraphs left for tomorrow)
- 7:25pm-8:30pm - Subcite
- 8:40pm-9:45pm - Subcite
- 10pm-10:30pm - Subcite
- 10:50pm-1:55am - Subcite
- 2:35-3:35am - Subcite

Friday: 11h 35 mins

- 11am-2pm - wrap up Case Comment argument
- 2:30pm-7pm - wrap up Case Comment argument & add footnotes
- 7pm-9:45pm - wrap up Case Comment footnotes
- 10:15pm-10:30pm - Subcite
- 10:40pm-11:15pm - Subcite
- 11:30pm-12am - Subcite

Saturday: 9 hours

- 12am-7am - Subcite
- 7am-9am - work on submitting (anonymize comments, make last-minute small technical edits to Case Comment, write Holistic Review Statement, fill out Grade Waiver)

Schedule 9

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
8:00 am	-	-	-	-
9:00 am	-	Run and breakfast	Breakfast	Run and breakfast
10:00 am	-	Subcite; Working lunch	Subcite; Working Lunch	Write Case Comment Reporting Section
11:00 am	Read all instructions and get acquainted with the materials; Review tips packet and a couple <i>HLR</i> YouTube videos			
12:00 pm				
1:00 pm				Lunch
2:00 pm				
3:00 pm	Break	Break	Break	Polish and finish Reporting section
4:00 pm	[Case Comment] Read district/circuit court opinions; take detailed notes; Brainstorm thesis ideas and tentatively choose	Subcite	Subcite	
5:00 pm				Break & Dinner
6:00 pm				
7:00 pm				Review sources; Pull info/ quotes for Argument
8:00 pm	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	
9:00 pm	Relax	Subcite	[Case Comment] Re-review cases; Review and select sources; Solidify thesis	Subcite
10:00 pm	Relax			
11:00 pm	Sleep			
12:00 am	-	Sleep		

	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
8:00 am	-	-	Final Case Comment Edits/Proofreading
9:00 am	-	-	
10:00 am	Begin writing Case Comment Argument section	Write Argument section; working lunch	Review instructions and organize docs; Finish and submit!
11:00 am			
12:00 pm	Lunch		-
1:00 pm	Work on Argument section		-
2:00 pm			-
3:00 pm	Break		Break
4:00 pm		-	
5:00 pm	Finish Subcite; Working Dinner	Write Argument section; Check citations and Bluebooking; Working dinner	-
6:00 pm			-
7:00 pm			-
8:00 pm			-
9:00 pm			-
10:00 pm			-
11:00 pm			-
12:00 am			-

* Work after 12:00 am not reflected. I finished between 1:00–2:00 am on Thurs./Fri. and around 4:30 am on Sat.

Schedule 10

Saturday, May 11

- Watched a tips session recording on YouTube and skimmed Case Comments on *HLR*'s website.
- Wrote my Holistic Review Statement.

Sunday, May 12

- 9:30–10:30 AM: Went to the gym.
- 11 AM–12 PM: Downloaded the Competition, read the instructions, and skimmed the packet.
- 12–1 PM: Ate lunch.
- 1–6 PM: Read Recent Case. Identified topic of interest and reviewed secondary materials. Wrote a thesis statement. Read relevant secondary sources. Refined thesis and started outlining.
- 6–8 PM: Ate dinner and went on a walk.
- 8–10 PM: Wrote a skeleton draft of the Case Comment.

Monday, May 13

- 7 AM–12 PM: Fleshed out a draft of the Case Comment.
- 12–1 PM: Ate lunch.
- 1–3 PM: Worked on the Subcite, just because I wanted a break from the Case Comment.
- 3–6:30 PM: Grinded out a full draft of the Case Comment.*
- 7–8:30 PM: Went to spin class in Harvard Square.
- 8:30–10 PM: Ate dinner and got ready for bed while making adjustments to the Case Comment.

*I chose a narrow topic, with only one substantially relevant secondary source, because I wanted to take Tuesday off and wouldn't have time to be more ambitious. Had I wanted to be more ambitious, I'd have spent most of Monday and Tuesday writing, aiming to finish up with technical edits on Tuesday.

Tuesday, May 14

- My birthday! I mostly took the day off. I spent an hour or two in the afternoon making final edits on the Case Comment (ensuring all of the citations were substantively and technically correct, refining language, etc.), but mostly spent the day with my friends who weren't writing on. 😊

Wednesday, May 15 – Friday, May 17

- 6:30–7:30 AM: Went to the gym.
- 7:30–8:30 AM: Got ready, ate breakfast, tidied up my workspace and got to work.
- 8:30 AM–12:30 PM: Worked on the Subcite. Proceeded page-by-page. However, when I first encountered a rote technical error (e.g., typeface issues, or a misspelling I thought might recur), I did a quick pass through the entire piece and corrected all instances of the same error.
- 12:30–3:30 PM: Worked on the Subcite.
- 3:30–5 PM: Went for a walk, called my parents, caught up with friends, did errands, etc.
- 5–6 PM: Worked on the Subcite.
- 6–7:30 PM: Ate dinner and watched Superstore.
- 7:30–9 PM: Worked on the Subcite.

Saturday, May 18

- 5:30–8:30 AM: Looked over everything, re-read instructions, and checked for compliance. Made sure the Case Comment was how I wanted it. Reviewed Subcite and double-checked comments were in correct form. Did last pass through the Subcite for common technical errors.
- 8:30 AM: Submitted and went to IHOP.